

**THE DARK SIDE OF THE PROCLAMATION OF THE BRAZILIAN  
REPUBLIC: AN ACCOUNT OF HOW SHERLOCK HOLMES ADDRESSED A  
CASE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION OF THE PAST IN  
RAIMUNDO C. CARUSO'S *NOTURNO***

**O LADO OBSCURO DA PROCLAMAÇÃO DA REPÚBLICA DO BRASIL: O  
RELATO DE COMO SHERLOCK HOLMES TRATOU DE UM CASO DE  
IDENTIDADE NACIONAL E REPRESENTAÇÃO DO PASSADO EM  
*NOTURNO*, DE RAIMUNDO C. CARUSO**

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**ABSTRACT:** This study is a close analysis of the novel *Noturno*, a parody of Sherlock Holmes and an account of a historical crisis triggered by the Proclamation of the Brazilian Republic. The characterization of Holmes and Colonel Moreira César is intimately related to national identity and historical elements. The parodic portrayal of the English detective foregrounds conflicts related to the complex of inferiority of Brazilians in relation to more developed nations and play with the notion of Brazil as a sexual paradise. The characterization of both the detective and the colonel is associated with a representation of history as an inevitably subjective interpretation of past events from textual traces.

**KEYWORDS:** Sherlock Holmes; Parody; National Identity; Historical Novel.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo é uma análise do romance *Noturno*, uma paródia de Sherlock Holmes e um relato da crise histórica motivada pela Proclamação da República. A caracterização de Holmes e do Coronel M. César está relacionada com aspectos de identidade nacional e representação da história. O retrato paródico do detetive traz à tona conflitos relacionados ao complexo de inferioridade dos brasileiros em relação a países desenvolvidos, além de jogar com a noção de um Brasil como paraíso sexual. As caracterizações de Holmes e M. César estão ligadas à representação da história como a interpretação subjetiva de acontecimentos passados com base em vestígios textuais.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Sherlock Holmes; Paródia; Identidade nacional; Romance histórico.

The first time Sherlock Holmes appeared in the English literature was in 1887, in a novel called *A Study in Scarlet*, published in *The Strand* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Between then and 1927, Doyle wrote three other novels and five volumes of short stories about Sherlock Holmes. Influenced by Edgar Allan Poe, the father of modern police detective fiction, as inaugurated in the short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), Doyle created the first scientific detective (Góes 2005: 34). Holmes' deductive method involved observation, formulation of a hypothesis, and its subsequent application. In 1893, Doyle decided to have Sherlock Holmes dead together with his archenemy, professor Moriarty, in the story "The Final Problem", in order to

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dedicate his time to what Doyle considered more important works – namely, the historical novels. However, led by public outcry, Doyle brought Holmes back to life in the story “The Adventure of the Empty House”, published in 1903.

Ever since the 1880's, Sherlock Holmes has become synonymous with the detective persona and an icon of the English culture, as there have been about 300 recreations of the Sherlock Holmes stories, among which more than 150 are filmic adaptations (Ferraz 1998: 13). If we look carefully, we will find something of Holmes in all detectives that came after him, even in part of the modern American detective fiction with its ferocious and ultra-womanizer detectives (Albuquerque 1979: 45).

In Brazil, the first detective narrative was *Mystério*, serialized in the newspaper *A Folha*, in Rio de Janeiro in the 1920's, written collectively by Coelho Neto, Afrânio Peixoto, Viriato Correia, and Medeiros e Albuquerque (Góes 2005: 31). Nowadays, the detective fiction is a growing genre in Brazil, as most publishers keep detective series or collections in their catalogs, partly because detective fiction readers are loyal consumers (Góes 2005: 31). All of Sherlock Holmes stories can be found in Portuguese from several Brazilian publishers, such as Ediouro, Melhoramentos and L&PM.

An important historical development in the detective genre was its marriage to American *film noir* in the 1940's and 1950's. The films from this period were marked by depression, disappointment and pessimism, as evinced in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), considered the first hardboiled detective film (Schatz 1981: 125). Nowadays, American *film noir* continues to influence American cinema, as recent productions illustrate: Curtis Hanson's *L. A. Confidential* (1997), Phillip Noyce's *The Bone Collector* (1999), and Clint Eastwood's *Mystic River* (2003).

Even though Brazilian cinema has not counted on a tradition of detective film as prolific as the American, the way has been opened by recent adaptations of Brazilian detective novels. Alain Fresnot directed *Ed Mort* (1997), adapted from the homonymous novel by Luis Fernando Verissimo, Roberto Santucci Filho directed *Bellini e a esfinge* (2001), from a novel by Tony Belloto, and Miguel Faria directed *O Xangô de Baker Street* (2001), from Jô Soares' novel. Of these three Brazilian films, two – *Ed Mort* and *O Xangô de Baker Street* – tropicalize their detectives into a parodic portrayal, mixing humor and genre subversion. While these Brazilian detective stories display great knowledge of the detective genre – from literature and film –, they play with notions of English or American culture that lie behind traditionally defining detectives such as Sam Spade (from *The Maltese Falcon*) or Sherlock Holmes.

Within this context, this essay focuses on how the images of the fictional character Sherlock Holmes, parodied in Raimundo C. Caruso's “*Noturno, 1894*” ou *paixões e guerra em Desterro, e a primeira aventura de Sherlock Holmes no Brasil* (simply called *Noturno* hereinafter), foreground and problematize notions of national identity and history. This novel draws on the well-known character of Sherlock Holmes in order to, at the same time, *underline* and *undermine* detective genre conventions. In this intertextual play, it challenges the plea for science that characterized the original stories of Sherlock Holmes, written during the heyday of positivist science in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This feature in the novel can be associated with what Linda Hutcheon calls postmodernism's “double process of installing and ironizing,” as its self-reflexivity and parody problematize official history and detective genre conventions (Hutcheon 1989: 93). On the one hand, factual Brazilian characters such as poet Cruz e Sousa, painter Victor Meirelles and Colonel Moreira César spring from history textbooks and become their own caricatures, weaving characterizations which are at the same time

comic and critical of their intertexts. On the other hand, the images of Sherlock Holmes deliberately destabilize our assumptions about the detective persona and his role in society. Moreover, in this novel, the dividing line between *real* and *reel* life is blurred so as to problematize notions of a transparent, true access to the past, and to raise the point that the past can only be accessed through its textual traces.

*Noturno* won, in 1989, the *Belo Horizonte City National Literary Award*, and was first published in 1993 by Minas Gerais Federal University Publishing House. As the title suggests, the novel features Sherlock Holmes in Brazilian lands for the first time in a Brazilian novel. Holmes and Doctor Watson arrive in Desterro, now Florianópolis, capital of the State of Santa Catarina, in the midst of a complete political turmoil that followed the Proclamation of the Brazilian Republic on November 15<sup>th</sup> 1889.

According to Salma Ferraz, some of the key points in the composition of *Noturno* are the psychological profile of Moreira César, the carnivalized recreation of Sherlock Holmes, humor, the intertext with the biography of poet Cruz e Sousa, political repression, a critique of the Brazilian's tendency to imitate the French, and most of all the *aleph* representation of history. The *aleph* representation of history in *Noturno* refers to a time and space in which many historical events from different periods meet. The term *aleph* is an allusion to the short story "The Aleph" by Jorge Luis Borges. According to Borges, the *aleph* is a virtual space where all the places in the world would appear together without causing confusion (Ferraz 1998: 30; 169).

*Noturno* focuses on the historical crisis that was motivated by the events that happened on and following October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1893, when rebellious groups fought against Floriano Peixoto, president of the Republic of Brazil, and declared Desterro, instead of Rio de Janeiro, the Temporary Capital of Brazil, under the rule of Frederico Lorena. Lorena was supported by Gumercindo Saraiva, one of the leaders of the Federalist Revolution in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, and Custódio de Melo, leader of the *Revolta da Armada* that questioned the legality of Floriano's administration and his oppressive authoritative government. Then, in April 1894, Floriano Peixoto sent Colonel Moreira César and 500 soldiers to suppress the rebels and to reestablish order in Desterro. When Moreira César arrived, however, there was no battle, and his task was to punish the rebels that remained on the island and anyone else who supported either the old monarchic regime or the rebels. During the months that Moreira César ruled Desterro, several people – intellectuals, artists, rebels and anyone who was suspicious of being involved with the rebels – were hanged at Anhatomirim, a small island close to Desterro.

Among the intertexts of *Noturno* are Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, as the subplot that involves Holmes constitutes a parody of Conan Doyle's stories. In *Noturno*, Holmes appears as Doyle, contributing to the confusion between reality and fiction that the English detective inspires. According to the Brazilian parody, unlike the man whose ultimate interest is found in complicated mystery puzzles, *Noturno*'s Holmes is concerned mostly with the solution to his own personal problem. Like all men in Desterro, he falls in love with Mona Lisa, to Watson's surprise:

Watson apanha de volta o canivete e espia com espanto o aspecto sonhador do companheiro:

– Mas é incrível, Doyle, foi realmente necessário viver todos esses anos e atravessar o Atlântico para poder vê-lo como o encontro agora (Caruso 1997: 83).

Winning Mona Lisa's heart and gaining access to her house – under government surveillance – becomes the problem that Holmes decides to solve. In order to see Mona Lisa, Holmes uses his ability to disguise. In his first encounter with Mona Lisa, Holmes disguises as a traveler who carries apples on a cart pulled by mules. On the day following his visit to Mona Lisa, Doyle tells Watson all the details of his sexual encounter, especially his great surprise to find out that behind the window where Mona Lisa spends her day, showing an enigmatic smile, is a voluptuous, half-naked woman (Caruso 1997: 81-7). For his second date, Holmes convinces Watson to help him, and they disguise as musicians – Holmes plays the violin while Watson plays the tambourine. As they pass in front of the city bar Die Schiffbr, the owner João Ramalho observes the two musicians. By allowing us to identify with João Ramalho's point of view, the author of the novel finds in the disguises of the English a source of humor. Ramalho thinks it is strange that the taller man (Holmes) should be so focused on his playing the violin and that the musicians should repeat always the same song (Caruso 1997: 109).

When Holmes tries to convince his partner to help him see Mona Lisa for the third time, disguised as walking grocery sellers, Watson complains, “Não, Doyle, o caso é simples demais. É o amor que o está deixando distraído e imprudente” (Caruso 1997: 144). Even so, Holmes manages to convince his friend to see his girlfriend for the third time. But when the political situation in Desterro becomes more unstable, as the herbalists draw closer to the island, the surveillance also becomes stronger around Mona Lisa's house. So the fourth time that the English citizens disguise to go around her house – as fishermen –, Holmes fails to see his beloved (Caruso 1997: 203).

In the parody of Doyle's characters, Watson is also *sexualized* in Brazil. Disguised as fishermen, Holmes and Watson pay a visit to the city brothel. As they go in, Rosirene notices that they are little suntanned and too well-shaven for local fishermen, and concludes that they must have recently arrived in the island, probably on board of the Speedwel (Caruso 1997: 205). Rosirene feels attracted to Watson at first sight, and takes the English doctor to her room (Caruso 1997: 208). As opposed to the cold and contained characters in Doyle's original Sherlock Holmes stories, in *Noturno* Holmes and Watson become sexually *activated*. However, their sexual encounters are rather arbitrary in the story, which signals that the novel is consciously playing with the notion of Brazil as being a sexual paradise.

Although Holmes is presented in a parodic manner in *Noturno*, especially by becoming sexually aroused in Brazilian lands, he does not become less successful in his deductive method, which happens in other parodies, such as *O Xangô de Baker Street* (1995). In *Noturno*, during his talk with the governor, Holmes impresses the colonel by deducing correctly that he had just been to the market, drunk coffee, come back on the same side of the street, talked to the Uruguayan painters, discussed a pay rise with them etc, all with plausible and correct explanations (Caruso 1997: 51). Nevertheless, as a counterpoint to Holmes' infallibility, when Watson and Holmes visit Rosirene, disguised as fishermen, the detective looks around the room and deduces that they are not the only visitors at the brothel, which is indeed a very elementary deduction for the brilliant reasoning machine (Caruso 1997: 206).

Moreover, both Holmes and Watson demonstrate an understanding of the political situation in Desterro that most of the other characters lack. During their talk to M. César, after Holmes shows off his reasoning and deductive method, M. César invites Holmes to discover the whereabouts of Lorena and the other rebels (Caruso 1997: 55). Holmes refuses to serve the Republican governor, giving the excuse that politics is not his business:

Excelência, estamos realmente lisonjeados por reconhecer nossos modestos talentos nesta parte do Atlântico. Porém, as leis do nosso país nos proíbem de imiscuir-nos na vida e nos problemas das nações com quem tem relações diplomáticas normais. Se isso não bastasse, senhor Governador, a Inglaterra é também uma monarquia, e vivemos muito bem com semelhante regime. Mas existe uma razão ética e mais profunda para nossa recusa: é que em política, o que pode ser ruim para o senhor pode ser razoável para mim e vice-versa. A política é coisa relativa, Excelência, e desde uma perspectiva diferente, um subversivo político poderá ser estimado como uma pessoa de bem e como um companheiro de valor inestimável. Não, senhor Governador, minha área é outra bem diversa, é o horror e o trivial do crime comum e não o controvertido e imponderável crime político (Caruso 1997: 56).

After this, however, both English citizens consider themselves as the governor's enemies, and this is the other reason why they should only walk around town disguised. As they talk about disguising as walking grocery sellers, Holmes draws on arguments about national and international politics to convince his partner:

...não há outra maneira de transitar pela cidade que disfarçados. E também sua companhia me é imprescindível para que, caso seja surpreendido no interior da casa de Mona Lisa – hipótese que considero quase impossível –, você possa levar o alarme ao nosso consulado. Afinal, você sabe o quanto o nosso governo é temido por esta jovem República, de quem nos presentes anos somos o seu mais importante fiador econômico.

Watson levanta-se da cadeira de palhinha e retruca, apontando o dedo para o companheiro:

– Essa é a sua lógica, a lógica racionalista inglesa, a lógica européia. Porém, você esquece que neste país não há lógica nenhuma. Aqui, não há regras a respeitar, princípios a defender ou exemplos a recordar. A lógica, neste país, é a lógica de quem está no poder. Ou, quem sabe, você estima como fruto da lógica todas as barbaridades que estão acontecendo nesta província? Que lógica é essa capaz de justificar duzentos assassinios – cuja culpabilidade é difusa como o ar – a sangue frio? (Caruso 1997: 145-6).

As represented in *Noturno*, Moreira César, the governor of Desterro, occupies a central role in the novel, and his cruelty is emphasized through his everyday deliberations. One instance of deliberate cruelty is evidenced in the incident of the bucket of water. During one of his everyday dawn walks to the public market, someone

throws out of a window a bucket of water. Even though the person shouts “Watch out!”, the content of the bucket accidentally hits the colonel. Knowing what building the water had come from, Moreira César sends Gouveia, his faithful assistant, to arrest several suspects for enquiry. One person after the other shouts “Watch out!” until a Uruguayan is identified as guilty of making the colonel wet and promptly sent to Anhatomirim to be hanged (Caruso 1997: 214-6).

Moreira César’s treatment of Dona Carolina and her son, poet Cruz e Souza, further demonstrates that the general finds in his cruelty some kind of pleasure. M. César often tortured Dona Carolina, saying that he deliberately keeps her son in Rio de Janeiro in terrible working conditions so he will starve. At one point M. César says: “Talvez a Senhora não saiba, mas Gavita, sua nora, está louca. (...) Seu filho, porém, sequer tem recursos para comprar dois pães” (Caruso 1997: 153). M. César also obliges Dona Carolina, who is Mona Lisa’s guardian, to work full time at the Republican Palace in an attempt to make Mona Lisa – to whom he was attracted – come to him. But Dona Carolina’s pride offends him: “A expressão orgulhosa do seu rosto me desafiou e, confesso agora à Senhora, me ofendeu” (Caruso 1997: 44). After months of psychological torture, Dona Carolina grabs a knife and attacks the colonel, who eventually kills the old woman (Caruso 1997: 213).

As his relationship with Dona Carolina signals, M. César’s cruelty is at least partly explained by his problematic relationship with women. Worse than the political rebels, the female characters offer him the most powerful kind of resistance and threat of all. He recurses to psychological torture, then, to compensate for a feeling of rejection that some women in Desterro evoke in him:

Apesar de todos os poderes e direitos que cabem a um combatente vitorioso – e ele os estava usando –, a idéia de uma resistência imprevista foi esboçando-se aos poucos, e conformando uma coisa aparentemente inexpugnável que começava a fugir do seu controle. E isso, ele o estava sabendo agora, eram os inimigos mulheres. Impedido por uma fatalidade de combater em guerras reais, ele pressentia – logo ele, a quem o governo central reservava um papel que ia muito além da simples restauração da ordem em Desterro – que estava sendo levado a medir-se com fêmeas. Era justamente a esse desfecho que uma intrincada teia de circunstâncias e acaso o estava conduzindo (Caruso 1997: 116).

His feelings of frustration and rejection towards women are mixed with his frustrated military career. M. César’s ambition was to be recognized as a great military and political figure by the whole country, like his colleagues, but that, he believed, would only be possible if he managed to participate in an important battle. Therefore, M. César devoted his days in Desterro to act strategically so that the rebels could provide him with such a battle:

O chaco e os pantanais paraguaios haviam produzido Deodoro e Floriano Peixoto. Sem aquela guerra, teriam sido meros burocratas, militares como ele, com condecorações com decurso de prazo. E, comprovação recente, a luta armada contra os federalistas também já havia revelado o talento e a inteligência de Júlio e Castilhos e Pinheiro Machado, comandante da famosa Divisão do Norte. Mais uma vez, não fosse isso, e

seriam rábulas, peões de estância de trago e chinas a cada dia primeiro do mês. A guerra, muito mais que atividade mecânica pura e simples, no estilo da Retirada de Laguna, é o supremo processo de seleção e credenciamento do homem público nacional. Só o combate lhe dá credibilidade, delinea-lhe o perfil, faz aflorar o carisma e o caráter. Além disso, nunca é demais lembrar, sem o exército de Solano Lopez, aqui o Monarca teria sido eterno (Caruso 1997: 172).

Without a battle, M. César believed he was not *part of history*, so he focused on creating the correct political and strategic atmosphere for the herbalists from the west of Santa Catarina to ally themselves with the remaining federalist and anti-monarchist rebels; otherwise, he would remain on the periphery of history (Caruso 1997: 68).

The historical process is presented as the product of private interests of a powerful political personality, as evinced to the extent that M. César manages to interfere with the way his adversaries behave. The question that the plot puts forward is, "Is the colonel going to have his battle?", and regards M. César's personal interest most of all. The atrocities in Anhatomirim and his cruelty towards the characters that surround him are at least partly explained by his problematic relationship with women, and his quest for power and public recognition, a compensation for a lack in his personal life.

Besides M. César, the leader of the herbalists also has personal reasons that drive him to battle. M. César believes that the herbalists' leader, the *Monk*, has been lovelorn for twenty years because of Mona Lisa's mother (Caruso 1997: 152).

However, even though M. César provides the rebels with opportunities to ally and become strong opponents, eventually they anticipate some steps and fail to provide the battle the colonel needed. Thus, on the personal level, by not fulfilling the colonel's private wish to have a battle, the rebels affect him more than they could ever do in a real battle (Caruso 1997: 210-1).

Thus, history in *Noturno* is not the portrayal of the broad historical process, what Georg Lukács termed as history as the *pre-condition of the present* (Lukács 1983: 21), but it is history from a private point of view, from M. César's perspective. The notion of history as the portrayal of the broad historical process, the aim of the realist historical novel, is problematized and presented as ultimately inaccessible in *Noturno*. Readers are left with a limited, personalized, *version* of history.

M. César's complex of inferiority is also associated with the representation of national identity. When Holmes refuses to serve the Brazilian Republic in order to imprison the political subversives, saying that England was a monarchy and that the English people lived well under that regime, M. César replies:

– Mas, Mr. Doyle – diz Moreira César, sem demonstrar a menor reação de contrariedade –, não queira comparar nem de longe Don Pedro II, os negros e os portugueses, com a rainha Vitória, os saxões e a responsabilidade puritana. Além do mais, um Shakespeare...

Doyle: – Martinho Pena.

Moreira César: – Cromwell.

Doyle: – Marquês de Pombal.

Moreira César: – Darwin, Spencer e Walter Scott.

Doyle: – Bartolomeu de Gusmão, Benjamin Constant e José de Alencar.

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Moreira César: – Almirante Nelson.

Doyle: – Almirante Barroso e a fragata Amazonas (Caruso 1997: 56).

This exchange demonstrates that whereas M. César depreciates Brazilian identity, culture, literature and science in relation to the English culture, Doyle (Holmes) shows how Brazil has important personalities and is, therefore, on a par with England on cultural terms.

Moreover, the notion of a definite Brazilian national identity is problematized in the portrayal of Desterro. As the narrative develops, people from several nationalities arrive to compose a hybrid identity of the city, including Italian, German, Mexican, Argentinean, Russian, Uruguayan, Portuguese, Greek, Arab, and Japanese. As they arrive, some of these immigrants become part of the political turmoil and try to resolve the social problems that affect Desterro according to their traveled perspectives. The Italian Lucas, for instance, begins to organize the workers of Desterro in order to demand better working conditions and better pays (Caruso 1997: 218-9).

The limitation of M. César's private perspective about the past is also associated with the construction of space in *Noturno*. Along the novel, the room where he spends most of his day becomes a perfect metaphor for his private perspective towards the historical crisis that surrounds him. Locked in his room, the window through which he looks all the time functions as a filter – a mediatory instance – between what took place out there in the streets and what happened inside him – the feelings of frustration regarding women and his career. The atmosphere of terror and brutality, the bleak ambience that is even in the name of the novel, is also demonstrated in the rainy and dark weather of Desterro.

The inaccessibility of history also evinces from the tense relationship constructed between narrator and main character. In the opening chapter, M. César, in a mix of complaint and mockery, explains Caruso's task in the novel to be written/read:

Exatamente noventa anos depois dessa madrugada de chuva e vento frio, você se senta diante de uma mesa escura atulhada de papeis, livros e jornais velhos, e começa a datilografar, com entusiasmo talvez apenas aparente, minhas primeiras páginas. *Começa agora a escrever o que imagina ser a história* dos breves meses em que administrei esta remota e controvertida cidade de Desterro, nome que por si só – curioso eco – é mais que o suficiente para muitos arrepiar e compungir a pele. E, enquanto escreve, sou obrigado a ficar neste terceiro andar de um velho hotel de putas, localizado na rua do Príncipe – pude ler o nome calhorda antes de entrar correndo no saguão –, mudo para o que seria preciso dizer e impotente – eu – para mudar nesta página uma única vírgula.

*No afã de revelar minha "verdade"*, tratará de saber a cidade onde nasci em 1850, minha juventude, a forma e o estilo da minha educação militar, alguma carta esquecida no meio das roupas, meus mais íntimos e indevassáveis pensamentos. Consultará médicos e se informará sobre o que é epilepsia, e se regalará com a notícia de Euclides, militar meu contemporâneo, que assegura em *Os Sertões* que ataquei a punhaladas e pelas costas um jornalista, em plena luz do dia, no Rio de Janeiro. Por mim você fará essas coisas e muito mais (Caruso 1997: 7, my italics).



From the start, Caruso, through M. César, poses the question of the inaccessibility of the past, unless through textual evidences such as reports, books, and the writer's own imagination. In contrast to the colonel's desire to be an active subject of history, through recourse to violence and repression, in the creative process of composition of *Noturno*, M. César becomes the impotent object of a portrayal, as the novel's narrator gives his own interpretation of the events that took place in Desterro in 1894.

Furthermore, both in the diegesis and in the composition of the novel, texts are seldom considered as disinterested in political terms. M. César follows closely what journalists write about the government, interprets poems and samba lyrics, always in order to assess whether or not they were biased enough towards republican politics. Among M. César's most urgent strategies to reestablish order and erase traces of the Brazilian monarchic past, for instance, was the change of the names of streets. Streets that had in their names any reference to monarchy – titles such as princess or count, important dates for monarchy, names of famous monarchic personalities – were to be changed into names that evoked the idea of the new republic. Talking to Mascarenhas, press secretary, M. César says,

Amanhã teremos a solenidade da substituição dos nomes imperiais. Não quero encontrar mais um único vestígio monarquista nesta ilha. Nem fotos, nem nomes, nem títulos, nem lembranças, nem saudades, nem nada. O passado está morto, enterrado (Caruso 1997: 51).

In the composition of the novel, besides references to history books, old newspapers, poetry anthologies, biographies, military reports, *Noturno*'s intertextuality draws on painting. Caruso's Mona Lisa is the carnivalized version of Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting. In Brazil, Mona Lisa's enigmatic smile makes every man in Desterro fall in love with her, but unlike the Italian painter's, the Brazilian character is blond and her secret is her sexual appetite (Caruso 1997: 40-2). Victor Meirelles, famous Brazilian painter and a friend of D. Pedro's, also becomes the target of M. César's cold-blooded repression, because the painter refuses to paint M. César's portrait (Caruso 1997: 186-8). Exiled in his own house and starving, Meirelles nonetheless continues painting according to his political convictions, and even under a republican's critic surveillance, a painting little by little is revealed showing frogs that swallow republican soldiers, a metaphor for the defeat of the Republican military body (Caruso 1997: 223).

The conception of history in *Noturno* is that of an inevitably subjective interpretation of past events from textual evidence. According to this conception, the realistic portrayal of the past is problematized and the distance between present and past is emphasized. Nevertheless, some approximations between past and present are at play in *Noturno*, as in M. César's desire to constitute a legacy for Desterro:

Deste povo, se é que ainda há algo da seiva original, espromerei o processo que há de sustentar e de dar um norte à sua existência futura. E a semente disso eu estou plantando agora, e vou vivificá-la a meu modo. Será esta a parte de mim que se incorporará à história desta ilha, impregnando cada célula dessas ruas e desse povo igual a água, o invisível cheiro de mar e o próprio sal (Caruso 1997: 24).

The irony is that, more than 100 years later, we know that M. César at least partly succeeded, that his rhetoric of technocracy, liberalism and neoliberal economics, and internationalism continue being defended by several politicians, albeit disguised by discourses of racial equality or social inclusion. As among M. César's political plans, he stresses that Desterro urgently needed to develop economically through the implementation of factories, and defended incentive to international initiatives at the expense of the extinction of local economies:

“No norte da Província” – continuou – “a Lumber Company, gigantesca madeireira norte-americana, a maior da América Latina, já cria empregos, impulsa a exportação, e celebra o quatro de julho perfilando na partitura de um gramofone que transmite patrióticos hinos em idioma estrangeiro, um bando de matutos brancos e preguiçosos. Lavouras primitivas, ralas plantações de milho e mandioca, meia dúzia de porcos e galinhas mambembes começam a ser substituídos, da noite para o dia, por guindastes e locomotivas que descem para os portos do litoral atropelando para sempre o ideário de rezas e fantasmagorias. É o branco contra o índio e o mestiço, o técnico contra o crente, o carvão e o óleo diesel contra o lobisomem. E à medida em que constroem postes e esticam fios de eletricidade, a república come a monarquia pelos olhos” (Caruso 1997: 157).

The atrocities carried out by M. César during his rule of Desterro can also be associated with the right wing and military politics' tendency to violent repression in recent Brazilian history. In this sense, it is difficult to dissociate the picture drawn in *Noturno* of M. César's intervention from the 1964 military *coup d'état*. The economic politics of the military governments were, like M. César's, developmentalist and sought fast modernization through the opening of the country to foreign capital, and, like in *Noturno*, during the years of military rule, in the 1960's and 1970's, several artists, intellectuals and journalists were arrested, tortured and exiled accused of being subversive (Didier; Rezende 2001: 617).

To conclude, Sherlock Holmes is characterized in a parodic way in *Noturno*, becoming more humanized and politicized than in the original stories. Contrary to Doyle's Holmes, who was interested in women only to the extent that they presented him with a difficult case or that they were able to reason like him, *Noturno*'s Holmes not only is interested in a woman, Mona Lisa, but he is also sexually active (or activated). Sherlock Holmes refuses to serve the governor and makes the center of his investigative powers the access to Mona Lisa's house. The fact that Sherlock Holmes is such a popular fictional character and that he is so famous for being infallible makes him an easy target for parodic portrayal. Contemporary parodies of Sherlock Holmes present a challenge to the rationalism associated with the original stories, whose aim was to account for the apparently inexplicable based on logic and clarity. Thus what M. César and Sherlock Holmes have in common is a textual background, the former official history and the latter, fiction stories. By playing with their characterizations, *Noturno* revisits their previous narratives through parody.

With reference to the representation of national identity, *Noturno* evinces that Brazilian culture is irreducibly plural and hybrid, as illustrated by the several immigrants that join the plot along the novel. Furthermore, nationalism as discourse is

parodied in a subverted nationalist talk between Sherlock Holmes and Moreira César. Whereas the governor attacks his own national culture and praises the English, Holmes defends Brazilian writers and artists. Besides parodying nationalism, this talk suggests a critique of Brazilians' complex of inferiority in relation to foreign cultures.

In Caruso's novel, history is problematized, for example, through the limitation of the protagonist's perspective. Moreira César's standpoint, his anxieties and alienation from the people demonstrate the inevitable subjective interpretation of past events that is derived from textual evidence. According to the representation of the past in *Noturno*, the unproblematic, realistic and broad portrayal of the past is unavailable except through textual evidence. Texts, songs, newspapers, and paintings become political tools to be given meaning according to ongoing political agendas. Moreover, M. César can be associated with the tendency in Brazilian politics for brutal repression against those who do not accept impositions from a dominant political group. Despite the almost exclusive limitation to M. César's perspective, other characters in *Noturno* engage the plot and reveal how their lives are affected by the historical crisis, that is the difficult establishment of the Brazilian Republic.

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