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Source: *Latin American Literary Review*, Vol. 22, No. 43 (Jan. - Jun., 1994), pp. 67-80

Published by: Latin American Literary Review

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20119672>

Accessed: 06/04/2009 06:16

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THE LOGIC OF PARADOX IN GUIMARÃES ROSA'S *TUTAMEIA*¹

IDELBER AVELAR

Tutaméia, published in 1967, was the last book to appear during Guimarães Rosa's lifetime. It is composed of forty short stories and four "barely nonfictional works called 'prefaces'" (Vincent 108)². From the beginning, the reader is struck by the careful construction and the meticulous arrangement of every detail. In the analysis of *Tutaméia*, everything must be taken into account: the order in which the stories appear, the epigraphs, the table of contents, the title, etc. Taken as a whole, the book has the form of a multidimensional web where each point can be potentially connected with any other. At any given intersection a multiplicity of meanings is produced, referring the reader to other dimensions, in a constant game of differentiation and deferral. I will direct my attention toward some of these intersections while attempting to maintain a sense of the whole. As I will show later, paradox in *Tutaméia* is often both condensed in a single word and displaced through the entire narrative fabric, a process that Guimarães Rosa described with the alchemic formula *solve et coagula*.

All the stories in the collection range from three to five pages. The sense of compression and density emerges in each text. Guimarães Rosa described *Tutaméia* as a book in which not more than two or three words could be taken out without damaging the whole (Rónai 216). In these stories, every sentence is absolutely essential even for a basic understanding of the plot; each one contains a maximum amount of aesthetic information. In an influential article written upon the book's publication, Paulo Rónai defined it as a collection of potential novels condensed to their utmost limits (220). Many readers have been puzzled and bewildered by the text's density, even abandoning it as unreadable. It is by far the most experimental of Rosa's works: the very efficacy of language as a means of communication is challenged by an intense labor of linguistic innovation.

The picture is made still more complex by the proliferation of paratextual signs: cryptic drawings and symbols on the cover of the first edition, epigraphs, etc. As Luiz Valente has noted, *Tutaméia* displays an innovative structure where

“normally extraneous elements such as prefaces, epigraphs, and indexes are incorporated into the text” (353). The table of contents presents the stories in the order in which they appear. They are listed in alphabetical order, except for two: “Grande Gedeão” and “Reminiscção” appear between “João Porém, o criador de perus” and “Lá, nas campinas”. Each of the four prefaces is placed in a strategic position, affecting the flow of reading and engaging in a dialogue with previous and/or following stories. The entire book is framed by two quotations from Schopenhauer, the first warning “exigir a primeira leitura paciência” (5), and the second concluding that “já a construção, orgânica e não emendada, do conjunto, terá feito necessário por vezes ler-se duas vezes a mesma passagem” (226). The reader is invited to solve all these riddles by deciphering a text that offers very few clues. Or rather, a text in which every clue immediately becomes a riddle in its own right.

The prefaces to *Tutaméia* do not perform, as Lenira Covizzi would have it, any didactic function³. They are rather *texts* in themselves, in the strong Barthesian sense of a self-enunciating practice of writing. As Luiz Valente points out, they are not designed to “explain and clarify it [the book] for the reader...they are ineffective as an introduction to *Tutaméia*” (350). The relation between the prefaces and the stories is rather one of dialogue, therefore not substantially different from the various connections that the tales establish among themselves. While admitting that there is obviously a textual pattern proper to the prefaces, I contend that their specificity must be searched beyond the function of simply explicating and justifying the stories.

The enunciating voice in the prefaces does not take the form of a fictional narrator, even though many tales and popular jokes are narrated in them. However, such a voice cannot be reduced to a transparently denotative expression of the author’s beliefs either. One can rather place it in a territory that fuses parables, anecdotes, metafictional remarks, and philosophical statements. The result is an uncertain voice, constantly alternating a becoming-fictional with a becoming-authorial. At times, Rosa withdraws to the background and leaves the reader with a narrative voice already fully fictional. The authorial ‘I’ eventually returns and takes responsibility for the statement, only to fade away again. Although one can subscribe to Paulo Rónai’s claim that the prefaces of *Tutaméia* present “uma profissão de fé e uma arte poética” (217), it should be pointed out that such poetics is to be *deduced*, i.e. the enunciating voice must never be simply assumed to be Rosa’s.

Since my target is the constitutive role of paradox, I will limit myself to the first preface, “Aletria e Hermenêutica”. These ten pages of riddles and nonsensical jokes display the richest of Guimarães Rosa’s elaborations on the question of paradox. The preface opens with one of the most commonly quoted passages in Rosa’s work:

A estória não quer ser história. A estória, rigor, deve ser

contra a história. A estória, às vezes, quer-se um pouco parecida anedota. A anedota, pela etimologia e para a finalidade, requer fechado ineditismo. Uma anedota é como um fósforo: riscado, deflagrada, foi-se a serventia (7).

Two major concerns of Rosean poetics emerge here: fiction's relation to the real and the notion of singularity. Rosa recovers the word *estória* from the popular storytelling tradition with the purpose of highlighting fiction's independence vis-a-vis the real as well as rejecting all mimetic models based on "faithful representations." The attack on realism continues further down in the preface, where the "realista verista" is said simply to approach the "grosseiro formal, externo a coisa" (14). The second aesthetic statement in the opening passage is more often overlooked and has rarely been dealt with in the Rosean criticism. It refers to a key notion in *Tutaméia*: the instantaneous, the absolutely singular contingency that erupts out of the narrative continuum. Alien to any subjective will, these singularities-events⁴ prove to be the structuring principle of most stories in the book.

The preface proceeds by narrating several *anedotas de abstração*. According to Guimarães Rosa, these are anecdotes and parables that "colindem com o não-senso, a ele afins; e o não-senso, crê-se, reflete por um triz a coerência do mistério geral, que nos envolve e cria" (8). As Luiz Valente has shown, what ties all these stories together is "their common dependence on absence, lack, and negation" (353). All of them in some way conceptualize or actualize nothingness. For Guimarães Rosa, they possessed the Zen-like quality of opening the path to the *satori*, the state of illumination where the mind is able to eliminate all thoughts and experience a pure being-in-itself. In this study, I am not concerned with the mystical implications of these parables, but exclusively with the *logic* underlying the constitutive role of absence in them.

One of the most humorous stories in the preface recounts the experience of a boy who gets lost while strolling with his parents: "garotinho...perdido na multidão, na praça, em festa de quermesse, se aproxima de um polfícia e, choramingando, indaga: - 'Seo guarda, o sr. não viu um homem e uma mulher sem um meninozinho assim como eu?'" (9). The vignette reverses the logic of presence by making the boy's *absence* the constitutive feature of the parents' identity. Instead of "have you seen someone tall, dark-haired ... ?", one is confronted with "have you seen someone without a kid like me?" For the boy, the parents can only be defined by the fact that *they lack him*, rather than by the presence of any personal mark. Absence, far from being a negative and nostalgia-provoking lack, is thus displaced to the positive and constitutive pole of the dichotomy.

A similar story involves a man who tries to explain to a friend what a wireless telegraph is:

— “Imagine um cachorro *basset*, tão comprido, que a cabeça está no Rio e a ponta do rabo em Minas. Se se belisca a ponta do rabo, em Minas, a cabeça, no Rio, pega a latir...”

— “E isso é o telégrafo-sem-fio?”

— “Não. Isso é o telégrafo com fio. O sem fio é a mesma coisa...mas sem o corpo do cachorro” (9).

The image of a dog occupying the entire space between Rio and Minas is constructed only to give way to its subsequent absence that will make possible the analogy with the wireless telegraph. That is, a given presence does not substitute for an original absence. It is rather conceived so that it can be “disconceived” and the materiality of absence can thereby emerge. The joke reveals how absence can only be conceptualized once an original and foundational presence has been posited. The specifically Rosean intervention is to unveil this presence as a deception, something that one creates in order to enjoy the pleasure of its disappearance, the *jouissance* of experiencing nothingness. The reader witnesses a true *art of disappearance*⁵: absence is not to be covered (by a psychoanalytic process of substitution), but rather dis-covered. As Guimarães Rosa explains: “a idéia do objeto ‘não existindo’ é necessariamente a idéia do objeto ‘existindo’, acrescida da representação de uma exclusão desse objeto pela realidade atual tomada em bloco” (10). In a sentence such as “o nada é uma faca sem a lâmina, da qual se tirou o cabo” (10), the nothingness that arises as a residue is the result of the fictionalization of an original presence: “Trocado em miúdo: esse ‘nada’ seria apenas um ex-nada, produzido por uma ex-faca” (10).

Absence is also inscribed as a metafictional device. Rosa closes “*Aletria e Hermenêutica*” by saying that “O livro pode valer pelo muito que nele não deveu caber” (17). The text thus draws attention to itself in a paradoxical fashion, inviting the reader to decipher everything that is *not* there or was left out. That absence retrospectively becomes the lens through which the entire text is interpreted. Most anecdotes in the preface can be reduced to a logical movement whereby a certain presence is posited and then deconstructed, giving way to the *jouissance* of nothingness (nothingness as *jouissance*). Popular rhyme patterns are appropriated to convey the same effect:

As minhas ceroulas novas
ceroulas das mais modernas
não têm cóis, não têm cadarços
não têm botões e não têm pernas.

Comprei uns óculos novos
óculos dos mais excelentes
não têm aros, não têm asas
não têm grau e não têm lentes... (11)

Both stanzas posit a certain object (a certain presence) only to deconstruct it progressively. One notes that Guimarães Rosa inscribes nothingness, absence, silence, etc. (i.e. the non-privileged poles of age-old Western dichotomies) not as a guilty and nostalgic encounter with some deficiency or lack. The notion of an original and foundational plenitude from which we have fallen is thus completely foreign to Rosa's text. As such, all parallels with either the existentialist or the psychoanalytic versions of nothingness and absence are valid only insofar as they show that Rosa operates in a radically different domain. The existentialist nausea and the Lacanian lack, in that they still reproduce the hierarchy proper to every binary opposition inherited from metaphysics, remain comfortably situated within the nostalgic narrative of the primordial Fall. Rosa, on the contrary, turns absence into a *production*, an affirmative play of paradoxes, a creative force. It is thus a Nietzschean energy: the infinite possibility of naming and producing signs.

The Rosean conversion of negation into affirmation can be further exemplified with the role of negative prefixes in *Tutaméia*. Many of his linguistic innovations originate from a single pattern, whereby the absence of an action is transformed into an action in its own right. Let us consider in detail some passages of *Tutaméia*:

— “Doido diacho monstro!” — minha mulher e
praga. *Desentendia* minha fundura (“Curtamão” 44).

Se diz aliás que a gente troca de sombra, por
volta dos quarenta, quando alma e corpo revezam o
jeito de se compenetrar. E quem vai saber e dizer? Em Gedeão
desprestava-se atenção (“Grande Gedeão” 89).

Romão, hem, gostou dela, audaz descobridor. Pois - por
querer também os avessos, conforme quem aceita e não confere?
Inexplica-o a natureza, em seus efeitos e visíveis objetos
 (“Reminiscção” 93).

O futuro são respostas. Da vida, sabe-se: o que a
ostra percebe do mar e do rochedo. *Inimuginemo-nos*
 (“Se Eu Seria Personagem” 156) (emphases added).

In these passages (and others could be mentioned), the italicized verbs have been created by the addition of a negative prefix to an existing verb. The stylistic and grammatical consequences of this creation do not concern me here, but from a philosophical viewpoint they foreground some of the issues discussed in “Aletria e Hermeneutica.” Rather than using *não entender*, *não prestar atenção*,

não explicar, and *não imaginar*, Guimarães Rosa, by means of prefixes, transforms a non-action into an action itself (*desentender*, *desprestar atenção*, *inexplicar*, and *inimaginar*). The radical difference between the two options is felt by any Portuguese speaker. Whereas *não prestar atenção* simply testifies to the lack of a certain action, *desprestar atenção* highlights absence as an affirmative and active statement. Nothingness becomes a verb, a productive force. The implications for the logic of sense are radical and profound, since *the presence of the action is no longer the paradigm for the statement of its absence*. The logical, Platonic dependence of absence upon presence is overthrown, insofar as absence no longer negates presence, but simply affirms itself as well as the possibility of every presence. Guimarães Rosa indirectly reveals, within the space of a single word, a central issue: *the extent to which our linguistic signs are accomplices in the violent hierarchy that organizes all binary oppositions*.

A further instance of Rosa's strategic use of absence lies in his rewriting of popular Brazilian proverbs. His deconstruction of proverbs has been analyzed by Luís Costa Lima (49-65) and Lívia Santos (536-61). Rosa's procedures range from inversion and condensation to combination of different proverbs and overt parody (Santos 547-50). I will limit myself to a few examples that display the paradoxical logic I have highlighted. One will notice the same structuring principles operating in all statements, generating a logic in which "the negation no longer expresses anything negative" (Deleuze, *Logic* 136), but rather states its own existence in an affirmative mode:

Deus é quem sabe o por não vir ("Arroio-das-Antas" 23).

Foi nessa altura que ele não caiu em si ("Estória No. 3" 61).

Atento...ao que não se passava ("Grande Gedeão" 91).

The estrangement effect conveyed by these re-elaborations of fixed linguistic forms is produced by certain procedures that entail the same logic. One invariably finds a given action (*saber*, *estar atento*, etc.) introducing a clause that, in its usual linguistic form, can only state a certain presence (to know something, to pay attention to something, etc.). Guimarães Rosa maintains the active statement, but makes it affirm an *absence*. The result is once again one of materialization of absence in language, in that a character is forced to pay attention to emptiness; God is said to know what is *not* to come; etc. The use of negative particles does not, therefore, express some "transcendental negativity", but rather an affirmative thrust. For example, in the statement "Deus é quem sabe o por não vir", Guimarães Rosa plays upon the reader's expectation of future facts by affirming the non-fact as that which is about to come. The very absence of facts is thus to be interpreted in its singularity.

It would be a serious misreading of Guimarães Rosa to suppose that such linguistic constructions are simply "stylistic" devices to produce unexpected

forms. Although analyzable from a stylistic point of view, their function in Rosean poetics extends much further than a mere deviation from a linguistic norm. For Guimarães Rosa, each word is, in and of itself, a philosophical tension. The distinctions between form and content, style and theme, etc. are in Rosa's text more obsolete than in any other. In the writerly text of Guimarães Rosa every content is necessarily a form, while every form is always already a philosophical statement. His linguistic innovations should also, therefore, be read with attention to the philosophical displacements they impose. Such displacements will become more clear as I link the linguistic subversion with the structuring logic of the text as a whole. Rosa's linguistic innovations will then emerge as paradoxemes, i.e. condensations of a larger paradigm that ultimately operates upon the entire narrative fabric of *Tutaméia*.

In "Lá, nas Campinas", for example, the epigraph introduces the reader to the story's central issue: "...nessas tão minhas lembranças eu mesmo desapareci" (97). The passage highlights the tension of memory/subject, a major concern of Guimarães Rosa's throughout his work. The story recounts Drijimiro's fixation on his childhood, combined with his inability to recall any significant facts, images, or people: "Drijimiro tudo ignorava de sua infância; mas recordava-a, demais" (97). His memory is thus structured by a constitutive void that eternally defers and eludes the efforts of remembrance: "De pessoas, mãe ou pai, não tirava memória... Que jeito recobrar aquilo, o que ele pretendia mais que tudo?" (97). Drijimiro's only persistent recollection can be reduced to a single phrase that vaguely recalls a landscape: "frase única, ficara-lhe, de no nenhum lugar antigamente: - 'Lá, nas campinas...' - desinformada, insoante, absurda" (97). The phrase erupts in his memory as a pure singularity, i.e. it evokes neither a particular place nor a general idea or concept. This empty signifier, as pure materiality in language, preserves the memory of a non-place, a *deteritory*: "uma campina... estando nem onde nem longe" (98). This utterly non-Oedipal, non-neurotic memory takes the form of a nomadic flight through the past. Such a relation between memory and subject constitutes the latter in a space alien to both the Cartesian omnipotence — where the subject supposedly controls and guides its memory — and the Freudian nostalgia — where the subject is trapped in the paradisiac (repressed) remembrance of a primordial unity⁶. Drijimiro is rather the deterritorialized subject, constituted in the vicinity of a *positive, non-castrative* singularity-event blasted out of the temporal continuum. The absence of memory, family, etc. (i.e. territories) places him in a state of perpetual nomadism:

"Antes ele buscara, orfandante, por todo canto e parte — 'Lá, nas campinas?...' - o que soubesse acaso. Tinha ninguém para lhe responder. De menino, passara por incertas famílias e mãos; o que era comum, como quando vêm esses pobres, migrantes: davam as vezes os filhos, vendiam filhas pequenas" (98).

A typically Rosean portmanteau word, “orfandante” (orphan + walking), foregrounds the character’s deterritorialized state. The description of his origins is actually a description of the absence of all origin which underscores his movement in the endless flow of becoming. No father, no mother, no primordial unity, no castration. From the beginning (if one can still speak of such a thing), Drijimiro is a point circulating through various series. His memory can therefore only be nomadic and uncertain, paradoxical and parricidal: a non-memory, as it were. To reorder his past experience, he counts on the singularity *lá, nas campinas* that crosses every present moment of his life.

Rather than searching for this past experience, Drijimiro (*dirijo + miro?*) settles down as a cattle farmer. By a process of substitution, he produces simulacra of the past using the images available in the present:

mas achava, já sem sair do lugar, pois onde, pois como, do de nas viagens aprendido, ou o que tinha em si, dia com sobras de aurora. Notava: cada pedrinha de areia um redarguir reluzente, até os vôos dos passarinhos eram atos (99).

Reaching a moment when the character enjoys a certain plenitude and the singularity-event from the past no longer disturbs him, the story seems to have nowhere to go. However, a fellow farmer who is about to die brings up the magical phrase and the inner void is revealed again: “Rixão...vinha, para passar. Só rever Drijimiro, pedir-lhe perguntado o segredo: - ‘*Lá nas campinas...*’ — mas que Drijimiro não sabia mais de cor...Doravante...ousava estar inteiramente triste” (99). Forgetfulness becomes again a source of pain, but not for too long. Two paragraphs lie in between this passage and the subsequent death of Drijimiro himself. However, in *Tutaméia* two paragraphs rewrite an entire life. Drijimiro, at the moment of his death, is overtaken by an illumination of memory that brings back the original territory, with all its meaning and richness:

Falou, o que guardado sempre sem saber lhe ocupara o peito, rebentado: luz, o campo, pássaros, a casa entre bastas folhagens, amarelo o quintal da voçoroca, com miriquilhos borbulhando nos barrancos ... Tudo e mais, trabalhado completado, agora, tanto — revalor — como o que raia pela indescrição: a água azul das lavadeiras, lagoasque refletem o pico dos montes, as árvores e os pedidores de esmola (100).

A Romantic/Realist/Modernist story would end here. The narrative seems to have been brought to a full circle. Despite the non-nostalgic nature of Drijimiro’s memory, one could still read the story within the usual plenitude-loss-recovery cycle. Even though his itinerary is nomadic and originless, the reader certainly feels tempted to narrativize it in Oedipal terms, i.e. as a

“recapture of the original territory.” Since he is overtaken by the image evoked by the magical phrase *lá, nas campinas* and remembrances return, he seems to have managed to reterritorialize the past in the present. However, the last statement by the narrator reestablishes the paradox: “Então, ao narrador foge o fio. Toda estória pode resumir-se nisto: - Era uma vez uma vez, e nessa vez um homem. Súbito, sem sofrer, diz, afirma: - ‘Lá...’ Mas não acho as palavras” (100).

The crisis that had haunted the character invades the act of narration itself. As of the moment when Drijimiro recovers plenitude, *the narrator finds himself unable to tell his story*. The narrator’s confession of powerlessness bewilders the reader and again leaves him/her in the air as to what *lá, nas campinas* really means. The text implies that completeness cannot be told and that narratives dwell in the realm of deferral.

A paradox is construed from the disharmonious relation between two series, through which a paradoxical element circulates. The non-correspondence between the two series produces a logic according to which the paradoxical element is always excessive in one series and lacking in the other. In “Lá, nas Campinas” this element is Drijimiro’s memory itself and the two series are set up within the opposition between *énoncé* and *énonciation*. That is, the *énonciation* (the narrator’s voice) can only refer to Drijimiro’s remembrance as long as this remembrance is lacking in the character. It thus inhabits the *énonciation* to an excessive extent, making the whole story revolve around the void of a non-memory. When Drijimiro finally recaptures the past image, the lack of memory is displaced from the *énoncé* to the *énonciation*. The narrator can no longer tell the story of an achieved memory, because the character’s achievement entails the narrator’s failure. The excessive presence of memory in one series produces its absence in the other.

One could reveal similar foundational paradoxes in other stories from *Tutaméia*. My purpose in reading “Lá, nas Campinas” was to demonstrate that the paradoxical logic underlying Guimarães Rosa’s linguistic creations also operates to structure the narrative fabric as a whole. In “Lá, nas Campinas”, one notes the same joyful, non-nostalgic, and non-Oedipal appropriation of absence that animates the Rosean sentence. The story’s emphasis on Drijimiro’s relation to his memory leads me to ask: given the structure of paradox, what are the specific conceptions of subject and temporality that emerge therefrom?

As far as the subject is concerned, *Tutaméia* provokes some estrangement: it was once labeled a “book without characters.” The protagonists of the stories are neither types nor unique individuals, since the compactness of the texts precludes any moral or psychological development. *Tutaméia* is definitely not a study of individual depths, inner conflicts or dilemmas. The book marks a break with the tradition of bourgeois literature centered around the personal sphere. In the example of “Lá, nas Campinas”, Drijimiro is merely the locus through which a certain memory circulates. There are no personal traumas to be resolved by a return to the past. There is simply a singularity-event that crosses

the subject to constitute him/her. All that matters in *Tutaméia* are these singularities-events that emerge at certain moments to punctuate individual lives. The subject is nothing more than a collateral residue of the event. Through a different analysis, Luís Costa Lima has reached a similar conclusion when he states that “em Guimarães Rosa ... o personagem, em si mesmo, no curso de sua existência privada, é apenas índice da eventualidade” (57). Costa Lima goes on to contrast Machado de Assis’ emphasis on individual psychology to Rosa’s residual characters, showing the latter’s unique place in Brazilian literature.

The moments of illumination that usually appear at the end of each story in *Tutaméia* (e.g. the return of memory in “Lá, nas Campinas”) are not “epiphanies” in the Joycean sense, since they are no longer attached to an individual consciousness⁷. In “Lá, nas Campinas”, the past remembrances return as if by themselves. Drijimiro is simply *overtaken* by them. The love scenes that close some stories are not rituals of seduction, but rather instantaneous and singular events. They are never prepared or arranged, but simply take place and involve the individuals.

The subject in *Tutaméia* is one that emerges by synthesizing singularities-events that completely escape the individual will. However, relativizing and situating the subject, depriving it of its Cartesian power does not amount to positing its constitution in the negative terms of castration and lack. To make such a claim would be mere inversion of the Cartesian problematic, since it would endow another subject (the castrator) with an all-powerful attribute. A reading of *Tutaméia* from the viewpoint of paradox reveals where Cartesianism and Freudianism touch each other, since both posit a subjective, *constitutive* agency beyond the event.

At times, the event takes the form of a riddle that characters are forced to decipher. In “Intruge-se”, the event is the murder of a gang member in the backlands. Ladislau, the gang leader, is caught in a game of deciphering and interpretation that occupies the entire story. Once again, no information is provided as to the characters’ origins or purposes. *They are depicted as not-yet-constituted subjects* who need, for their emergence, to respond to an absolutely contingent event. They must, in Deleuze’s words, “become worthy of what happens to us [them], and thus to will and release the event, to become the offspring of one’s own events” (*Logic* 149). Ladislau’s detective-like search differs from murder mysteries in that there is no all-powerful mind collecting proofs and testing hypotheses. The solution to the crime is instantaneous like everything in *Tutaméia*. The subject is again overtaken by a singular and non-individual event:

Um vaqueiro passou, Liocádio, agradou o cão que latiu ou não latiu, não se ouviu. Ladislau falou, bateu na mão do outro - era por repetida vez! - de uso, de esquecido? Aquele, atentado, em risco se rebelou, drepente, sacando faca a fura-bucho...

Mas Ladislau num revira-vaca, no meio do movimento,

em fígado lhe desfechou encostadamente a *parabellum* de doze balas, boa arma! Espichado o ferrabruto amassou moita de mentrasto, caiu como vítima. Rigriz disse, que viu, que piscou:

“Remexam nos dobros dele, que o assassino ele era, por algum trato ou furto!” (85).

Ladislau thus proves worthy of what happens to him. The event that leads to the solution does not connect with any previous search, but rather takes place and forces the subject to respond to it. One could say that the solution finds the character, rather than the opposite. There are no development of possibilities or speculative intelligence: in this anti-detective story, the final discovery simply makes the character aware that “nada sabia de si” (85), which further underscores the primacy of the event over the subject.

Another feature of the subject in *Tutaméia* lies in its perpetual condition of being deterritorialized and nomadic. The book is peopled by originless, orphan, free-moving subjects. Rather than the exiles (alienated or far from home) that one finds in *Primeiras Estórias*, characters in *Tutaméia* are nomads (alien to the idea of home altogether). In “Barra da Vaca”, Jeremoavo is said to be “desterrado, desfamiliarado” (37). In “Orientação”, Joaquim is described as a “joãovagante, no pé-rapar, fulano-da-china - vindo, vivido, ido” (123). At least three stories (“Faraó e a Água do Rio”, “O Outro ou O Outro”, and “Zingaresca”) confer the main roles on gypsies, the embodiments of nomadism par excellence. Several of Rosa’s portmanteau words (e.g. “orfandante” and “malandante”) foreground the perpetual flow of becoming proper to nomads.

As nomads, the characters in *Tutaméia* have very little in common with the modernist homelessness. They are not deprived of a home or exiled from one, but rather state themselves as nomads in a *positive* fashion. Again, one does not find any negativity or cult of lack in Guimarães Rosa. Nomads do not lack a home; rather, *homes lack the movement and energy of nomadism*. In “Zingaresca”, the gypsies occupy a farm, leave the proprietors and the priest in amazement, and abandon the place when everybody least expects it. The story is simply a filmic shot of one point of an itinerary without origin or destination, foreign to all territories. As Deleuze and Guattari point out, “if the nomad can be called the Deterritorialized par excellence, it is precisely because there is no reterritorialization *afterward* as with the migrant” (*Plateaus* 381). Many of the paradoxes in *Tutaméia* are related to the fact that the characters portrayed are neither at home nor exiled from it, but rather situated in a constant state of deterritorialization. As paradoxical subjects, they dwell in the realm of pure becoming.

Having analyzed the subject of paradox in *Tutaméia*, we are still left with the question of temporality, a major concern in the book. The reader is likely to be struck by the strange temporal structure of these narratives that do not seem to tell any story. I have noted that the characters’ past and future are hardly ever

alluded to. In fact, the very sense of diachrony is shattered in each story. There is rarely a progression of actions, not even a shuffled and chaotic one. Guimarães Rosa breaks radically with the age-old framework of a story (action A, complicator B, resolution C) by halting the narrative in the first stage. The reader is simply confronted with an *event* that stretches itself out for three or four pages amidst a true delirium of language. A good example of this can be found in “Hiato”, a story whose very title indicates the in-between of the Rosean temporality.

In “Hiato”, two *vaqueiros* are confronted with the frightening sight of a bull, which in the end turns out to be a tame steer. The whole story narrates the intangible moment when they believed they were in the presence of a wild animal. In the nowhere of the *sertão*, they are overtaken by the fear that provides the narrator with material for three entire pages. Guimarães Rosa makes a strategic use of commentary to halt the flow of actions and suspend the temporality, thereby conveying the impression that time itself is reduced to an intangible and incorporeal instant. Rather than a narrative, “Hiato” comes across as a purely *descriptive* story (which is obviously a paradox in its own terms). Jon Vincent has correctly pointed out that “Hiato” is an “antiplot piece centered on the absence of events” (123). No temporal markers are found in the whole text; nothing truly happens in it. As the narrator points out, during that moment “tudo era possível e não aconteceu” (73). The erasure of past and future is also alluded to: “errático, a retrotempo, recordava-se sobre nós o touro, escuro como o futuro, mau objeto para a memória” (74). The instant simply stretches itself out to embrace past and future and delete both. As Guimarães Rosa put it, this is the time of the “infinite monosyllable” (23).

This temporality is the realm of “the empty present of the *Aion*” (Deleuze, *Logic* 63): the temporal dimension of the perpetual present that engulfs both past and future. As opposed to *Chronos* (the circular time of the eternal return), *Aion* is inhabited by singularities-events which, by their very nature, are alien to all diachrony⁸. Since they neither remain nor change, they elude both being and becoming. The event (and the “appearance” of the bull in “Hiato” triggers an event in the true philosophical sense of the word) belongs in the incorporeal temporality of the instant, therefore outside the oppositions being/becoming and permanence/transformation. “Hiato”, like most stories in *Tutaméia*, dwells in the intangible temporality of the event: always singular, uncapturable, and unrepeatable. The time of paradox.

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NOTES

¹I am grateful to the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico, from Brazil, for a grant that made possible this research.

²Jon Vincent's *João Guimarães Rosa* is the best English introduction to *Tutaméia* and to Guimarães Rosa's work as a whole.

³See, for example, her assessment of *Tutaméia* as a "livro didático, orientado, que não deixa cada qual senti-lo e/ou dissecá-lo em paz", a misreading in that it approaches the prefaces from the point of view of an explicative function that they simply do not have (89).

⁴For a philosophical inquiry into the event as a singularity that erupts out of the temporal continuum, see Gilles Deleuze's *The Logic of Sense*, especially "Of Singularities" (100-8) and "Of the event" (148-53).

⁵I borrow the expression "art of disappearance" from Baudrillard. He has theorized disappearance as a game in his *Forget Foucault* (76). See also Paul Virilio's *L'Esthétique de la Disparition*.

⁶I take Cartesianism and Freudianism as privileged comparisons because they represent two major paradigms of modern reflections on the subject, i.e. the subject as rational cogito and the split and nostalgic subject of psychoanalysis. For an alternative to both modern rationalism and psychoanalysis, see Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*.

⁷Luís Fernando Valente has demonstrated the absence of epiphanies in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. See his "Affective Response in *Grande Sertão: Veredas*" (83). In *Tutaméia*, the moments of illumination emerge, but as non-individual, non-consciousness-centered epiphanies. Such desubjectification sets Guimarães Rosa apart from, for example, his contemporary Clarice Lispector, whose work obsessively revolves around the torments of consciousness.

⁸*Aion* and *Chronos* are the two dimensions of temporality in Stoic philosophy. They have been reappropriated for modern thought by Gilles Deleuze in his *The Logic of Sense*. See also Pierre-Maxime Schuhl's account in *Les Stoiciens*.

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