

Robert E. DiAntonio

*BRAZILIAN FICTION: ASPECTS AND EVOLUTION OF THE
CONTEMPORARY NARRATIVE*

Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1989

Reviewed by Lucia Helena

Reflecting upon the transition from the "poetic of myth" to the present-day "poetic of antimyth," DiAntonio begins with an introductory chapter on Brazil, then with each of the following chapters concentrates on diverging theoretical approaches to analyzing different authors' works. The first chapter underscores the fact that many of the real-life figures and events that dominated Brazilian politics during the military takeover have been represented in literature by a new generation of authors. Commenting on the way this new generation confronts and deals with the myth of "the country of the future," the author also briefly mentions a new generation of women writers who explore existential questions within the framework of everyday experience. The second chapter considers Clarice Lispector's role as a modern-day mythmaker, and João Ubaldo Ribeiro's dramatization of the conflict between civilization and the last stages of Brazilian barbarism. The third chapter displays the antimythic perspective of Darcy Ribeiro's novel *Maira*, analyzed as an indication of the desire to restructure Brazilian past truths, and a way of defying a sociopolitical present. The fourth chapter analyzes Márcio de Souza's novels *Mad Maria* and *Galvez: Imperador do Acre* as allegories of the attempt to comprehend ontological truths, and national values. Addressing the integration of the Jewish experience into Brazilian culture and fiction, the fifth chapter examines Moacyr Scliar's *O Centauro no Jardim*. The sixth chapter considers Ignácio de Loyola's novel *Zero*, a futuristic vision of São Paulo that is firmly rooted in the political, social, and environmental failings of the present. The seventh chapter discusses Lispector's *A Hora da Estrela*, and the eighth, and final chapter presents an overview of other writers of the time.

Like most overviews of Brazilian literature, the volume is "purposefully structured to allow the chapters to exist as separate entities with the specific studies in each chapter also existing independently" (xi). This is exactly how the book is structured. Each chapter is completely independent, without a binding central theme or theory. Most reviews of Brazilian literature tend to be similarly random, but DiAntonio has in his favor the striking ability and sense to choose the best examples of fiction. On the one hand, both the independence of the chapters and the variety of theoretical perspectives enable the author to focus upon the uniqueness of the different narratives; on the other hand, it creates a problem in the understanding of the overview and how it links the different authors and their relationships in Brazilian contemporary prose fiction. DiAntonio mixes methodological tools, blurring the distinction between the different theoretical fields, thus ignoring significant interdisciplinary boundaries. From the first chapter, where he refers to a sharp distinction between the writings and intentions of established authors and the present generation of writers, DiAntonio should have also explored more deeply the theoretical

foundations of his arguments. In the author's attempt to cover so many novels and literary theories, he presents enough material to develop another book. Whereas DiAntonio succeeds in giving an interesting and good overview of modern Brazilian fiction, he fails to develop some of the questions which he himself raises. Nonetheless, DiAntonio's work has, among other qualities, the merit of calling the American reader's attention to an unfamiliar national literature.

Saad Elkhadem

CANADIAN ADVENTURES OF THE FLYING EGYPTIAN

Translated with a critical introduction by Saad El-Gabalawy

Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1990. \$6.95

Reviewed by A.F. Cassis

This is a cleverly conceived and carefully executed novella that is at once intriguing, revealing, delightful, and innovative. It is a demanding novella that taxes the reader's imagination and calls for undivided attention and close reading.

The novella is essentially the story of the protagonist, Hasan Gum'a Rajab, as he emigrates from Egypt following the Six Day War, or, as the fictional novelist calls it, the "six hour war." The story narrated by the fictional novelist is presently being published posthumously by King's Press, Cairo, with the Editor's comments clearly identified by square brackets. What is not so clear at first, however, is the distinction between the fictional novelist and his protagonist, for both their streams of consciousness are revealed by the literary convention of the interior monologue. It soon becomes apparent that the stream of consciousness of the fictional novelist is signaled by the use of the interior monologue in the form of address: "You must finish it somehow," as the opening sentence suggests, or by the first-person plural: "We must decide." The subconscious free movement of thought and emotion of the protagonist Hasan Gum'a is generally brought out by the indirect interior monologue: i.e., by using the third-person past tense to report his experiences in Egypt prior to his departure and upon his arrival in Canada. There are moments, as in the Café at the end of Jacques Cartier Bridge, when the protagonist narrates his experience directly using the first-person singular.

The experience rendered throughout the novella is a tribute to Elkhadem's total awareness and understanding of the social, economic, and cultural realities in both Egypt and Canada. Whether it is the fictional novelist attempting to create fictional situations or "complications" to further the development of the protagonist's story and justify his emigration, or whether it is Hasan Gum'a Rajab's own brush with the authorities in Cairo in the late sixties, his revulsion at the prevalent corruption, his frustration and predicament when he lands in Canada, his marginal life in the "potato island" and bewilderment at the FLQ crisis, these experiences are sensitively and perceptively realized with great economy and compression. The fictional novelist's monologue is fascinating, to