

The constructive reason and the poetic lacework of Maria Lúcia Dal Farra

Teresa Cabañas

Universidade Federal de Santa Maria

ABSTRACT

This article concerns itself with the analysis of the work of São Paulo poet Maria Lúcia Dal Farra, *Livro de auras (1994) e Livro de possuídos (2002)*, attempting, principally, an approximation of the constructive mechanisms that dynamize her poetical universe. The focus of attention is centered on the use, by this poet, of a constructive ratio which moves between the canto and the decanto to symbolize, as feminine writing, the possession an aesthetic intellect that an androcentric culture reserves for masculine use only.

Keywords: Feminine poetry, constructive ratio, compositional procedures.

Man hunts and fights. Woman intrigues and dreams; is the mother of fantasy, of the gods. She possesses a second vision, the wings that let her fly to the infinite of imagination and desire”- Jules Michelet ‘The enchantress’

It is well known the manner in which Adélia Prado, in the paradigmatic opening poem of her debut book¹ addresses herself to the condition of the woman. The existence of a clear opposition to the masculine figure, painted here as a confrontation in terms of masculine (negative) and feminine (positive), allows the insubordination of self against the debased situation of this “species” repressed by a predominantly masculine world. It is because of this that the lyrical self, in a daring gesture of contestation, feels open enough to declare the acceptance of stratagems (subterfuge) that her undervalued self imposes and which become necessary should she wish to mark her place in a space which still keeps her ashamed.

It is seen in the initial subterfuge of the dubious character’s “poetic license” of the text title, and that, in apparent deference, becomes an access code to a territory of foreign dominion. In it the “license” swaps itself in free will, in transgression, so that this space can become reconfigured with characteristics of another nature, which in the case of the Mineira poet, we already know, are linked to themes of provincial, domestic routine, until then rejected by

¹ Prado 1976

minutia and the unenlightened. Thus, the general women's condition (gender), "this still shamed species", defines itself at the same time as a specific condition of the producing self (poet), who decides on her emancipation via difference- "Be lame in life, it's a curse for men"- to bring the existential density to the bear that hides behind this apparently grey universe of the common woman.

In the ideological baseline of the poem, this means fully assuming her strange historical-social condition and making of it her great advantage "Woman is unfolding"

Nearly twenty years after Adelia Prado's first book, another poet, the paulistana Maria Lúcia Dal Farra arrived on the national literary scene to take it by surprise with what I call, if I may, her unfolding poetry. The evolutionary social marks generated in the interval between *Bagagem e Livro de auras*²(*DalFara*) can be seen to be synthesized with the suggested displacement of the alluded to characteristic, which seems in the end to accommodate itself more to the poetic process than explicating this general situation of restriction suffered by women historically. I am not saying that Dal Farra's poetry does not cross over this small part of the feminine universe; on the contrary its presence is evident in many of the poems of the first book, whether in the remembrance and representation of her everyday childhood or in the sensitive and avid eye which penetrates situations, objects and natural beings.

In all, as well as introducing us to a female diction, which marks its territory with the woman's voice and travels through the domestic context of its own existence, *Livro de Auras* can be read as an allegory of the conquests of this female voice in its definition as socially emancipated. It is in this respect that the book writes another chapter in the treatment of female authorial poetry in Brazil.

Part of this chapter corresponds, without doubt, to a definition of positions, not necessarily explicit, with respect to the poetic model installed since the fresh themes and tonalities of Adeliana's work. It is not that Dal Farra's poems have intended dialogue with Adeliana's work, as exist between her and other national poetic dictions. What I am interested in arguing is that *Livro de auras* reveals itself not just as a receptacle of a lyrical voice of original timber, which lends density to the general panorama of Brazilian literature, and here I discount the question of gender, but that, moreover, it also acts as a vehicle for poetic modes that brings us to the evolutionary picture of the female self's work conditions, a process that can be sketched exactly from Adeliano's precedent.

² DAL FARRA, 1994.

This is, as social subject, a female entity that enunciates the discourse in the cited book and will illuminate with its posture as much its specific productive situation as, at the same time, the general historical cultural circumstances rooted in a certain social conglomerate at a determined moment.

Because of this we need to situate ourselves here between the image of the “unfolding woman”, that in 1976 was a metaphor for the different subject positions³ that a large majority of women were obliged to assume in their social existence, and this other that I called “unfolding poetry”, which in 1994 stressed a type of work that is a distension of the expressive limits of female subjectivity, achieving in language texture, possibilities to impose sense and meaning not just identifiable to the gender tradition of such subjectivity.

Or rather, if in books like *Bagagem* the contrast between the female existence and the male world is evident and can elevate to an upper plane the everyday of the common housewife’s provincial living, thus marking its own positions then in the formalization of *Livro de Auras*, the opposition disappears and this masculine world comes to us as weakened echoes and resonances of something that also plays a part in this female voice and its universe. It represents an instance of overcoming this first collision protagonized by *Bagagem*, this social moment in which female expression needed to proclaim its difference and condition to take its place alongside the traditional and canonized masculine voices that monopolized the national poetry scene.

The division of ‘*Livro de Auras*’ in differentiated yet homogenized sessions could have already confronted one of the aspects in the materialization of this ‘layered nature of the poetry.’

If *Viveiro*, *Coisas de mulher e Lição de casa* encompass private, sensitive moments, in all of them the lyrical subject dedicates itself to the unpeeling of the motives that in each circuit occupy its attention, activating through this, a language that needs to potentialize the very capacity to go forward through the various layers that make up the motive, whether memory, inanimate or natural being.

What derives from this is a relief of language itself, via the recollection and observation of objects and beings seen as stimulus to the nomination and it is this that becomes the principal objective of this poetry.

The epigraph of Portuguese poet Herberto Helder when introducing *Viveiro* places us on a questioning foot which says ‘it is so beautiful to grasp with the bones, which are inside the hands, on the point of a name, and fold it over, rip out this constricted soul’.

³ Ernesto LACLAU, 1986

Open, extend, unroll is to modify an action to the original state of the thing, which in this case alludes to the names abstract material, a substance which gives materiality to all things. Thusly, taking away 'grasp' which determines them and attaching 'name' and then making the effort of de-obstructing and unlocking (unfolding it) it may be possible to take away that which determines things (soul) that the name doesn't give us at the first, direct impact but it does store it, folded in itself. The meaning gleaned from the semantic mark "rip" points to an action of intensity, to which diligence and suitability are applied so that the act bases itself on an expansion of strength, necessary to reveal what restricts the profundities of name and which this does not immediately offer us. It amounts to an excavation work of the non-evident significations of name, to unfold-multiply- its apparent meaning to alter the first logic that usually accompanies a pragmatic communication. What the Portuguese poet's epigraph proposes then is an experience of the beautiful which encrusts itself on the same act of searching and questioning other possible meanings of the name.

To enquire of the word in this form, to configure an experience of the beautiful, results in a modification of the apparent initial meaning of the name that in this way can be projected on the unfolding of its multiple meanings and resonances, the two materials of which it is composed. This done, we are not driven, at least not in the first reading, to cause things to appear suddenly but to find the name that expresses them and as such try to penetrate the pleasures of nomination. Of course, derivation from the named thing displaces itself in another and it, by virtue of this nomination, can appear to us in an unusual existence. One could say that in this act there are an infinite number of possibilities (forms) to construct the poetic as a continuous unfolding of the word. We find ourselves then in the orbit of this unfolding poetry.

To this clue that Helder's epigraph offers us, we can now add the poem which precedes it and which opens the book. In each of the two quintets that form the structure, two verbs attract, ostensibly, the attention of the reader, this by virtue of the visual positioning of the textual architecture, which makes up the totality of the second verse of each stanza -"Inquilina inquieta do intervalo/ canto"(restless tenant of the interval/canto; "Provisória passageira de lumes./ decanto" (provisional passenger of lights) .

This initial disposition of the elements of meaning, that refer here to the aforementioned visual quality, are a part of, as we will see later, a laborious and continuous action on the structure of the poem, so that it operates for every integrant, opening itself to a new layer of meaning, lending a density of meaning, as is seen when, after provoking, by this graphic disposition, a significant first contact, gives way to the Sonora material relevance which echoes in the phonetic parenthesis of both verbs. Only having established the written and sonorous material of the sign is it that this unfolds in semantic tinges, so that, in the end, we have in front

of us a realization of the substance of the word, or to put it in Saussureano terms, the visibility of the signifier and signified.

As such the book's introductory poem is at the same time a declaration and a realization of the principles which will become manifest throughout the various poems- an arc that recovers the original nature of poetry, its older incline to the canto and invocation, to ally it, in synchronicity with decantation, this continual and laborious cleansing action, prospect and purify the word until its rich heart-wood is extracted and then it will only give in when submitted to this process. Because of this, the terms become one- de canto – the poetry of Dal Farra exists motivated by the correspondent construction contrasting elements or contrary orientation, which characterizes it, principally as an exercise in attentive observation, continuous reflection and constructive emphasis.

If, in the first stanza, the canto is meant to 'invoke indecisive spirits' which seems to invite diffuse evocations or intangible entities compatible to the idea of inspiration, it is also a resource "to tread on a little deeper/ the ground I walk on" so that the 'indecisive' passage works for a pure materiality of the concrete world- ground where the lyrical 'I' wants to be seated.

The canto has form and material in this sense. Of the land of the poem, it and the lyrical 'I' obey the decantation requirements, which make them apt to transit by and transmit a life experience embodied in the option to construct (decant) linguistically a canto that places it subject in its world of experience, which is, of course, woman's, but that is not necessarily restricted by this condition. This is how 'Livro de Auras' wins the freedom to move between the three spaces that make it up, and that, obey the possible modalities of a nomination manifest and the lyrical 'I' defines itself as social subject.

Viveiro, for example, opens itself to sensitive experiences in which the gender definition of the lyrical 'I' does not stand out in any special way. There is a rarefaction that announces it's almost total neutralization, while giving privilege to a reflexive deed that is pure constructive ratio, anchored in an observational mode that penetrates its motives, these generally being objects, but also situations and personalities and relocates them in a dimension designed by the imagination. This is not, yet, that overflow in which realities without connection meet to propitiate, as told by the surrealist dream with strange images and very often pressurized. Imagination controlled and dosed by reflexivity, that is invoked here, is something that could belong or have belonged to the thing as potentiality, but that this does not allow to be

constituted by the virtual meaning of the word it expresses, as the table (House), that the utilitarian object regurgitates ‘the memory of the tree’, reminding us of its initial nature extinguished by us for the sake of the pragmatic necessity that now serves us. The inanimate object therefore returns to life, rescued from the anodyne space of use by the capacity to imagine and driven by the sensitive familiarity of the world for the word that in this form redoes itself in aesthetic appearance. Or when in another moment, the tiger inside the cat is revealed to us and it comes out of its slow domesticity to remind us of the seven existences it has within

But things and beings always seem withdrawn in this poem. The certainty of its impenetrability, the conviction of the existence of some auratic principle, that makes them, in the end, inapprehensible, is discovered in the way that they deal with them, -it teaches not to fold before the mystery that they carry but to build them a second entity, something akin to a clone of words (4)⁴ that moves the attention from the object to these, and that at the same time brings it to us in a new investiture. With regard to the poem ‘o Gato’ it could be illustration when it is written.

Uma palavra para o gato: ágil (One word for the cat: agile)

Também unha, preguiça, pupila. (Also nail, laziness, pupil)

O resto (the rest)

É o que ele (is what he)

(entre uma e outra delas) (between one and another of them)

preenche de charme delgado – (fill in with fine charm)

enigmático. (enigmatic)

Those familiar with the world of poetry can easily identify, in the three poems Dal Farra dedicates to cats, an attraction akin to fascination when put beside Baudelaire’s *As flores do Mal*⁵. However in the three poems that the French poet also dedicates to the cat, it appears at

⁴ No poema *Poética* (p .48) o que tento explicar aparece referido com os termos “espectro” e “fantasma” (In the poem *Poética* what I try to explain seems referred to in terms of ‘spectrum’ and ‘phantom’

⁵ BAUDELAIRE, 1985.

once as motive for the compulsion to discover sensitive dimensions to be experimented by I, it being a pretext for this experience that other times represents the enchantment exercised by the impregnable mystery of beings. In 'Livro de Auras' the animal is emptied of itself to appear in word. In this manner it is not in the cat that penetrates – as Baudelaire wishes-, it is not his enigma, which only belongs to him, that wants to be deciphered. The real cat, its substance, is imperceptible here and on to this metaphysics or transcendences do not stick. Mystery is its prerogative and it does not matter, as in Baudelaire, why. If Baudelaire's cat 'does not talk with words'⁶, then what Dal Farra is looking for can only be expressed as pure writing against the real.

Adoraria poder nele apalpar o pêlo (Would love to be able to touch his hair)

e saber de que abstração é feito. (and find out what abstraction is made of)

Mas (felino) ele se enrosca incisivo (But (feline) he twists incisive)

no vão do meu pensamento (In the gap of my thought)

e dependura-se (and hangs)

(em telepática acrobacia) (in telepathic acrobatics)

nas suas prerrogativas. (in his prerogatives)

Só me permite escrevê-lo (Just let me write it)

a contrapelo. (against 'opposite')

The desire to take possession of the cat, expressed in the future tense as possibility, ipso facto denies itself with the adversative, so that the I, rational, purifies the psychological experience with the productive act of emptying the object of its abstractions and filling it up with words (agile, nail, laziness, pupil) this concrete material with a visual and audible presence. This cat which from there arises, unlike the other, can be infinitely redone, not crystallized by emotion or by the impenetrable, but dynamic, always ready to transform itself. This done, it is not the cat that is captured; in the end it is not the object of possession but rather the sign that nominates it, that this poetry becomes concrete, positive, in the sense that the word does not

⁶ BAUDELAIRE, 1985, p. 227.

install itself here in essential form, paralyzed in its abstraction. This, on the contrary, wants to be returned to man as the material that belongs to him. From here the subject's clear freedom to exercise over it his wish and mould it in the form he chooses becomes apparent.

Still, the attitude is not understood as pure voluntarism but as constructive will, guided by a profound reflexive reasoning that, if it is not tied to the desire to get to know the objects, then, as Valery, knowing this to be impossible, takes the observation of the beings as a starting point for its own observation. This Viveiro in which objects jump, animate and inanimate, reveal for this, in all its extension, a seeding plat, not only in words as mainly, teaching of textures of kinfolk and relationships, of combinations and mixtures, of *unfoldings* from which the word interweaves with others a web of meaning, original and diverse, becoming finally in language, an articulation of words.

This creator consciousness reports to the naming of the object. It is, moreover, this labor of language that shows the translucency of the object, the place where beauty is radicalized as suggested by Helder's epigraph. As the shell that is molded by the 'maritime whirls' and upon emptying allows the sensation of "a labuta/ de um corpo que em tudo a fez/ a imagem e semelhança" ("Concha"), Dal Farra's poetry refers to the very struggle to compose the work bringing with it the conceptual tone that sustains it: strain to evoke (*canto*) the indecisive, that which is emptying itself of form to render it palpable for the work (*decanto*) to provide it with a name. Impalpable as the body which the shell no longer possesses, the *canto*, in the homonym poem materializes, however, in words that fix its lean form on the white of the sheet and in unusual presences (*chair/rooster*): words that blend with each other to, through its relative power, give visibility to that which has none and which ends up exploding in the last stanza in assonant bellows and sonorous affinities.

Entretanto	(However)
o encanto terrestre deste	(the terrestrial charm of this)
objeto	(object)
alçado ao canto	(lifted to the canto)
– desperta de qualquer maneira	(awakes any way)
a manhã.	(in the morning)
Mérito do parentesco.	(Merit of parentage)

It is poetry which clings to the concrete and that explores some parentage merits just as with one of the Brazilian poets most preoccupied with the valorization of the deed, João Cabral de Melo Neto. Some motives, such as this of the rooster's crow or the vision of Northeast landscapes, but, above all, the concentration in the handling of linguistic material which bursts on the aforementioned strain of decantation, of object emptying and its unfolding in word, as the very contention of the lyrical I to the point of actualizing certain elements of the poem's musicality, indicate not only parentage as a private recovery of *ars cabralina* that the author exhibits in the beautiful poem "João e Joan". The poem 'cavalo em pugna para desbocar' (horse in fight to chip) has as its theme the struggle for control of words ("é com destra que penteia/ a crina das própria sílabas") (it is with the right hand that it combs), the tremendous effort to bless them with numeric precision, the mineral word (stone, blade, lime) that Benedito Nunes⁷ talks of in the studies he dedicates to João Cabral. The letters are 'attracted by sparks' to perfect qualities in each other ("Amarelo fica o azul/ de tanta luz que lhe infunde"; "cacto é borboleta"; "(Manolete) é sertanejo")- (Yellow becomes blue/ with so much light infusing it); cactus is butterfly; Manolette is rustic). As with Cabral the intention goes in the direction of the 'things made of words' and the reflexive quality that rests in the attentive observation of things (that in the author's second book will be the definite beginning of construction) moves even the apparently domestic world of 'Coisas de Mulher'.

If here the condition of woman reaffirms itself in the more marked appearance of the experience of subject, the process of questioning continues the same, maybe now simply directed at more female worldly identifiable motives than is declared. The read with the written continues to occupy all the attention of this 'meaning bearing' woman, whether among household objects, carrying out domestic tasks or in quiet contemplation. And it is also the calibrated exercise of the written that directs the erotic gaze of this subjectivity, lessening through the constructive ratio whatever poetic persona subjectivism. A clear example of this is 'Promise of Sex', the first poem of this part, and which will apply to the emptying of the immediate content of experience it announces, to formalize it as pure eroticization of the written.

⁷ NUNES, 1971.

Uma espátula fina	(A fine spatula)
clama	(cries out)
pelo livro adiado,	(for the postponed book)
sua bainha.	(it's hem)
Duas canetas e uma sem tampa – (Two pens and one without a cover)	
a desta	(this)
se aplica na escrita.	(is applied in the writing)
Inútil,	(useless)
o enigma do alicorne de bronze	(the enigma of the bronze spiral horn)
ainda não porta-peso	(does not carry weight yet)
sobre nenhum papel composto.	(on any compound paper)
Este apenas se garatuja	(this merely scrawls)
sob o engenho da minha pena.	(under the mill of my pity)

Tudo em cima da mesa (all on top of the table)

The meta-linguistic nature which defines the poem returns to the forms that could endow the instruments of its own register with sensuality, a task that could reveal a high level of difficulty when it is seen that the attempt is mounted basically on a descriptive parapet that as emotion is kept at short rein and seems to lend a vivid, carnal substance to the objects it nominates, by virtue of the verbs that grant them.

Finally, it is on all this that promised pleasure radiance focuses. For this, there are the revelations of the adventure of writing, its way of refusing to appear, to be difficult, that woman who denies the appeals of love, delaying the giving in, which the poem highlights, concentrating itself on the preparations for the material deed (Everything on top of the table), here, more act of

conquest than of love, which suppresses the presence of I, discreetly withdrawing to the end of the poem.

It is this sobriety in the treatment of language and of the lyrical I – “Evito rimas, recuso acrobacias/ apenas do frugal me ocupo inteira” (“Artes”)- (I avoid rhymes, refuse acrobatics/ just of the frugal I occupy myself fully)

-that runs through the constructive rationality present in this poetry, and that evokes the same disposition found in this writing “from the inside out” which characterizes João Cabral. Likewise, here there is just an apparent concentration on things, since the logic of the composition discovers an analytical posture, obliged to research, to bubble, not these, but the word, until penetrating the swirls and make it exact and indispensable, as Valery wanted it.

Poetry

A ilha	(The island)
(com a densidade do mar	(with the density of the sea
palpável nas entranhas rochosas)	palpable in the rocky entrails)
limita as águas e vigia as bordas.	(limits the waters and watches over the edges)
Essa palavra se sustenta sozinha:	(This word sustains itself alone:)
quer apenas o volume	(it only wants the volume)
e a jurisdição do seu espaço.	(and the jurisdiction of its space)
Soma de trilhas,	(sum of trails)
de peixes de sílabas lisas,	(smooth syllables of fish)
tem também o verbo que a exila	(also has the verb that exiles it)
mas que a liga (perene) ao continente.	(but that links it (perennial) to the continent)
Ela isca o sentido	(it baits the meaning)
E	(and)

(poetisa)

(poet)

figsa o que registra.

(captures what it registers)

Pruning the word to the exact cut, as the knife with the vegetable in 'Rito', "searching its diameter/ all around its extension" is not however sufficient. A space needs to be constructed for the poem to inhabit and this comes from the laborious task of tracking combinations (Sum of trails/of fish smooth syllables) which, while they could be infinite, should, through effort, make room for that precise one as in the number in João and Joan. Word exercises through which the 'I' is absorbed in the executed labor to, put in parenthesis, in a strategy of apparent hiding, reveals itself, paradoxically, as constructor of that it registers. The creative action, therefore, marks spaces, observes names, checks densities, incites meaning; thus, by this work, what is displayed and shown is dislocated from the center and is occupied by the same act that it makes it possible: ensnare, cling to, capture but also discover. Helder's epigraph comes to our minds again.

This degree of concentration on the act of giving birth to meanings, and which I don't take here to mean taking what is inside and putting it out, but before as evocation of the thorough and painstaking work of generation, checking, as we saw even the most subjective and intimate dominions of the female condition.

The subjects of sensuality/sexuality appear often in the cross-dressing of objects and become lascivious by the word, as in "Vida Cava", where the forms and material of an old wooden sofa transmute themselves into erotic and eroticizing presences, to provoke the desired memory of 'I'. Or especially in the sensual transference that invades the fruits, the peach and the apple, and that later we find again in a variety of the examples of 'Vergilianas' of Livro de Possuidos⁸, the author's second offering.

The use of fruit as euphemisms for sexuality clearly harks back to biblical times. Through metonym, metaphor or symbolism, not many poets have used them to drive their relationship with the body, with the anxieties of physical desire, with the masculine oppression which for so long conceded her a sexuality dependent only on his or linked to procreation. Because of this, its use in the world of feminine poetry often redirects a page to express the female condition in her historical and social environment.

⁸ DAL FARRA, 2002.

Calibrated study of the various poetic universes, Dal Farra⁹ already touched on some of these cases, of which I can now apply my discourse on the contrast formalization. Paula Tavares, Adélia Prado, Gilka Machado are the names cited by the author in the article, which notes precisely the complicity between fruits and sexuality. Taking the poem of Adelia Prado, which in the article is defined as ‘radiant, happy song’¹⁰, a plastic painting of images and flavors where the lyrical I is absent, Dal Farra’s examples show the incline for the complaint, a certain passivity turned revulsion, the donation conventionally attributed to the woman, the idealization of the loved. Whereas in Gilka Machado’s poem that analyzes the fruit it is examined with a lightness of touch that would be imperceptible, in Dal Farra the synesthetic sensuality of touch and taste that reaches everything, is developed to the limit. The peach is struck by the lyrical ‘I’ that, with the gesture, wishes to deeply penetrate it and leave on it an impression, whatever fingerprint attesting to the owner of the rich sap. Active subject, the ‘I’ does not avoid here experimenting with the latest consequences of this possession, and this done, it will be the peach, defenseless, that complains while the I receives the stipend of its act, which causes the extinction of what is irredeemably taken.

‘The Peach’

Na textura da fruta	(In the texture of the fruit)
afundo minha unha:	(my nail deepens:)
estará madura?	(will it be mature?)
Desponta na abaulada penugem	(begins in the convex fluff)
a meia lua	(the half moon)
– impressão digital do meu gesto	(digital impression of my gesture)
Indeciso	(indecisive)
entre afeto e arranhadura.	(between attachment and scratch)
Que sente a fruta?	(What does the fruit feel?)

⁹ DAL FARRA, 2001.

¹⁰ DAL FARRA, 2001, p. 63.

Do poço da sua seiva (from the nectar of its well)
 um calafrio perplexo me reconhece (a perplexing shiver recognizes me)
 na gota que se liberta. (in the drop that liberates)

Transpira o pêssigo o pensamento mais denso (the peach exudes the most dense thought)

(o último) (the last)

Porque (because)

Entrementes (meantime)

(e ainda úmido de queixa) (and still humid from complaint)

tudo deixa contra o brilho dos meus dentes. (everything leaves from the shine of my teeth)

The contemplative disposition that dominates Gilka Macahdo's poem, and which on the plane of its ideological making could be associated with the idealization of a state of pacific subjection, disappears completely with Maria Lucia, absorbed by the resolute action of the 'I' granting benefits.

In the fabulous 'Forbidden Fruit', the theme of possession appears again, this time dealing with the limit of paroxysm implied in the vampirization and masculinization of 'I'. Subverting the biblical legend, through the almost sacrilegious posture of I, the incitement to the full climax of senses invites all the voluptuousness of this modern icon that has fascinated through its venality and by the amoral permissiveness which defies oppressive petitions of middle class society's Judeo-Christian ideology. The challenge of this vampirized I is not just in the possession of carnal material, as with the earlier poem. Now-Dracula- it yearns for absolute possession, which happens with the conquest and or capitulation of the spirit. It moves within symbiotic meanderings of the body/soul, a symbol of complete possession attacked by the 'I'.

Com suas nádegas lascivas de mulher (With her lascivious woman's buttocks)

a maçã se deita de costas (The apple lies facing backward)

na cesta sobre a mesa. (in the basket on the table)

Já de batom está pintada, (it's already painted with lipstick)

armadilha edênica no seu poço	(paradisiacal snare in its well)
– no ponto da voragem,	(on the point of the vortex)
caverna de pevides.	(stone cave)
Drácula, penetro	(Dracula, penetrates)
no seu espírito interdito,	(in his banned spirit)
no jardim das delícias.	(In the garden of delicacies)
Cometo (insensato)	(I commit (unwise))
a grande virtude capital.	(the great capital virtue)

The conversion of the sin in virtue by the unusual act of I, in a script, the inverse of that proposed by for example, Baudelaire, is also a conversion from passivity and submission, behavior traditionally associated with the female condition, to free decision. Thus once more, through the decided action, that characterizes this poetic personality, the 'I' breaks hierarchies, achieves its indecisive will, symbolically comparing itself to the male figure and bargaining for itself roles that society reserves for this figure. There is no interdiction between these verses, at least no more than could fit with this same male. On the tense ground of sensuality/sexuality where woman was placed as sinner, the impurity of this now is presented to us with a social subject that through action gains equality. The manner in which the typically female comes out of this demystified reveals itself as cultural code that can be modified by the constructive action of the social being.

This act, exposed in the plane of thematic content, will radicalize itself also in the constructive will of a writing that, without giving up the canto, renews the excessive subtlety of the female word, all complaints, denunciations and frustrations, to submit it to the same arduous process of decantation and rigorous elaboration that the cultural convention of phalocentric society does with male poetic endeavors. Like Dracula this writing penetrates, then, these forbidden territories, to show in the concentrated handling of its instrument, in the formal work's conscience, that there are no forbidden spaces for the subject, man or woman, that decides to explore them through these means. This configures, without scandal or commotion, a democratized vision of the processes and instruments of communication, even more consistent

since it does not sit easily on the evident plan of thematic development but penetrates the depths of the structures of composition.

However, do not think that this constructive will, this obstinate conscience of the formal work is exempt from affliction? In 'Retrato', one of the last poems of 'Coisas de mulher', the lyrical I, using the same emotive contention noted before, presents itself as almost exhausted, questioning its métier with veils of deception:

De que me vale a herança do saber	(What good is the heritage of knowledge)
se atrelá-la devo a meu viver	(if harnesses it I owe to my living)
e se o que escrevo é pó, unguento e em nada	(and if what I write is powder, ointment)
mudo aquela que em si já era farta?	(and I change nothing that in itself is already full?)
Ó dicionário exato em mim minguante,	(The exact dictionary in me diminishing)
lua cujo reverso acresce em vão!	(moon whose reverse grows in vain)
Buraco, estátua de musa, chão	(Hole, statue of muse, floor)
estirado entre a fala e diante	(stretched between speech and in front)
de que motivo? Eu? mito perdido	(of what motive? I? Lost myth)
nos elos, eras, fui (e tenho sido)	(in links, used to be, was and has been)
prodigioso equívoco, penso istmo	(prodigious mistake, I think isthmus)
a ligar som ao vivo coração	(to turn on sound live heart)
das comovidas coisas sem estilo	(of the affected things without style)
de que me ocupo (e às vezes me dão dom).	(that I occupy myself with and at times give me dom)

This 'full woman, loaded with plurals'¹¹, charged with birthing meanings, debates the anguish of creative inexpression.

Advanced in the solemn diction of this sonnet, riddled with questions and exclamations, it is seen how the emotive state moves bit by bit from the centralized focus of I, typical of lyrical expression to aspects connected to or consisting of its deed: the poetry itself ("aquela que em si já era farta"); the word constitutes it ("dicionário exato"); the motives that fill it up; the objects on which it detains itself ("comovidas coisas sem estilo"). The erasure of I ("prodigioso equívoco"), no longer central poetic motive, originates from the idea that conceives it as another constructively complex piece responsible for effectuating the union between the material expression that nominates the things and the emotional load deposited in them.¹² What occupies the attention now of the I and the poem's main motive is the task of establishing the possible meaningful relationships between the word (sense and sound) and the emotive content. Poetry that rejects the consolation metaphysical, that amazes the complacency with its very self, appearing in 'Retrato' that flees to the I pictography to design the arduous search of its deed.

It is as such that these 'coisas de mulher' (women's things) are deceiving. If we think of penetrating them, imbibed with the spirit of learning their topics or to renew acquaintance there with a stylized warp, conceded with the conventions of gender which give it life, of the 'private female universe' type, we could run the risk of misperceiving the constitution of a woman's world that is deconstructed (a little word very much in fashion) itself in the demasking of conventions that crystallize it as such. Conventions that, in our androcentric and discriminatory culture, have reached the writing to imprint on it a 'female' and 'male' essentiality, that in truth is inexistent.

It is not by chance that Maria Lucia Dal Farra, in her posture as critical subject, has opted to 'presume that the written, considered culturally as gender (male or female), can be conceived as one of the many resources of literary rhetoric, as one of the many means of persuasion at the disposition of the author'.¹³ Even though the poetry is also replete with themes and scenarios normally linked to the solely female universe, it is not this that 'women's writing' represents it with more vigor. It explodes in this male use of constructive ratio that the 'I' of his poems obstinately actualizes, even when dissimulated in the theme of domestic chores, the humble

¹¹ DAL FARRA, 1994, p. 85.

¹² In her second book (DAL FARRA, 2002, p. 9), the author declares: "À maneira de um dos poetas de Platão, tornei-me recipiente para que em mim pudessem (os objetos) estar presentes num corpo que não era de origem o deles". (The manner of one of Plato's poets, turns me into a recipient for the objects in a body that is not of their origin.

¹³ DAL FARRA, 2001, p. 54.

activities (washing clothes, cooking or ‘working the loom’) ¹⁴, the stigmatized male world’s productive vision as pure sterile repetition.

It is then that this doing entity will serve frequently to convert them in opportune moments for the composition of forms and structures which go beyond the simple recreation of a theme. The metaphor taken then is ‘I’ as domesticity, that I understand here as tame, colonization by the female sensibility of a constructive reason, of a ruined intellectual that cultural convention always denied it or conceded unwillingly. Note the paradigmatic case of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Thus, in this specific woman’s world, the crochet towel’s lacework as much incorporates what is identified as female delicacy as the necessary dexterity to organize elements in such a way as to construct beautiful forms, sight and touch, inexistent before. It is a labor that requires calculation, time and patience, in a lengthy renewal until the precision of the perfect form is reached through decantation. Moving on from there, the crochet towel can be chosen as an icon of this poetry, because it exposes, in its smells and voids, the existence of pure structural texture capturing beauty. “Parca doméstica”:

As teias da toalha de crochê	(The crochet towel webs)
efabulam-se	(enfabled)
no centro da mesa	(in the center of the table)
para o aparecimento do objeto apreendido:	(for the appearance of the arresting object)
O jarro e sua flor.	(the jar and its flower)
Toda a sala se arma em torno	(The whole room arms itself)
dessa pequena descoberta.	(around this small discovery)
As madeiras gemem	(The wood moans)
no parentesco vegetal da beleza urdida.	(in the vegetable parentage of interwoven beauty)
O armário arrisca a desenhar	(The wardrobe scribbles to design)

¹⁴ DAL FARRA, 1994, p. 54.

(desde o tronco)

(from the trunk)

um galho que os enlace

(a branch that enlaces them)

enquanto os cristais mal se sustêm de êxtase. (while the crystals barely sustain themselves in
ecstasy)

A aranha preside a tudo

(The spider presides over everything)

(invisível).

(invisible)

In the inter-stanza space, the jar and its flour, objects with defined weight seem to float in the levity of the images invited by the very frame - “crochet towel webs” – that sustains it. This initial plastic effect, material product of the terms’ spatial disposition on the poetic structure, begins, in truth, with the preeminence of the fabled verb, wholly highlighted, in its reflexive form, in the second verse of the first stanza. From there the imaginative invention chooses, orders and directs the elements of this world that come to life in the readers’ eyes. Relations appear between apparently diverse elements and everything points to the tie, the parentage, under the guide of the imaginative will which supplies things and its meanings so as to be captured in a significant form, as does the web the spider weaves. At this level, it costs little to bring the imagination to bear on the constructive reason that guides this poetry, in as far as the first is there to facilitate the opening to invisible realities and the second to give them a structure without which they do not, finally, become visible, tangible. How can we not feel in this dynamic, the meeting of the canto, the invocation of the indecisive, and of the decanto giving it form?

Maybe we can finally speculate on the new meaning that, it seems to me, brings with it the auras of this first book. The semi-material, subtle and evanescent beginning that surrounds things, the aura shows itself to be lost definitively to the poetic perception that, as mentioned, does not propose to capture the secret substance of the object, its indefinable trace but to address the linguistic material through a lucid consciousness of the formal work.

Joining the disseminated cables throughout this text, it is understood that the invocation of the indecisive, the manner it is realized, augurs the existence of a sensitive atmosphere that is the pure manifestation of the full meaning capacities of the word. Because of this, these auras result in the warping of constructive will, of imagined and meticulously organized combinations, an artifice which could constitute new old objects, new familiar recollections,

new scenes past, since they do not exist before being given form in the poem. These auras are composed of perceptions-interpretations of the analytical spirit, seated in the present to transit, not by the things, but through the contact that is established with them through the words; not by the remembrance of past, but by the image that is constructed of it today. This done, it is possible to understand that “Words do not come out of alchemies/ of kitchens-/nor of vain desires”, as the verses of ‘Autografo’ finish with, the last poem of the book. Metonym of a greater body that is language with its syntactic and sonorous structures, the latter so well explored in these poems, the words should then be taken out of limbo by the reflexive consciousness to be arranged by a larger structure by the force of a constructive deed. Here is the home lesson.

In ‘Livro de Possuidos’ the towel web lace weaves in the circumlocutions of a language that accentuates its descriptive vice to, literally, go around the object so as to investigate its existence. This object has a particular curiosity; when it does not constitute in itself a representation of a previous aesthetic, the plastic realities of the pictorial creations of Van Gogh and Klimt, belong to the natural world of fruit and vegetables, trees and flowers, independent of the will of this entity that makes up its motives. By the hand of Maria Lucia the latter, the latter assimilates to the work of the painter since they become composed of truly still life. This signals the creation of a specific procreative work, which it seems to me brings a radicalization of the procedures that this poetry submits to the object, as was detected in ‘Livro de Auras’.

Therefore, there is in this book, as the earlier one, an affirmation of the incapacity of the word to know the substance of things, to penetrate the entrails, in the original manner that these seem ordered for a sensitive experience. In this way the word here opts, once again, for giving them another existence, unfolded from the real as a perception that the linguistic material can formalize in the architecture of an artistic web.

Having already familiarized ourselves with such constructive procedures, the author herself, in the first words directed to the reader in ‘Possuidos’ and acting more as critic than poet, affirms it when recognizing the transformation that the original realities were submitted to, in function of the impossibility of representing them.¹⁵ These objects come to reside in the pure verb -‘my egotistical verb’-gaining with this the survival of a personal existence that does not intend to repeat the original, even if this is grandiose. In front of this canvas of Klimt. (“Ondinas”):

Habitantes das ondas (Inhabitants of the waves)

¹⁵ DAL FARRA, 2002, p. 9.

parentes das uíaras	(relations of the uíaras (Brazilian mermaid))
irmãs das sereias –	(sisters of the mermaids)
como escrevê-las?	(How to write them?)
Por gotas	(by drops)
Enxurradas	(storms)
por palavras pingadas que,	(by words dripping that)
afinal,	(finally)
cantem e extasiem?	(sing and find hypnotise?)
Deixá-las ao silêncio das correntes submersas,	(Leave them to the silence of the submerged currents)
sua morada–	(its residence)
é como hei de escrever.	(is like having to write)

As before, the verb here is the material that the poetry serves. Being material it should still be molded into a structure that supports a new meaningful existence. At this moment, notice the way in ‘Possuídos’ that constructive consciousness resonates in each poem, since the lyrical I is concentrated in an exercise that is mainly architectural filigree, which can be gleaned from the very choice of motives, firstly, images contained in spatially limited pictures. The restriction of the image to the limits of the canvas, but also the defined configuration that identifies each natural being, is conducive ground for the penetrative observation, for this ‘vertiginous attention’, alluded to in a new epigraph of Helder’s¹⁶ and that manifests itself as the first visual attribute of these texts. Thus, from the beginning, the observation seems to penetrate in the form of the canvas or of the natural object that looks at it; however, at the same time as this is witnessed, guided by the apparent descriptive spirit that inhabits these texts, this one picking up the other, it being of the poem. At the time of looking at the picture, its lines and features taking shape, its colors defining them, or rather its material reality –“The garden / is canvas spotted

¹⁶ DAL FARRA, 2002, p. 47.

with colors” (“Jardim florido”) –, makes present another material, the linguistic which gives existence to the poem.

The painting expresses the poem that, as the picture, composition of shapes and colors exists as pure language composition, with its combinations of words, which are also combinations of sounds. Because of this the poem is not a transcription of the canvas even though it is this to which it refers; it is a process that, like the picture, creates a form that which did not exist before, as Valery argued.

With regard to a Van Gogh canvas (‘Twelve sunflowers in a vase’):

Atestados do sol,	(Witnesses of the sun)
diferentes provas da existência de deus	(different tests of the existence of God)
na galáxia doméstica,	(in the domestic galaxy)
arranjos de constelação prazerosa –	(constellation arrangements of pleasure)
eles nos brindam a cada uma	(They toast us each one)
das horas do dia.	(of the hours of the day)
A vista se regozija	(the view overjoys)
(minuto a minuto)	(minute to minute)
recebendo a prenda.	(receiving the gift)

On the other hand the infinity of synesthetic images that appear in this process puts us in front of the perception of a subject that for most of the time remains half hidden or definitively absent. Something of the impersonal and objectivist emphasis of the Parnassian seems to hover above many of these texts that, as pointed out, gives in to the plastic description of the observed objects, in such a form that the unusual impression of the poem emerges by itself. Still, being the object that seems to be at the scene’s foreground, it is not being represented here, rather it is the mode in which the sensitive perception captures it.

And it is this mode that becomes impersonal, in the sense that many times the ‘I’ simply presents itself as consciousness that organizes the perceptive process in visual forms which have their place in a given sensitive experience. It could be its own, even if at the psychic moment of artistic subjectivity it conceives and gives life to the original pictorial images.

This obfuscation of I, already registered in other poems of ‘Auras’ (as in this one that the spider presides over everything invisibly and, physically, removing the poetic body through the inter-stanza double spacing), is defined in a lot of the texts of ‘Possuidos’, proof it seems to me, that it comes to be a reflexive quality that, with the impersonal, expurgates the psychological experience to formalize its mechanisms of perception.

Poetry that captures something that the object in itself does not possess but that is given it through a spirit which contemplates it from a perspective that if, from one side, is disposition to carry out a form and is also, on the other side, the power of subjective imagination to invoke possible meanings through the linguistic arrangement of the poem alone – “audible music/just/for those who kneel/on the earth”.¹⁷ The pure subjectivism (non personal) demanded by Valery for poetry that through the imagination activates suggestions and manages to materialize them in language due to the organizational capacity of the artistic intellect.

On the other hand, returning itself to the construction of an expressive wire fence made up of, as we saw, composite mechanisms which attack the confiscation of the constructive ratio from the exclusive male use, is the most important aspect this poetry reveals of the historic condition of a certain type of woman. It would not do to insist here in maintaining the homogenization of the female epithet, since women today are social beings with a variety of places in the productive dynamic of society. The image that, in this sense regurgitates the poetic procedure analyzed here could be linked to the subject in the orbit of influence of the productive urgencies of contemporary times: female subject that already shares with the male the same calamities of the productivist pressure of bourgeois society.

Through this bias the creative gesture that dynamizes the poetry of Maria Lucia Dal Farra, defined here as analytical spirit and constructive work, would have attached to itself the same conditions gained by man in the ungrateful world of production, or at least, attributing to it spaces not more disadvantageous than those that could be enjoyed by another in such a context.

With this, even if this woman could continue flying ‘to the infinite of dreams and imagination’, a place where the paternalistic society encloses it, it is undeniable that now as an

¹⁷ DAL FARRA, 2002, p. 115.

agent of the productive process, she also enters into the fight to secure positions of parity within these production coordinates through which, by requirement of bourgeois society, she begins to transit actively. In such a situation, the struggle of this female subject is an agreement which, as seen, cannot indulge in declarative spasms on the thematic plane, rather apply itself to the constructive deed of an expressive procedure.

The ‘magical mechanism’ alluded to by Haquira Osakabe in the presentation text of ‘Possuídos’ can maybe reveal in this double condition ingrained in the poetic construction to which it conforms, in a highly original manner, the idea of poetry as formal work applied to the content of imaginative intelligence, that evokes and suggests. It is what I tried to conceptualize, from the analysis of the initial, fundamental image that is the canto/decanto, in the visibility of the (de)canto as ‘unfolding poetry’. “The intimate unity of this poem with things”, that the author declares for Helder’s poetic voice, only remains viable by the force of a nomination that, penetrating deeply in the beings and objects that it takes, grasps them to then return them, not to their original state, but transformed into other possible existences. Deposed of its original content-deobjectified- they are fictionalized (made fables) and then potentialized, to exist not on the exterior of what it belongs to but on the interior of the actual poetic material. This is the mechanism of the possession.

This transfiguration is, without a doubt, alchemy of language, verbal magic that will enchant because it will remain mysterious even after having deciphered its formulas and understanding its charms. Still, alchemy being essential to the improved knowledge of the hidden properties of the elements, I will continue to understand its practice as applied labor in the poetry of Maria Lucia Dal Farra, in the concentrated handling of her instrument, under the lucid consciousness of the formal work.

Bibliography

BAUDELAIRE, Charles. *As flores do mal*. Trad. Ivan Junqueira. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1985.

DAL FARRA, Maria Lúcia. *Livro de auras*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 1994.

_____. “Poesia de mulher em língua portuguesa”. *Letras*, n. 23, p. 53-69, 2001.

_____. *Livro de possuídos*. 1. ed. São Paulo: Iluminuras, 2002.

LACLAU, Ernesto. “Os novos movimentos sociais e a pluralidade do social”. *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, v. 1, n. 2, p. 41-47, 1986.

NUNES, Benedito. *João Cabral de Melo Neto*. 1. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1971.

PRADO, Adélia. *Bagagem*. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1976.

Translated by Tony O' Sullivan
Translation from Revista Estudos Feministas, Florianópolis, vol. 13, n.3, p. 545-566.
Sept./Dec. 2005