

Brazilian Contemporary Science Fiction: An Analysis of Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* (2005)

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Abstract

The present study aims to raise discussion on Brazilian Science Fiction and its relation to social and political issues, particularly in the first decades of the 21st century. In this way, the analysis is focused on Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* (2005). As theoretical support, we build on the literary scholarship of Rachel Ferreira (2008), Molina-Gavilan (2003), Ipojuca Pontes (2006), Gaudêncio Torquato (2012), among others. As for methodology, a content analysis model is adopted in a bibliographic, exploratory, and qualitative approach. The results illustrate the engagement of the genre with social issues at the same time that provides the readers a thought-provoking and enjoyable reading. In conclusion, we can infer that Brazilian science fiction has reaffirmed the genre's relation to history as well as its emphasis on social and political issues.

Keywords: Brazilian Science Fiction, *Tempos de Fúria*, social and political issues

Ficção Científica Brasileira Contemporânea: Uma Análise de *Tempos de Fúria* (2005), de Carlos Orsi

Resumo

O presente estudo tem como objetivo explorar a ficção científica brasileira e sua relação com questões sociais e políticas, particularmente nas primeiras décadas do século XXI. Dessa forma, a análise se concentra na obra *Tempos de Fúria* (2005), de Carlos Orsi. Como suporte teórico, nos baseamos na produção literária de Rachel Ferreira (2008), Molina-Gavilan (2003) e dos críticos em política Ipojuca Pontes (2006), Gaudêncio Torquato (2012), entre outros. Quanto à metodologia, adota-se um modelo de análise de conteúdo com abordagem bibliográfica, exploratória e qualitativa. Os resultados ilustram o engajamento do gênero com as questões sociais ao mesmo tempo em que proporciona aos leitores uma leitura instigante e prazerosa. Concluindo, podemos inferir que a ficção científica brasileira tem reafirmado a relação do gênero com a história, bem como sua ênfase em questões sociais e políticas.

Palavras-chave: Ficção Científica Brasileira, *Tempos de Fúria*, questões sociais e políticas;

Ciencia Ficción Contemporánea Brasileña: Un análisis de *Tempos de Fúria* (2005), de Carlos Orsi

Resumen

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo suscitar la discusión sobre el género ciencia ficción brasileña y su relación con cuestiones sociales y políticas, particularmente en las primeras décadas del siglo XXI. De esta forma, el análisis se centra en *Tempos de Fúria* (2005), de Carlos Orsi. Como apoyo teórico, nosotros tomamos como base los apotes teóricos literarios de Rachel Ferreira (2008), Molina-Gavilan (2003), Ipojuca Pontes (2006), Gaudêncio Torquato (2012), entre otros. En cuanto a la metodología, se adopta un modelo de análisis de contenido en un enfoque bibliográfico, exploratorio y cualitativo. Los resultados ilustran el compromiso del género con los problemas sociales al mismo tiempo que proporciona a los lectores una actividad agradable y que invita a la reflexión. En conclusión, podemos inferir que la ciencia ficción brasileña ha reafirmado la relación del género con la historia, así como su énfasis en cuestiones sociales y políticas.

Palabras clave: Ciencia Ficción Brasileña, *Tempos de Fúria*, cuestiones sociales y políticas;

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Introduction

The academic study of Brazilian Science Fiction is relatively new, although its first works can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century. In the last two decades, the number of academic studies of Brazilian Science Fiction has considerably increased. Critics such as Elizabeth Ginway, Léo Godoy Otero, Roberto de Sousa Causo and Bráulio Tavares, among others, have focused on the national genre as a literary vehicle for examining the perception and cultural impact of the modernization process in Brazil.

The history of Brazilian Science Fiction is strongly linked with identity issues, and consequently with political and socio-cultural aspects. In this perspective, the present study has as its main aim to provide a discussion on Brazilian Contemporary Science Fiction and its relation to social and political issues. To do so, after making a quick resumption of the 20th century production, we will analyze Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* [*Times of Wrath* (2005)] as an important representative of the new tendency of the genre since the novel offers a trenchant critique of the new cultural and socio-economic Brazilian reality in the beginning of the century.

An overview of Brazilian Science Fiction production

The 1960s are regarded as one of the most significant periods for the genre, considering the number of works published in the time period and their importance in the national literature. Many factors made this an era of unprecedented achievement within the genre. Among them, Molina-Gavilan (2003) stresses the increased availability of translated U.S. and European works, leading to the broadening of the genre to embrace more of the thematic concerns of the social sciences and humanities. Writers such as Rubens Teixeira Scavone, Fausto Cunha, Dinah Silveira de Queiroz, Geronimo Monteiro, André Carneiro, and Antonio Olinto, among others were eager to change the direction of Brazilian science fiction, giving their works a regional style that was informed by specifically Brazilian cultural concerns.

During the seventies, the genre was marked by a series of dystopian narratives in which writers used a futuristic and imaginary world to denounce and criticize the actions of the government. By using an allegoric representation of the regime, writers tended to focus on the effects of the arbitrary and cruel technocracy which, in one way or another, instigated changes in society as a whole. The dystopian novels of this period are characterized by nostalgia for the past, especially in the idealized portrayal of Nature or women as repositories for authentic Brazilian identity as seen in the works *Fazenda Modelo* [*Model Farm*] (1974) by Chico Buarque, *O Funcionário Ruan* [*Ruan the State Worker*] (1975), by Mauro Chaves, *O Fruto do Vosso Ventre* [*The Fruit of thy womb*] (1976), by Herberto Sales, *Um Dia Vamos Rir Disso Tudo* [*Someday We'll Laugh About All This*] (1976), by Maria Alice Barroso, *Umbra* [*Shadow*] (1977), by Plínio Cabral and *Asilo nas Torres* [*Asylum in the Towers*] (1979), by Ruth Bueno.

During the eighties, important historical events contributed to significant changes in Brazilian science fiction: in the scientific and technological field, this included the birth of the first Brazilian test-tube baby (1984) and the inauguration of the Itaipu Hydroelectric company (1982); in the political field, the end of the dictatorship (1985) and direct presidential elections (1985); in the artistic field, an increasing number of Portuguese translations of Anglo-American science fiction classics, the transmission of series such as *Land of Giants*, *Lost in Space*, and *Star Trek* on Brazilian TV, and the popularization of films such as *Blade Runner*, *Alien*, *Close Encounter of the Third Kind*, and *Star Wars*, among others. The development of Brazilian science fiction during the eighties is in part linked to all these events because they either inspired or directly provided elements to improve the genre in the national scene. With the popularization of these international series and films, it is not surprising that Brazilian production continued to be strongly influenced by the Anglo-American tradition. Thus, there was still a strong desire for a genuinely Brazilian science fiction production.

Among the most significant works written during the eighties are: Jorge Luiz Calife's *Padrão de Contato* [*Partterns of Contact* (1985)] and *Horizonte de Eventos* [*Event Horizon* (1986)], Alfredo Sirkis's *Silicone XXI* [*Silicon 21* (1985)], Henrique Flory's *Sozinho* [*Alone* (1989)] and *A Aristocracia Eletrônica* [*The Eletronic Aristocracy* (1989)], Ivan Carlos Regina's *Pela Valorização da Vida* [*For the Valorization of Life* (1987)] and Bráulio Tavares's collection *A Espinha dorsal da memória* [*The Memory's Backbone* (1989)]. All of these works are somehow marked by the recent experience of the Brazilian dictatorship.

During the nineties, writers seemed to be less focused on themes directly related to the military regime and more concerned about the impact of modern policies of globalization on Brazilian society. As a result of this, Brazilian writers were strongly influenced by the American Cyberpunk style which, unlike hard science fiction, is usually pessimistic and shows the dark side of technology. As the most representative works of this trend, the author would highlight Fausto Fawcett's *Santa Clara Poltergeist* (1991) and Guilherme Kujawski's *Piratas Siderais: romance cyberbarroco* [*Outer Space Pyrites: A Cyberbaroque Novel* (1994)]. Both novels critically explore issues of race, class, and gender, and at the same time provide a discussion on the cultural exchange between the center and the periphery of the world system.

In general terms, most writers from today's generation focus on modern life and the lack of traditional values in contemporary Brazilian culture. According to the critic and historian Rachel Haywood Ferreira in *The Emergence of Latin American Science Fiction* (2011), Brazilian science fiction allows readers to see the identity crises generated by the process of modernization. The national body of science fiction works exemplifies the erosion of national identity because it is permanently influenced by cultural changes inherent to the process of globalization initiated during the 1990s. In other words, contemporary writers are concerned about the process of cultural hybridization discussed by Homi Bhabha (1994) and Nestor Cancline (1997).

In the first decades of the 21st century, many significant works were written. Among them, we highlight *Tempos de Fúria* [Times of Wrath] (2005), by Carlos Orsi, *Os dias da Peste* [The Plague Days] (2009) by Fábio Fernandes, *Mnemomáquina* (2014) by Ronaldo Bressane, and *A lição de Anatomia do temível doutor Louison* [The Anatomy Lesson of the Terrible Doctor Louison] (2014) by Enéias Tavares, among others. In order to show how Brazilian fiction has become a genre that deals with contemporary national issues, the following section aims to analyze Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* [Wrath Times/Times of Wrath] (2005) as a representation of the most recent tendencies in Brazilian science fiction.

Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* [Times of Wrath (2005)]: A Contrastive Image of Brazil in Contemporary Times

Given that most critical studies on Brazilian Science Fiction have focused on works produced during the 60s and 70s and how they represent important tendencies that emerged in the genre during and after the end of the military regime, it is now time to outline and comment on more recent literary works. Although the genre has not received the same academic attention as other national genres, it is noticeable that science fiction is beginning to come into its own in Brazil. After analyzing the most recent manifestations of the genre in Latin America, the critic Rachel Haywood Ferreira calls attention to recent developments in the field: Not only has there been a wave of publication in science fiction in the past two decades, but there has been an exponential increase in critical studies of the genre, particularly in the areas of bibliography and genre history. These recent trends have meant that writing, reading, teaching or researching in the field of Latin American science fiction is now a vastly different experience from even a few years ago (Ferreira: 2008, 352).

In Brazil, the increase in critical studies of the genre may be, in part, attributed to Ginway's work which, in many respects, gave guidance to other researchers. In terms of literary production, new perspectives can be seen in the field, and this 'different experience' mentioned by Ferreira (2008) is easily observed in works such as Carlos Orsi's *Tempos de Fúria* [Times of Wrath] (2005). The novel is characterized by the author's engagement in social and political issues, and it is probably the work which best represents Brazilian science fiction during the first decade of 21st century. It offers a trenchant critique of the new cultural and socio-economic realities caused by the process of globalization in Third World countries.

Carlos Orsi is a journalist and writer born in Jundiaí, São Paulo in 1971. His science fiction works have been widely popularized in prominent national magazines such as *Isaac Asimov*, *Play*, *RPG Dragão Brasil* and the *American Crypt of Cthulhu*. My reason for choosing Orsi is justified by the fact that Orsi has been broadly recognized as a science fiction writer, inside and outside of Brazil. As he is a contemporary and well-known writer, his works can be found in any Brazilian bookshop.

Orsi's first notable work was *Aprendizado* [Learning] published in the *Isaac Asimov Magazine* in 1992. Since then, he has made important contributions to the genre of Brazilian science fiction, including *Medo, Mistério e Morte* [Fear, Death and Mystery] (1996), *O Mal de Um Homem* [Man's Evil] (2000), *Guerra Justa* [Just War] (2010) and *Nômade* [Nomad] (2010). Some of Orsi's early writings were influenced by Howard Phillips Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928), which is based on the Cthulhu Mythos. Lovecraft was an American horror, fantasy and science fiction writer whose works were based on what he termed 'cosmicism', the idea that life is not comprehensible to human minds. Within the history of science fiction, Lovecraft is usually associated with themes of degeneration, atavism and the occult that characterized fin-de-siècle Anglo-American Gothic Fiction and preceded the Golden Age of science fiction when it was identified as a new genre. However, Orsi tries to show that his writings go beyond Lovecraft's influence. According to Orsi (2007)², two elements are central to Lovecraft's work: the sense that humanity is utterly helpless and a deep sense of irony about humanity's place in the universe; such elements constitute an important point of divergence between these two writers:

² Interviewed by Sr. Arcano from *Sombrias Escrituras* in August 2007:
<http://www.sombriasescrituras.net/products/carlos-o-martinho-agosto-de-2007/> Accessed on June 12, 2012.

O que me distancia um pouco da obra dele, hoje, é um certo provincianismo que passei a sentir em seus trabalhos, nesse negócio de os personagens ficarem loucos ao notar como a raça humana é insignificante. Dá vontade de gritar... [What distances my work a bit from his work, today, is a sense of provincialism that I began to feel in his works, in this business of his characters going crazy when they realize how insignificant the human race is. It makes me want to scream...] (*Sombrias Escrituras*, 2007).

Indeed, the idea that the human race is insignificant permeates most of Orsi's works, particularly *Times of Wrath* (2005). This work is a collection of six short stories entitled: "Estes 15 minutos" [These 15 Minutes], "Questão de Sobrevivência" [Matter of Survival], "Pressão fatal" [Fatal Strain], "Planeta dos Mortos" [Planet of the Dead], "Desígnios da noite" [Designs of the Night] and "A Aventura da Criança Perdida" [The Adventure of the Lost Child]. In this work, Orsi offers a fusion of life and death in such a way that it is possible to see the existential crises in which contemporary society is immersed. By using textual strategies, he produces his dystopian critique of modern Brazilian imperialist policies. This attitude seems to be a trend not only in Brazil but in most Latin American countries. Commenting on the way the Latin American writer Gerardo Horacio Porcayo deals with themes of imperialism in his postcolonial science fiction novel *La Primera Calle de la Soledad* (1993), Juan Zapata states;

It is in this way that dystopia becomes critical in an epoch of the global and local trend of fusion. PCS elaborates strategies of negotiating the passage from late – capitalist and apparently post-ideological Anti-utopia, in which it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to change it to a Utopia of justice [*sic*] (2010, 199).

Both Porcayo and Orsi demonstrate the double vision that societies have acquired through globalization. Orsi's first story, "These 15 Minutes", tells the story of the two central characters, o Gordo (the fat guy) and o Magro (the thin guy) who have just returned from a trip to Colombia, Merdistão, Porriquistão, Cuziquistão³. The narrative begins in a dirt floor bar where the two characters and a bandit gang named "Men of the Command" meet to plan a bank robbery. The Men of the Command are the ones who control the drug trade and other kind of crime rings. Command here refers to the headquarters of a paramilitary, criminal organization. (In real life they are often corrupt police officers and politicians). Gordo and Magro, nicknames which the Brazilian reader associates with those given in Portuguese to the American comedy duo Laurel and Hardy, are the ones who execute the crime but are not part of the Command, that is, they do not gain any kind of prestige or advantages other than a very small part of the profit. Suddenly, Magro starts to talk about esoteric topics such as the formation of the universe, transcendentalism, image projection and cinematography, among others. All these come across in the story as forms of scientific and technological knowledge. Gordo does not show any interest in this conversation, first because he does not understand Magro's words, and secondly because all of that discussion seems to him a waste of time. In his opinion, Magro had travelled to Acre (one of the poorest states of Brazil located in the North region) and returned with those idiotic ideas.

Despite Gordo's lack of interest in the conversation, the Men of the Command demonstrate great interest in Magro's ideas and listen attentively. Thus, Gordo must be quiet and listen, too. After Magro's long speech, they finally start to plan the bank robbery. Drugs, pornography, and obscene words are frequent in the dialogue, particularly when they see Magro's wife dancing and provoking men. Magro's wife (Loira) is a sexy and provocative blonde woman whose body is the object of sexual desire. Apparently, because of her lack of inside knowledge, she does not pose any threat to the gang. The robbery is successful and the Command receives 50% of the money.. However, Loira discovers where Magro hides his money and drugs, and she kills him. The reader discovers that she is part of the Command and acts on their behalf. After Magro's death, the leaders of the Command plan to kill the other participants in the robbery (including Gordo) as a way of destroying all traces of evidence. The story ends with the assassination of all the participants in the robbery, except the Men of the Command.

In this first story, "These 15 Minutes", Orsi depicts a society in which technological advances and progress are still far from forming part of ordinary and poor people's lives, and thus technological and scientific knowledge are important elements of subversion. From the very beginning of the story, Orsi presents the reader with a society that excludes, marginalizes and exploits the 'Other' in the name of an endless search for power and personal advantage. In this society that sustains itself internally by maintaining social exclusion and inequality, lack of knowledge and education is imperative for the perpetuation of poverty

³ These imaginary places seem to be a reference to third world countries that seem to be independent but are still economically dependent on First World countries. The fictitious names that three of them are given ..., Shitistan, Hellkistan and Assholekistan are clearly intended to refer to living conditions in them, and, by listing them with Colombia, would appear to include it, too.

Fim de tarde num boteco de chão de terra batida... As mesinhas de armar (e cadeiras idem) foram, um dia, vermelhas por causa da tinta mas agora deviam a cor à ferrugem...

– E se eu disser pra você que tudo, o mundo inteiro, foi criado há menos de 15 minutos?

– Eu diria, ou melhor, *repetiria*, que estamos aqui discutindo essa merda de assunto, já faz mais de meia hora... (9)

[Evening in a bar with a tramped down earthen floor... The old tables and chairs were once red because of the paint but now their color is due to the rust...]

– And what if I told you that everything, the whole world was created 15 minutes ago?

– I would tell you, I mean, *I would repeat*, that we are talking about this shitty subject for more than half an hour...].

Orsi's decision to start his work by describing a scene typical of Brazilian suburbs is arguably a strategy to produce science fiction without losing his focus on Brazil's experiences arising from the economic and cultural conditions caused by global capitalism. It is worth observing that contradiction is an important element in the society Orsi wants to describe; in the story, although characters are in a dirt floor bar, there is someone who insists on talking about technological and scientific progress, something that is not part of those people's worlds.

Analyzing Brazil's political and economic portrait during the first decade of 21st century, the time when the story was written, one could easily observe two different realities: one of them claims Brazil is an emerging nation alongside Russia, India, and China, and the other reality shows that, in spite of its advancement in terms of technology, Brazil has one of worst income distributions in the world. Discussing this contrasting image of Brazil in contemporary times, the journalist Gaudêncio Torquato (2012) points out that "After decades of high inflation, [Brazil] managed to forge a stable currency; it shows a good surplus in the balance of trade; displays cutting edge technology in some sectors; it is competitive in niches such as agribusiness; it lowered the country risk and settled the debt with the IMF. On another scale, among 177 nations, it shows the fourth worst coefficient that measures the distribution of income among individuals, with 47% of national income in the hands of the richest 10%; it buries 50,000 victims of gun violence annually; It has an investment rate of about 20% of GDP (in China, this rate reaches 45%), and it is the leader in the ranking of interest rates and taxes, reaching 37% of GDP."

This contrastive image of Brazil is clearly emphasized by Orsi in "These 15 Minutes" and it is illustrated by the huge difference, in terms of techno-scientific knowledge, between the two central characters. It is worth mentioning that the whole scientific conversation takes place in a bar with a tramped-down earthen floor, a place where people would never meet up to talk about scientific development. This contrast permeates the whole narrative starting with the description of the nameless protagonists: a fat and a thin guy.

O Magro. O Magro é um sujeito engraçado, pensou o Gordo. Traficantezinho de merda. Sumiu por uns tempos, e agora voltou com essas idéias cretinas. Disse que tinha passado uns tempos na Colômbia, com as Farc, e depois no Merdistão, Porriquistão, Cuziquistão, vá lá saber, um daqueles lugares onde fazem ópio, heroína (10) [The thin guy is a funny chap, thought the fat one. A 2-bit trafficker of shit who disappeared for a while and returned with these cretinous ideas. He said he had spent time in Colombia, with the Farc, and then in Shitistan, Hellkistan and Assholekistan, who the fuck knows, one of those places where they make opium and heroin].

If on the one hand the thin guy is the one who holds knowledge and progressive ideas, on the other hand, he represents the idea that techno-scientific knowledge is not enough to acquire economic and political independence. Although Magro has demonstrated his intellectual superiority, it is not enough to be part of the Command; instead, he is just a 'traficantezinho' (a 2-bit, very small-time trafficker) whose only function is to carry out the Command's orders. This may suggest the paradoxical situation in which Brazil has immersed since the turn of the century and which has been subject of countless reflections and discussions. For Torquato (2012), the paradox of Brazil is that it carries geographical weight yet its people are still far from achieving nationhood, defined in this sense as a synchronism of spirits and hearts, a sentimental solidarity of races, of a communion of hopes, common dreams, and a collective decision to march together.

While Torquato makes a case for a strong sense of nationality, he denounces the lack of identity as part of the Brazilian colonial inheritance. This attitude is well illustrated by the figure of the nameless characters named according to their physical characteristics: 'o Gordo' (the fat guy), 'o Magro' (the thin guy), 'a Loira' (the blond woman). There is no character whose name could express any sense of personal identity or individual representation.

The author's reference to foreign influence on Brazilians is significant ; the thin guy changed his behavior and ideas after living abroad. Although he has not been to the First World, he demonstrates that his knowledge came from the countries he visited, suggesting that he was, somehow, influenced by foreign ideas. According to Molina-Gavilan (2003), international relations are a frequent theme in science fiction from Latin America and Spain; some stories reflect current events as they imagine a new political and economic alliance among nations or explore issues of sovereignty. This tendency is clearly present in "These 15 Minutes".

However, Orsi opts to explore this alliance in its negative side showing that international relations are usually harmful to Brazilian society as a whole. From this perspective, Orsi depicts a world without any consistent values, as if it were not possible to fix the damage or foster hope for the future: *O mundo é cheio de remendos... Emendas malfeitas entre os pedaços de 15 minutos... Costuras ruins* [The world is full of patches... Badly made amendments between the pieces of fifteen minutes... Lousy seams] (p. 15). This negative way of seeing the world is closely related to that presented by Lovecraft. Also, Orsi's text bears witness to his own disbelief in better times for the economy and politics of Brazil. If at the turn of the century most people really believed that Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (the President elected in October 2004) would be the best choice in an attempt to change the course of Brazilian politics, in 2005, there was a strong feeling of deception and disillusion toward Lula's government.

Lula had become president in 2002. However, changes did not come as they were supposed to; scandals of political corruption, among other crimes, were frequent during the first years of Lula's administration. In December 2004, after analyzing the two first years of Lula's government, the journalist and writer Ipojuca Pontes demonstrates his deep discouragement toward the future of Brazilian politics:

O grande enigma para as consciências livres não é mais saber o que de promessas, escândalos e arrochos aguarda a população brasileira no próximo ano, mas sim, em que escala, amplitude e proporção elas ocorrerão. [The great enigma for free consciences is no longer to know what promises, scandals and crunches await the Brazilian population next year, but rather in what scale, amplitude and proportion they will come] (Pontes: 2006, 95)

Both Orsi and Pontes seem to share the same negative feeling toward Brazil. Scandals involving congressmen and government ministers were the topics of innumerable debates and discussions in all sectors of society, particularly in academic circles and the public sector. Although there was evidence that members of Lula's party (the Worker's party) used illegal money to fund Lula's election campaigns, he insisted on saying that he did not know about the scheme. Thus, the expression "I didn't know" was used ironically to refer to the President's lack of competence to govern Brazil. As a journalist, Orsi was aware of all scandals involving members of the government, and because of that, he utilizes the genre of science fiction to critique the way in which the actions of corrupt politicians have affected the Brazilian population. In "These 15 Minutes", his critical reflection emphasizes the involvement of the government in illegal activities, the consequences of which affect particularly the lower class. The omissions and participation of the government in these illegal activities are clearly expressed in the end of the story:

Os homens do Comando estão lá, mas não se comunicam. A centímetros uns dos outros, mas não se tocam. Gritam, mas nenhum deles é sequer capaz de ouvir a própria voz. O vazio penetra por suas bocas escancaradas e os preenche. Em breve, nenhum deles será mais capaz de ouvir os próprios pensamentos [The men of the Command are there but do not communicate with each other. A few centimeters from each other but they do not bump into each other. They shout out loud but none of them is even able to hear his own voice. The void penetrates their gaping mouths and fills them. Soon, none of them will be able to hear their own thoughts] (Orsi: 2005, 21)

Through this passage, one can see a connection or reference to the gang formed by the President's ministers and personal friends exposed within the first years of Lula's administration. The expression "the Men of the Command" seems to refer to Lula's team – José Dirceu (Lula's chief of staff and a minister), Waldomiro Diniz (Dirceu's aide) and José Genoíno (the president of Lula's party) – whose negative images were getting worse each day (within the real political scenario in Brazil). Although there has not been any consistent proof of Lula's personal participation in the crimes committed by his team, public opinion considers Lula as the most important mentor of the crimes. For Pontes:

Lula bateu todos os records... conseguiu corromper todo o tecido político, institucional e administrativo do país, em especial comprando votos, permitindo negociatas, omissão diante de fraudes impetradas contra os recursos públicos, gerindo, ele próprio, o aparelhamento do Estado, para fins de perpetuação do poder. [Lula beat all records... He managed to corrupt the entire political, institutional and administrative fabric, especially by buying votes, allowing under-the-table negotiations, omitting fraudulent use of public resources, and by him himself managing the apparatus of the State in order to perpetuate his power] (Pontes: 2006, 51).

Any attentive reader would note the similarity between Pontes's and Orsi's discourse. As journalists who both live in São Paulo, it is possible that they have participated in the same group of intellectuals who tried to initiate the impeachment process against Lula. Once again, Brazilian science fiction offers an alternative way of discussing Brazilian socio-political problems. Since ancient times, literature has been used as a way of registering or denouncing practices that effect, oppress or destroy a society or group.

In contemporary times, this function has been expanded due to the increasing involvement of writers in the social events they want to critique. Brazilian contemporary science fiction writers, for example, are mostly professional journalists, which facilitates their access to information that ordinary people do not have. Thus, Brazilian science fiction has reaffirmed the genre's relation to history as well as its emphasis on social and political issues. As suggested by the critic Ericka Hoagland, the genre has been used as: "an ethical enterprise packaged as entertainment; and a forward-looking project that is frequently rooted in anxieties about the present" (Hoagland: 2010, 9). Contemporary Brazilian science fiction then draws critical attention to how colonialism/neocolonialism and all its practices have been constructed and maintained throughout Brazilian history.

Orsi's *Times of Wrath* seems to initiate a new moment for the national genre. As a 21st century science fiction writer, Orsi uses his literature to express his critique of the modern kind of political, economic and cultural domination faced by Brazilian people today. He offers a combination of the real and the imaginary in which man exists in the middle of an existential conflict caused by the complexities of a world of new technology and globalization. Among other stylistic resources, the kinetic narrative stands out as the one which best differentiates his style from other contemporary writers. The constant movement of time allows characters to have a subjective experience of life which goes from present to future without any commitment to the laws of reality:

No vácuo entre os Universos, não há luz. Nem som, ou cheiro. Nem toque... não há como medir o tempo. Não há nada para lembrar um homem da própria existência (21) [In the void between Universes, there is no light. No sound, nor smell. Nor touch ... There is no way to measure time. There is nothing to remind a man of his own existence]. Orsi creates characters marked by the inversion of values promoted by rampant capitalism and all its derivatives. In this sense, the characters' existential conflicts are deeply linked to the inconsistency of Brazil's political and economic development. The huge economic insecurity that Brazil faced in the first years of the 21st century created a social tension that affected people's lives at all levels: social, emotional, familial, spiritual, and so forth.

While this visible existential conflict may reflect the lack of grounding which victims of an inhumane and corrupt system experience, it may suggest the possibility of a new beginning without any connection to the past: Eles rezam para que tudo acabe logo, e cada oração dura um segundo ou um milênio, quem poderá dizer? [They pray for it all to go away, and every prayer lasts a second or a millennium, who can say?] (21). Throughout the text, Orsi invites the reader to reflect on events that seem to be unimportant for society as a whole. This attitude is fundamental to his strategy of resistance, which is to confront the real with the imaginary, truth with untruth, corruption with non-corruption. Although some of Orsi's early works were influenced by Lovecraft's style, his recent works have demonstrated his individual growth in the science fiction genre, showing a personal style and a unique ability to deal with contemporary themes, particularly in the political and cultural fields.

In general terms, Orsi's works deal with socio-political and cultural aspects of Brazilian society, emphasizing a variety of post-modern ethical issues, such as neo-colonialism and all its forms of oppression and domination, organ transplantation, ecological disaster, human corruption, terrorist activities and human evolution. His style differs from others on account of his extraordinary ability to present the reader with a world in which reality and fiction go hand in hand. He makes use of current political and economic events to detail his criticism toward the Brazilian government and to project his own anxiety about the modern world. Within the literary context, Orsi's regional flavor or style may well represent a growing independence of Brazilian science fiction genre from the Anglo-American tradition.

Conclusion

The diversity of styles in the science fiction genre has shown a boundless range of possibilities for dealing with social issues. Brazilian writers have made use of these possibilities in various exciting and productive ways. The misconception that science fiction is a genre of First World countries is contradicted by works of a large number of writers in Brazil and other Latin America countries. The genre's multidisciplinary features have allowed Brazilian writers to explore a wide range of social issues through a Brazilian lens.

In general terms, post-colonial literature, particularly postcolonial science fiction, is a means of exploring neocolonial and postcolonial situations in Brazil. Therefore, in order to understand Brazilian Science Fiction, it is useful to apply postcolonial theories. As expressed by Ericka Hoagland and Reema Sarwal in their introduction to *Science Fiction, Imperialism and the Third World* (2010), in both postcolonial literature and science fiction, the representation of the encounter with difference, Otherness and alterity is an important characteristic. For them, the function of the 'Other' is intriguingly similar in both genres. The 'Other' consolidates difference as well as solidifies the norm; as both a theoretical concept and a tangible object, the 'Other' is used to justify the exploitation and annihilation of peoples, whether red, black or green.

In order to show how Brazilian people are ‘othered’ by an imperial system perpetuated since colonial times, writers took advantage of the combination of science fiction and postcolonial literature. The use of allegory, cognitive estrangement, and techniques such as irony and metaphors allowed these writers to inaugurate a new circle of writing in Brazilian science fiction which differs from the Anglo-American tradition. Using postcolonial theory to read Brazilian science fiction, it is possible to see some of the key differences between Brazilian and Anglo-American science fiction. Although Brazilian science fiction may use the same icons and images as those of Anglo-American tradition, these icons are used according to Brazilian political and cultural perspectives. Therefore, *Tempos de Fúria* (2005) is a good illustration of how contemporary writers have developed a writing style imaginatively exploring Brazilian technological society. Orsi presents the conception of man and machine from the perspective of a third world country which is apparently a technologically developed nation, but is still essentially dependent and submissive. Orsi presents technology as extremely harmful and destructive to human relationships, affecting people’s behavior and conceptions of friendship and fraternity.

In this climate of innovation, the first decade of the 21st century is marked by a great number of writers who continued to develop their own styles by exploring the relationships between reactionary nationalism, postcolonialism, the complexity of cultural politics, as well as Brazil’s socio-economic situation. Unlike twentieth century writers, 21st century writers are more anxious to gain space in the literary milieu to share their critiques. As a consequence, the number of science fiction readers and writers has increased considerably, and this has caught the attention of critics not only inside but also outside of Brazil.

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