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Literary expression of Citizenship and territorial identity in favelas in contemporary Brazil.

Abstract

This essay examines literary production in Rocinha, an economically and socially challenged urban community (favela) in Rio de Janeiro, through a geo-referenced mapping of locations represented across analyzed works of various fictional and non-fictional genres. The objective is to undertake a geo-critical analysis aimed at elucidating the construction of territorial identity, which is inherently positioned between a sense of belonging and a mechanism of resistance amid the socio-political and structural challenges characterizing marginalized sectors of Brazil's urban landscape. Employing an interdisciplinary framework, this study addresses issues of civic self-recognition in relation to urban, social, and cultural phenomena in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro. The research aims to interrogate the cultural work of literature concerning the community, while assessing the role the literary outputs play in constructing territorial and political identity. By applying a geo-referential identification system (GIS), this analytic method aspires to translate aesthetic and literary analyses into an interactive tool, thereby facilitating cooperation between academic institutions and socially marginalized populations.

Resumo

Este ensaio discute aspectos de um levantamento da produção literária na Rocinha, uma comunidade urbana vulnerável ou *favela* do Rio de Janeiro, sistematizada como um mapeamento georreferenciado dos lugares representados nos livros analisados de diferentes gêneros ficcionais e não-ficcionais. O objetivo desta abordagem é realizar uma análise geocrítica que busque compreender a constituição do sentido de *território*, sempre dividido ambigualmente entre a identificação de pertencimento e o recurso de resistência diante dos desafios sociopolíticos e estruturais das partes marginalizadas do desenvolvimento urbano brasileiro.

Como parte de uma abordagem interdisciplinar para o autorreconhecimento cívico de questões urbanas, sociais e culturais na Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, o objetivo é investigar o trabalho cultural da literatura sobre a comunidade e como se torna parte da constituição de uma identidade territorial e política. Por meio da aplicação de um sistema de identificação georreferencial (SIG) na pesquisa de representações e expressões literárias, este método analítico ambiciona converter análises estéticas e literárias em uma ferramenta interativa de colaboração entre a academia e populações socialmente desfavorecidas.

Introduction

This essay is the result of participation in academic initiatives in the context of the collaboration between PUC-Rio and Rocinha in the Gávea Valley, Rio de Janeiro. It arose from my participation in the project *UNIR* in and about Rocinha - PUC-Rio, under the guidance of Professor Marcelo Tadeu Baumann Burgos, Funded by Faperj in 2022, UNIR is part of the joint effort of the scientific community of PUC-Rio and its partners in Rocinha to create a *Center for Research and Articulation of Knowledge*, integrated with the *Digital Humanities Laboratory* of PUC. The UNIR project represents an interdisciplinary approach to civic recognition of urban, social, and cultural issues in Rocinha, Rio de Janeiro, which involves the participation of seventeen departments of PUC-Rio and nine autonomous organizations and NGOs from Rocinha involved in a wide range of activities in the favela.

In this way, UNIR represents not only the presence of the university in the favela, more importantly, but it also expresses the effective presence of the favela in the university and has established in academia a research agenda committed to the needs of the community and the demands of political engagement for the articulation of public policies at all levels.

One of UNIR's main objectives was to develop a methodology for evaluating the results of support provided to organizations operating in Rocinha in various areas. At the same time, the ambition arose to create a geo-referenced and interactive platform with all the research carried out over the years, mainly through censuses by IBGE, IPP, and PAC, which are often not accessible to the target population of these studies. It is important to emphasize that this platform is still being built with the ambition of creating a dynamic and interactive tool for accessing all existing public and private research on the complex reality of Rocinha.

My research, presented below, was responsible for a small part of the cultural information accumulated and mapped, and for the inclusion on the UNIR platform of some maps dedicated to the visualization of literary expression. The survey and mapping of the places represented in the books and their distribution throughout the favela and the city, together, offer a cognitive and

affective topography of the territory, strongly marked by the frequency of their appearance and the values invested in them. In addition to the platform, the research aims to provide a practical complement to the development of interpretative experiences of this tool in elementary and high school classrooms, mainly in schools that house students from the community in Rocinha, Gávea and São Conrado. This part of the research project, which has only been tested a couple of times so far, aims to work with issues of urban identity and demographic and social challenges based on texts or literary fragments of representations and testimonies of these topics. Read in the classroom, the selected fragments of the books analyzed offer a shared experience of the “place” itself, referenced by topographic and spatial identification. The proposal is to seek the effect of recognition among each of the students that “this is where I live!” and in this way, the combination of the cartography of the textual fragment and the map offers a path for an unprecedented relationship between the student and the issues of his/her experience.

The importance of space

It is appropriate to begin with some precise words by the Bahian geographer Milton Santos in the book *O espaço do cidadão* [*The space of the citizen*] (1987), in which he emphasizes: “It is impossible to imagine a concrete citizenship that does without the territorial component.” (Santos, 1987, p. 80) On the eve of the new constituent assembly, Santos warned of the spatial and territorial challenges for citizenship in Brazil. In his view, the two essential components of the civic model are culture and territory, which he, in a certain way, defines as synonyms. The dimension of space imposes itself on the analysis of citizenship to the extent that the population experiences, through space, the fact of scarcity. “The citizen is the individual in a place. The Republic will only be truly democratic when it considers all citizens as equal, regardless of where they are.” (Santos, 1987, p. 203)

Santos speaks here about access to public goods and services, which is obvious, but he also speaks about “territory” as a transcendent dimension in relation to the material components of space. For Santos, territory is a field of forces that unites the past and the imminent future. Or, put more

directly, territory is the cultural component of space, an identity of resistance and belonging, which often determines the scope of agency. It is in the community place, that is, in the territory, which means, through culture, that the individual becomes a citizen. Therefore, Milton Santos can conclude his book by emphasizing that “The Republic will only be truly democratic when it considers all citizens as equal, regardless of where they are.” (p.203)

Later, Santos returns to the question of the importance of this aspect of geography for an understanding of social issues in Brazilian cities, since “geographicity imposes itself as a historical condition, to the extent that nothing considered essential today is done in the world that is not based on the knowledge of what Territory is. Territory is the place where all actions, all passions, all powers, all strengths, all weaknesses flow, that is, where the history of man is fully realized based on the manifestations of his existence. Geography becomes the discipline most capable of showing the dramas of the world, of the nation, of the place” (Santos, 2002, p. 9).

Based on these initial observation and using the privileged example of Geovani Martins' novel, *Via Ápia* (Martins, 2022), we seek in this essay to describe the cultural construction of freedom in the territorial behaviors of residents, often very young protagonists, whose actions compensate for unequal citizenship in the occupation or, as Santos would say, in the territorial use of space. According to the North American urban planner James Holston (2014), the historical trajectory of Brazilian citizenship has always been divided between formal citizenship, inclusive of the nation-state, and the substantive and often territorial inequality of its distribution. In light of this dual characteristic of Brazilian citizenship, and its deepening alongside the urban growth of the favelas and peripheries of Brazilian cities, we gain a key to understanding the growing exclusion, illegality, and violence, as the reverse of insurgent citizenship, since the democratic process initiated in 1985. The dynamic presence of excluded bodies in the city, the recovery of mobility, and the occupation of public space are expressions of the insurgency of citizenship, often with kids and adolescents as protagonists in their spontaneous but also culturally conscient behavior.

James Holston analyzes the issue of citizenship based on the history of land disputes since the first occupation of the colony. He shows how the legality of popular land occupations has always

been questioned in court and continues to serve as an instrument of exclusion, while in the vast majority of legal cases, the objective of the occupying residents has been to gain recognition of their rights of possession, if not directly of legal ownership acquired by purchasing land from third parties armed with fraudulent documents. Instead of the land issue, in this essay, we seek to understand literary expressions of the daily lives of the residents in the territory, paying attention to mobility and transportation customs, recreational habits, cultural activities such as parties, dances, and spontaneous gatherings, and behaviors that can be understood as a spatial dimension of this civic insurgency.

The role of marginal literature?

But what is the importance of literary and aesthetic expressions and representations of space and territory in deprived urban communities? Initially, it is important to highlight that the geo-critical approach in reading literary production that originates in deprived communities, that is, written by residents or from an insider's perspective, even when attempting to understand the complexity of the community in its broader context from an outsider's point of view, already involves a particular understanding of literature. This particularity became clear in the debates surrounding the so-called "marginal literature" or "peripheral literature" that emerged in the 1990s and that often questioned whether it was appropriate to analyze these narratives with the analytical parameters of literary and aesthetic studies shaped by canonical literature. Or, whether it is necessary to develop other analytical categories in dialogue with different literary experiences of historical testimonies and other traditions of documentary writing. Should "marginal literature" instead be understood as an emerging performative genre in constant transformation in the hybrid field between music, cinema, dance, theater, and writing? Was it questioned whether it was appropriate to interpret and judge marginal literary products while maintaining a presupposition of their aesthetic autonomy? In other examples, the collective and community dimension of marginal writing that in its essence is no longer intended to be the expression of an authorial subjectivity was emphasized.

In Brazil, as in the rest of the world, literature has always been written mostly by middle- or upper-class writers for a literate audience of peers situated in an equivalent social and cultural universe. When the narratives referred to another reality, such as poverty and marginality, it was usually as a phenomenon to be studied from an external, if not exotic, point of view. The exceptions to this rule – from Lima Barreto to Carolina Maria de Jesus – are well known, but in the last decades of the 20th century, more writers from the outskirts and favelas of the country began to appear, with some examples of editorial success, such as the novel *Cidade de Deus* (1997) by Paulo Lins from Rio de Janeiro, which seemed to be the opening act of a certain movement of writers that in 2005 was given the name *Literatura marginal* (*Marginal Literature*) (Ferréz , 2005), a partial title of the collection of “*talents of peripheral writing*” organized by the São Paulo writer Ferréz , author of the also pioneering *Capão Pecado* (2000). The identification of marginality with the geographical and spatial dimension is notable in the novel *City of God*. by Paulo Lins as a history of the neighborhood of the same name and in the case of Ferréz , with a nickname title that characterized the Capão Redondo favela in the south zone of São Paulo. Here the community is part of its creation by the participation of a collective of the author's neighbors of musicians, poets and other artists. In this way, the relationship with the territory and its collective was programmatically emphasized as constitutive of *Marginal Literature* as it was recognized in the historical protagonism of the Canindé favela, São Paulo, in *Quarto de Despejo* (1960) by Carolina de Jesus. In *Becos de Memória* by Conceição de Evaristo, and written in the 1970s and 1980s, the real protagonist was the “morro de Pindura Saia” in Belo Horizonte, but the book was only published twenty years later when the favela had been removed and no longer existed as a real reference.

In the programmatic preface to the anthology *Literatura marginal: talentos da escrita periférica* [*Marginal Literature: Talents of Peripheral Writing*] (2005), Ferréz immediately confirms the relationship between the Marginal and the space of the periphery, the favela, the ghetto, and the streets, articulating his advocacy in favor of spontaneous literary expressions of this reality. The preface was titled “Manifesto Literary Terrorism,” and a single quote is enough to introduce the theme of marginalized urban space from the perspective of the organizer and author:

We are on the streets, we are in the favelas, in the countryside, in bars, on overpasses, and we are marginalized, but first and foremost we are literature, and you can deny this, you can close your eyes, turn your backs, but, as I said, we will continue here, just like the invisible social wall that divides this country. Playing against the massification that dominates and increasingly alienates those they call “socially excluded” and to make sure that the people of the outskirts/favelas/ghettos have their place in history, and that they do not spend another five hundred years thrown into the cultural limbo of a country that is disgusted by its own culture, marginalized literature is present to represent the culture of a people, composed of minorities, but overall a majority.

But we are in the area, and there are already several of us. We are fighting for space so that in the future, the authors of the ghetto are also remembered and immortalized. We show the various faces of the pen that are present in the favela, and to represent the cry of the true Brazilian people, nothing more than the authentic ones. (Ferreira, 2005, p.10)

The manifesto points to a writing that rebels against its own exclusion due to the social, educational, and cultural conditions that accompany the spatial and geographic marginalization of significant parts of large Brazilian cities. The marginality of this literature expresses the stigma that accompanies those who occupy this territory in the favela or on the outskirts, but in some cases, it is described and represented with a certain pride and claiming community qualities unknown to those who do not live there. In other words, it is a writing that is characterized by a certain ambivalence in relation to the spatial identity represented with strong markers of both rejection and affection. Even though it is a writing with strong critical content that exposes the conditions of precariousness, it is a fictional creation that expresses elements of identity, memory, and belonging to the community that is simultaneously imaginary and real, strongly linked to the territory and signaled by proper names.

With this approach, we abandon a traditional hermeneutic reading, since the main objective is to understand the role of the texts in expressing and symbolically constituting the urban space itself. We also avoid questioning how these texts are received by the community by recognizing that their individually solitary and contemplative reading is not the focus of our approach. We intend to develop the work with the texts in a practical, interactive, and educational dimension in which reading becomes collective and dialogical. We want to understand how “place” gains meaning in the interaction of a body moving through a geographic and urban landscape. Literary representations can become direct or indirect expressions of the production of meanings, of the

understanding of historical recognition, and of the stability of the lived space. They can speak of belonging, territorial identification, movement, freedom, and bodily expansion, but also of violence and restricted mobility, all notions that gain a political dimension when focused on the context of urban marginality.

By mapping the places in the literary production about Rocinha, we focused on the symbolic construction of the territory. Placing the place at the center of the research means valuing a transversal dimension in the diversity of works that, in one way or another, contribute to the reality of the territory. The books analyzed were of different genres, mainly fiction, memoirs, documentaries, biographies, and even journalistic works. All of them interact in a particular way with representations that affect the perception and experience of the place. The question of their literary or aesthetic quality is only the backdrop, which allowed us to work with spatial issues that can be explored later in direct teaching situations or educational dialogue.

In this context, the textual fragments of spatial images gain new meaning in relation to the symbolic investments made by the students themselves in the names of the places connects to their real-life experience in this geography. We consider this analysis a peculiar part of what has been called a geocritical (Westphal, 2007) approach that combines the topographic and philosophical coordinates of life in a space-time scheme to better understand the confluence of spatiality in the comprehension of the social and cultural reality of its inhabitants. Geocritical analysis situates places in their temporal depth to discover or reveal multifaceted identities and the temporal variability of heterogeneous spaces.

In the books mapped, the historical dimension of Rocinha is clear, in *Uma Esperança* (1986) by Francisca de Oliveira, which was written in the early 1980s, but which speaks more about the arrival in the favela in the 60s, we only find the mention of two central streets, “Rua 2” and “Rua 4”, among the total of twenty places mentioned. In *Um Bandido e outras histórias da Rocinha* (Alves, 1997) the short-stories speak of the 1970s, and we find 10 names of places specific to the community, such as Valão, Dioneia, Roupa Suja, and Cachopa, and some streets among a total of 27 names specific to the city of Rio de Janeiro, most of them from adjacent neighborhoods and transport routes that connect the favela to the city. In the novel *Via Ápia* (Martins, 2022), this

number increases to 84 places and 38 within Rocinha, some with a high frequency of mention (Valão, Larginho, Vila Verde, Via Ápia, and Cachopa) and many references to the roads that connect Rocinha to the city and the country and to the means of transport that make this connectivity possible, such as bus and motorcycle taxi lines. And, finally, not to forget the living presence of a network of favelas in which the protagonists move with greater freedom, although with some dangers in territories under the control of competing drug trafficking factions (Vidigal, Cruzada, Mangueira, Jacarezinha, Alemão, among others).

Understanding the territory

Our understanding of cultural space is due to the importance of the classic study *La production de l'espace* (1974), by the french philosopher Henri Lefebvre, which moved away from a dual understanding of the relationship between "space" and "place" in which, according to Heidegger's hermeneutics, space was merely the empty container of the temporal flow and place an ontologically given occurrence of positive qualities specific to the human sense of space. Lefebvre's analysis historicized the concept of "place" from the triangulation between "la pratique spatiale" (spatial practice), "les représentations de l'espace" (representations of space) and "l'espace de représentation" (representational space or space of representation). In the urban context, "spatial practices" reflected, according to Lefebvre, the spaces of everyday life in routines, perceptions and actions; "representations of space" referred to the space of knowledge, expressed by language and the framework of ideology; and "representational space" or "space of representation", the true innovation of the philosopher, indicated the space already formed or projected by cultural representations and images and expressed their historical interactions. In short, "spatial practices" are the spaces of everyday life, of routines, perceptions and actions, called by Lefebvre the "perceived" space; "representations of space" refer to the space of knowledge, that is, maps, cartographies and various descriptions of space or "conceived" space; and "representational space" is the space that is formed by cultural and historical representations and images, including imaginary and fictional interaction, and which Lefebvre calls "lived space". With the concept "lived space", Lefebvre qualifies the discussion of "place" in a way that

seeks to move away from a narrow dialectic between space and place, in which abstract space gains its meaning as a place through human habitation. With the central insertion of “representational space”, Lefebvre opens a questioning of the understanding of meaning in relation to the sign dimension and the representational power of the spatial dimension as formative of the living and dynamic meaning. It is from this perspective that one can analyze and understand how agrarian or urban space is configured and gains meaning through visual images, representations in all their modalities, and social, cultural, and affective investments. Decades later, geographer Edward W. Soja (1996) launched his interpretation of this third dimension, which he would call “Thirdspace”, a space considered neither real nor imaginary, but rather a social space, at the same time real and imaginary, composed simultaneously of physical elements, images, and representations.

From the point of view of Lefebvre's analysis, lived space is not a separate space; what it indicates is a path to better understand the role of representations in their interaction with perceived and conceived space. Frederic Jameson (1984) argued in the seminal essay that architecture and urbanism were the most direct expressions of post-war corporate capitalism. Without going into the centrality of this argument for his analysis of the postmodern, which he described as “this peculiar ‘great transformation’ – the displacement of time, the spatialization of the temporal” (Jameson, 1984, p. 186), we must remember that this is not only evident in the mirrored facades of skyscraper towers, but even more evident in the epidermal and global proliferation of peripheries and slums in large cities lacking basic urban services.

From our current perspective, it is important to keep real, imaginary, and “real-imaginary” spaces together in the same procedure, because we work with literary texts in which recognizable geographic references and projections of spaces created by fiction force us to work on this same relationship dynamically. The perceived space is reflected in practice and concrete mobility in urban space, in the path of coming and going from home on the routes to the destinations in the city that are routinely dominated. The conceived space is, itself, a representation of space: it corresponds to the space of urban planners, cartographers, and others whose guidance the resident has at hand, if needed, in a simple consultation on Google Maps. When we speak of lived

space, we refer to all this enveloped by spaces of representation. In other words, lived spaces are traversed, interacted with, and experienced through images, signs, and singular projections of those who position themselves and choose their individual itinerary among all the infinite options without necessarily following the map. In the lived space, we find the complex intertwining that, for Soja, identified Thirdspace:

Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and the never-ending story. (Soja, 1996, p.56-57)

Consequently, it is a lived space that captures analytical attention when we attempt to discuss the constitution of “place” as the significant dimension of spatial complexity. It is in the analysis of lived space that we attempt to understand the identification that is established between the occupants, inhabitants, and users of social space, even when it is in deficient conditions from the point of view of the needs of urban planning, architectural design, and social, educational, and cultural services and apparatus. The space of representation can encompass the other two spatial concepts, “perceived space” and “conceived space”, although it does not always do so, and Lefebvre emphasizes that this “lived space” is permeated by what he considers to be the clandestine or subterranean side of social life. When it comes to literary or artistic expressions and representations, the philosopher understands them as specifically linked to spaces of representation and not necessarily to the codification of space in general. In this way, he emphasizes the production of contradictory meanings in the space of representation and suggests understanding this type of ambiguity in relation to partial unknowability, mystery and secrecy, and the nonverbal subliminality of resistance. It is in the space of representation that the potential insights of literature and the arts lie to the detriment of the sciences. This is the space of “inhabitants” and “users,” a space lived directly with all its intractability intact, a space that extends through the images and symbols that accompany it. It is space as a used space that the imagination (verbal, but mainly nonverbal) seeks to change and appropriate. The space of

representation overlaps the physical space, making symbolic use of its objects and establishing more or less coherent systems of symbols and nonverbal signs.

Milton Santos defines territory as “used space” (Santos, 1999, p.7), and when we work with urban territories, this occupation happens by the “event of solidarity” and is expressed in spatial representations of power, and in the imposing power of more or less operational representations. The lived spaces of representation are, therefore, the terrain for the generation of “counterspaces”, spaces of resistance to the dominant order that arise precisely from their subordinate, peripheral, or marginalized positioning. These spaces are also vitally filled with politics and ideology, with the real and the imaginary intertwined, and opposing the material spatial practices (capitalism, racism, patriarchy, etc.) that concretize the social relations of production, reproduction, exploitation, domination, and subjection. The spaces of representation of territories become the “used spaces”, the spaces of the peripheries, of the margins and of the marginalized that can be found at all scales, in the corporeal reality of the body and mind, in sexuality and subjectivity, in individual and collective identities, from the most local to the most global. These are living spaces destined for resistance and emancipatory practices, but always around a vital and affective core that combines places of action and passion. For Milton Santos, we have evolved from the Territorial State to the notion of the transnationalization of territory, but in the face of the transnationalization trend, the “inhabited territory creates new synergies and ends up imposing revenge on the world” (p.15). It is the use of territory through objects and actions that constitutes human space or inhabited space and that allows Santos to introduce another distinction between a territory formed by horizontally contiguous places and another vertically by places in a network that, thanks to science, creates “new solidarities: the possibility of a solidary event, despite all forms of difference, between people and places.” (p.16) In this way, we can understand how the territory, on the one hand, is constituted by the places of the contiguous space, for example, the neighborhood, and on the other by places of the network that define the community, and simultaneously in the solidarity gesture of identification of several neighborhoods, favelas, or specific territories with the territory as a vertical solidarity identification.

In his phenomenological discussion of Heidegger, Yi -Fu Tuan (2015) sees “place” as emerging from the almost incipient and chaotic proliferation of human relations associated with space. Place identifies a powerful spatiotemporal dynamic through which it becomes distinct and therefore knowable, and it is this dynamic that creates meaning and shapes the entire human experience of the world. A place should thus be understood as the result of a surprisingly dense set of crystallized social relations. These relations may be revealed in the everyday experiences, attitudes, or memories of the individuals or groups who inhabit, visit, or simply know these places, which in turn may represent a complicated web of historical events, narratives, traumas, and so on. Place identifies a certain sense of localities in space defined by their uses—work, encounter, rest, gathering, confinement, etc.—but from a phenomenological and existential point of view, place qualifies the subjective relation constructed in space by an affective geography or topography. For Heidegger, the human being depends on the way he inhabits and works space, an activity that qualifies man existentially, and space thus gains its meaning as a place through habitation. This understanding is based on a phenomenological and ego-centric perspective and is behind Tuan's concept of “topophilia”, an aesthetic, affective, and existential affinity of the subject with certain places in which the individual finds rest and belonging. Tuan identifies a powerful spatio-temporal dynamic in which a place becomes distinct and, therefore, knowable, and this dynamic creates meaning and gives shape to the entire human experience of the world. We agree with the reservations formulated by Robert T. Tally (2019) when he observes that the affective encounter is not necessarily one of landing and adaptation, but must observe the same duplicity analyzed by Sigmund Freud in the essay on “Das Unheimliche ” (Freud, 1919) in which the subjective adaptation and identification with home (Heimlich) can be accompanied by a hidden estrangement about to be revealed in what for Heidegger was observed as anguish (Angst) and for Freud himself as the malaise (Unbehagen) linked to the conflict between individual drives and the societal and civilizing aspect of modern culture. In Robert Tally's critique of Tuan, “topophilia” becomes “topophrenia” when emphasizing the double aspect of the affective and emotional relationship with the place, at the same time that Tally recognizes the other fold between individual and society at the heart of geocriticism itself. The approach to the analysis of the spatial dimension in literature has focused attention on the narrative as a kind of

cognitive mapping and almost always privileges the subject (author, narrator, character) in his/her ego-centric relationship with the spatial dimension. In Bertrand Westphal's proposal (2007), geocritical analysis is carried out through multi-focalization and multi-sensory records in the search for the production of collective meanings linked to space as a place, landscape, community, and geography. Geocriticism, according to Westphal, privileges the perspective of the symbolic construction of space and its multiple public and private meanings.

A favela or a peripheral community may offer precarious housing conditions and housing without resources and services. sufficient and at the same time establish strong bonds of identification and belonging. The analysis of the lived space encompasses this contradiction, which in turn paves the way for identifying its potential for resistance and transformation in the face of the challenges posed by deficiencies and marginalization. In descriptive terminology, the use of terms such as "territory", "favela", and "community" includes this contradiction with connotations that sometimes express marginalization and sometimes belonging and identification. As expected, such ambiguity is reproduced in the play of representations and expressions typical of residents of these socially challenged housing conglomerates in large cities.

The example of the novel *Via Ápia* by Geovani Martins

The example we will discuss below is the novel *Via Ápia* (2022) by Geovani Martins, which constructs a narrative involving a group of young people, most of whom live in Rocinha, a well-known neighborhood in the south zone of Rio de Janeiro. In this novel, the name *Via Ápia* is also a place, the nickname of a street that runs through the central part of Rocinha. It is a synecdoche of the community and a direct indicator of the centrality of place in the story, which in this novel is much more than the backdrop for the events narrated and will be understood here in its leading role in the lives of the characters. The name of the novel is the namesake of the most famous street that gives access to Rocinha for those who go up from the Lagoa-Barra road and pass through the most intense urban center of the neighborhood. Thus, Geovani Martins' narrative unfolds tied to the geographic and urban dimension of the neighborhood, always inserted in the larger space of

the city and the country, and at the same time with temporal and historical references that are easily recognized by those who live in Rio de Janeiro and the country, as they are landmarks in the political history of the first decades of the 21st century. The temporal landmarks are set by the occupation of Rocinha, part of a state pacification plan that began in Rocinha on the night of November 13, 2011, by the Riot Squad and the Special Operations Battalion of the Military Police (BOPE) and involved the favelas of Vidigal and Chácara do Céu. The story of Washington and his friends begins before this date and ends after the disappearance and death of the bricklayer's assistant Amarildo de Souza, on July 14, 2013, which shook public confidence in the pacification project and began its subsequent closure. This historical context is important to the young protagonists, although it is rarely the direct subject of their conversations and reflections, except for the most tangible consequences, that is, the changes produced in their mobility and circulation in and out of Rocinha, their coming and going always under the influence of the controls of the army troops when entering and leaving the neighborhood and caused by the impact of the new presence of the UPP police. For the young people, the most worrying consequence of the occupation is the difficulty of maintaining the habit of smoking marijuana, since the main target of the community's operation is the drug trafficking controlled by organized crime and its maintenance of the places of sale, "as bocas de fumo", which all the characters frequent in some way and to some extent. At the same time, the brothers Washington and Wesley, who live with their friend Biel on Travessa Kátia, need to find and rent a new house due to conflicts with the owner, and this challenge provokes a series of other considerations about the issues of the territory that permeate the search options. Douglas is their friend and is trying to learn the trade of a tattoo artist. Gleyce Kelly is the female protagonist and the only one who studies and wants to continue studying journalism at college. She moves freely in the neighboring neighborhoods and, even though she feels at home in Rocinha, she seeks ways to guarantee this freedom of movement. Another character is Murilo, a childhood friend of the two brothers who is doing military service in the São Cristovam barracks and feels the conflict of entering other communities in the city as an armed soldier, even though he lives in Rocinha. Biel was born in the Cruzada São Sebastião housing complex between Leblon and Ipanema and only arrived in Rocinha when grown up. He has whiter skin, which is why he can make friends with the upper-middle-class

boys from the beaches in the south zone, with whom he earns money by selling drugs. Among the characters, he is the one who has the most ambiguous relationship with his own social situation and invests, even through illegality, in social advancement and leaving the favela. For everyone, the main issue of urban space that affects their lives is undoubtedly the relationship between the “asphalt” – the well-known city of the neighborhoods in the South Zone, where almost everyone works – and the “morro”, the favela or community on the hill, where they live. Commuting between home and work is an unpredictable, slow, and bumpy journey that shapes and delimits citizenship to the extent that it steals time from everyday life and restricts free mobility. Young people from the favela do not travel freely on public transportation, as they are targeted by the police, but also by organized crime that does not allow young people from other areas to enter. On the other hand, they find work as drugstore and pizza delivery men, motorcycle taxi drivers, and eventually “aviões” – small scale drug traffickers bringing back the cheapest marijuana from the suburban neighborhoods of the North Zone.

Internally, in Rocinha, there are other tensions between sub-neighborhoods that are well-known and where people feel like they are “grown-ups” of the place, and other regions dominated by the militia (milícia), for example, or simply further away from the places they frequent daily, and where they feel more insecure and even threatened. The immediate effect of the occupation was the military siege that controlled all entrances and exits to the community, and with the installation of the UPPs, even within the siege, a police presence control emerged that hindered the fixed drug sales points, making it difficult to access marijuana, which is the most widely used recreational drug for young people. For Washington, the central character who begins and ends the story, the path between work on the asphalt and home on the hill is, in a way, the spatial path that tragically determines his life.

Another effect of the occupation was the tendency to facilitate the acquisition of cocaine, pushing many young people to use this drug, which is easier for drug dealers to carry and sell, and more dangerous to use from both a health and physical safety point of view. One of the narrative threads is precisely this problem for Wesley, which creates a dependence on cocaine and ultimately forces the young man to leave his home and the city.

The novel's characteristic feature is that it is constructed on two parallel levels, where a historical and documentary foundational level embraces the specific period of the Rocinha community as a kind of diary of the daily lives of the group of protagonists, from July 27, 2011 to October 26, 2013, marked by a public security operation in Rio de Janeiro, coinciding with a period of formation of these young people. The overlapping level is woven by the parallel narratives of the protagonists' adventures, intertwining fictional events that probably dialogue with the experiences of the author, who wrote the novel based on a period in which he lived in the community. Even so, the auto-fictional aspect is not significant, since the narrative web as a whole does not adhere to the particular biography of someone who left the community to pursue a career as a writer, but rather brings together elements that are representative of the stories of many young people who experience the ambiguity of the divided city and, above all, their identification with the community and the struggle for better options for growth and individual life. Thus, the novel identifies a particular realistic commitment that, on the one hand, reproduces a significant historical moment for Brazilian society, especially for public safety in Rio de Janeiro, and, on the other hand, sensitively portrays the daily lives of young people from peripheral communities whose lives are intertwined with urban conditions. All the narratives are prominent insofar as they portray conflicting conditions of insertion into society, determined largely by topographical conditions.

The community itself is the main “character” and, in this sense, invites a geocritical analysis that can enrich our understanding of this particular heterotopia formed by the favela. Between the two levels of fictional realism, the documentary level that provides a historically accurate backdrop and offers the reader a clear reference to the many events that occurred in the dramatic months portrayed will never be developed except indirectly. An example appears in the comments to the character of the “master” who the reader from Rio will easily identify as the drug dealer “Nem da Rocinha”, or Antônio Francisco Bonfim Lopes, the most wanted criminal of the time, and who was arrested on November 9, 2011, as a result of a spectacular manhunt by the Civil Police and the BOPE. However, these picturesque facts are not mentioned in the novel, just as the reality of organized crime in the sale of drugs is never described except in the brief moments when the characters go to the points of sale, the “bocas”, and the quick contact to make

the purchase with other young people, known or unknown to the protagonists. At the narrative level, the documentary facts are indirectly behind and inscribe the fiction in the chronicle of the community and the city of Rio de Janeiro. We can observe this overlapping of the narrative with the documentary anchored in the geography of the community, which, as previously observed, offers a cognitive cartography for the events of the narratives, always situated on the map of the community by proper names, which are all referential. The actions of the characters develop in dialogue with the description of the places that are anchored by proper names such as *Via Ápia*, *Travessa Kátia*, *Cachopa*, *Dioneia*, *Rua 2*, *Curva do S*, *Travessa Roma*, *Valão*, and so on. In the novel, we find 89 proper names of places that involve a few geographic locations in the country and several in the city and its outskirts, but most of all points to community locations, whether recognized or not. In this way, it is possible to construct a referential map from which the narrative actions draw a complex cartography of movements without giving the plot a single route from beginning to end. According to the definition of analytical philosopher Saul Kripke (1980), proper names are "rigid designators", that is, once the name is given, it is the name of the same individual or place in all "possible worlds" in which this individual (place) participates. In this way, the name becomes a strong reference that can be used in various descriptions with fictional variability from the point of view of those who experience the situation of the place, even so the proper name does not stop designating the same location. Thus, we perceive that urban proper names are real both as references of knowledge for urban planners and cartographers and at the same time constitute an extra-linguistic spatial deixis that ties fiction to the referential map of the city and ensures that the documentary and narrative levels are tied together by the indexical reference (semiosis) that not only attributes historical veracity to narrative fiction, but also functions performatively in the sign construction of the perceptive, cognitive and affective senses of the community space.

Returning to Edward Soja's concept, it is possible to argue that this novel's narrative takes place in the "thirdspace", at the same time real and imaginary, "real-imaginary", or with Henri Lefebvre's concepts, that the story unfolds in the "lived space" in which the harsh physical reality of perception (the "perceived space") and the representations of knowledge (the "recognized space") are hybridly mixed in the representational space in which elements of perception, knowledge

and imagination gain symbolic reality in the "experience". In this sense, it is a sort of realism different from the positivist ideology of transparent and neutral representation, a realism that proposes to articulate the lifeworld (Lebenswelt) of the protagonists in an exemplary and representative way to other young residents of the community interacting at the same time with the real space-time.

The most important thing in this observation is to emphasize the active role that the author's own writing, his own literary project, plays in the construction of reality, in its broadest sense, of the place called Rocinha and its living geography and identity in the imagination of its residents, not only those who have the opportunity to read the novel, but all those for whom this small aesthetic and literary contribution becomes yet another piece of a complex and dynamic mosaic. Lefebvre's triad emphasizes the importance of the "representational space," which in his exposition is the "lived" space, insofar as the subject's interaction with space does not only occur by following the perception of its hard materiality of walls, corners, squares, and streets, nor even by the practical knowledge of following the map and choosing the right bus line to get to the destination, but is constructed in the real and imaginary experience in which its interpretation, memory, symbolization, and representation interact in the conception of place. It describes what culture actually does in the constitution of place, pointing to an understanding of how literature and other artistic and cultural products can function in relation to the implicit cartography of their realization. Commentators such as Soja understand Lefebvre's contribution as a spatialization of Marxist dialectics, broadening the vision to what the French philosopher himself called a "trialectic" analysis composed by "perceived, known, and lived" spaces that expand into the relationship of spatiality, sociability, and historicity. The importance of this contribution by Lefebvre is not only to overcome the duality in the relationship between space and place, but mainly to open a field of research into the contribution made by spatial representations and expressions in the interdisciplinary perspective that involves geography, urbanism, and cultural studies, among others.

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