

Monteiro Lobato in the press*

Monteiro Lobato na imprensa

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ABSTRACT

The article discusses the importance of the work developed by Monteiro Lobato in the press, focusing on the territory where he started his activities: the Parayba Valley. The approach herein is to explore a facet of the writer still little described in the academic field, i. e., the journalistic activity that preceded his trajectory as a writer. Supported by bibliographic research, this text points out, in a summary way, the publications of the referred region that counted with the contribution of the journalist/writer, signaling particularities of his performance in this context.

Keywords: Monteiro Lobato, journalist, journalism, press, Paraíba Valley

RESUMO

O artigo discute a relevância do trabalho desenvolvido por Monteiro Lobato junto à imprensa, com enfoque no território onde ele começou suas atividades: o Vale do Paraíba Paulista. A tentativa que aqui se faz é de explorar uma faceta do escritor ainda pouco retratada no âmbito acadêmico, ou seja, a da atividade jornalística que antecedeu sua trajetória como literato. Amparado em pesquisa bibliográfica, este texto aponta, sumariamente, as publicações da referida região que contaram com a contribuição do jornalista-escritor, sinalizando particularidades de seu desempenho nesse contexto.

Palavras-chave: Monteiro Lobato, jornalista, jornalismo, imprensa, Vale do Paraíba

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INTRODUCTION

MONTEIRO LOBATO (1882-1948) is a singular figure of the Brazilian intellectuality. Popularly known for his children literary work, which gave rise to the TV series *Sítio do Picapau Amarelo*¹, the writer contributed enormously not only to this publishing segment, but also to the whole book industry in Brazil, promoting – in a propitious moment, social and culturally speaking (Koshiyama, 2006: 16) – significant advances in the sector, either with his own works or with the publishing of other Brazilians and foreign authors.

Creator of characters that nowadays still inhabit the Brazilian imagery – as the restless rag doll Emília or the controversial Jeca Tatu – Lobato had become a kind of national myth, having his image especially related to a man avid for changes and progress. This characteristic was printed in his career and work, such as in the book *América*, in which he stated that “a country is build by men and books” (Lobato, 1966: 45, our translation), clearly showing his tendency of being an editor and a man interested in the development of the human being.

It is worth remembering that he was one of the main enthusiasts of the nationalistic campaign for the oil, and that this fact was responsible for his imprisonment and for the decline of his career. In the beginning of the 30’s, as a newcomer in the U.S., he encouraged the creation of Brazilian companies devoted to oil extraction. However, his enthusiasm, characterized by a strong nationalistic appeal, turned into a controversial confrontation with the then-president Getúlio Vargas, who imposed many obstacles to the oil exploitation. As Marisa Lajolo reveals,

in the analysis done towards his oil campaign, Monteiro Lobato assigns its failure to political reasons: to him, the *Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral e o Conselho Nacional de Petróleo*² were committed with the interests of international oil trusts (2000: 76, our translation).

The writer registered his indignation towards this story in, at least, two works: in the book for adults *O escândalo do petróleo*³ (1936) – censored in 1937, but whose first editions were sold out as soon as they were published – and in the one for children *O poço do Visconde*⁴ (1938).

To the common sense, Lobato was a man who was ahead his time. Having lived “in a time marked by a series of transformations” (Marçolla, 2005: 173, our translation), in which “the world was looking for different paths, in the name of progress” (Ibid.), he gave several warnings in order to help the growth of Brazil, using the devices he had at hand – particularly the newspapers and the books. Not by chance, the sociologist Gilberto Freyre uttered that “the figure

1 *The Yellow Woodpecker Ranch*, in a free translation.

The extensive children’s literature written by Lobato, 1920 – with his debut book in this genre, *A menina do nariz arrebitado* (*The girl of the upturned nose*) – until 1947, was converted by four TV stations of the country, in a television show for children. The first experience was the on *Rede Tupi* (1952-1962), followed by *TV Cultura* (1964) and *TV Bandeirantes* (1967-1969). But undoubtedly, the most remarkable was the production of *Rede Globo*, responsible for two versions of the series (1977-1986 and 2001-2007).

2 National Department of Mineral Production and the National Oil Council, in a free translation.

Author’s Note: the Conselho Nacional do Petróleo (National Oil Council) was created by decree-law n. 395, in April 29, 1938, after government officials have ascertained the existence of “black gold” in Bahia.

3 *The oil scandal*, in a free translation.

4 *The well of the Viscount*, in a free translation.

of the writer ought to be kept not only by the literary history of Brazil, but also by the history of our people and of the Brazilian nationality” (apud Nunes, 2000: 5, our translation).

In face of these observations, it is important to say that the understanding of the intellectual perspectives of Lobato cannot leave aside the space which was significant for the dissemination of his ideas and for the formation of a critical man and, somehow, fearless: it means that the *press* should be necessarily incorporated to the debate risen around the work of Lobato. After all, it was on this stage – more specifically on the newspapers – that he found, in different stages of his life, a propitious place to express his opinions, besides, of course, “publicize his name and achieve a higher goal, which was to sell his books”, as well observed by Eliane Freire de Oliveira and Robson Bastos da Silva (1999: 44, our translation).

The article that follows puts the figure of the journalist Lobato under debate, focusing on the scenario that marked the beginning of his work in the press: the Vale do Paraíba, in São Paulo state, which is the region where Taubaté, his hometown, is situated. This is an essay built in the light of the bibliographical research, which has the modest – but, at the same time, ambitious – intention of disclose a complex historical investigation field, that may contribute to new insights towards the intellectual formation of the writer.

BIODATA

As it was previously said, Lobato was born in Taubaté (in São Paulo state), on April 18, 1882. His parents – the farmer José Bento Marcondes Lobato and the dame Olympia Augusta Monteiro Lobato, who was the daughter of an also farmer, Joaquim Francisco Monteiro, who got the title of Baron and afterwards of Viscount of Tremembé (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 22) – baptized him with the name José Renato Monteiro Lobato. At age 11, however, he decided to replace *Renato* by *Bento*, intending to inherit his father’s cane, which had been engraved with the initials J.B.M.L. Thus, “he eliminated the R which interfered in his dream of carrying a cane. And with a card adorned with flowers, he communicates his mother the new name” (Marçolla, 2005: 174, our translation).

In the childhood, the boy Juca – as he was commonly called – “he grew up differently from the other kids” (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 27, our translation). Always with the “face buried in books, and with shining eyes seeing far beyond the bedroom window” (Ibid.), “his favorite place was the library of the Viscount, in the house situated at Rua XV de Novembro⁵, near the Largo do Teatro⁶, in Taubaté, where he used to spend hours leafing through the magazine *Revista Ilustrada*⁷ and the newspaper *Journal des Voyages*⁸” (Ibid.).

5 Fifteen of November Street, in a free translation.

6 Theatre Square, in a free translation.

7 *Illustrated Magazine*, in a free translation.

8 *Newspaper of Trips*, in a free translation.

As usual at that time, the boy learned the *first letters* with his mother when he was four or five years old. Already literate, he had a private tutor: Joviano Barbosa. At age seven, he entered the school of the teacher L. Kennedy, a newcomer in Taubaté. Later, he studied at the Americano⁹, at the Paulista¹⁰ and at the São João Evangelista¹¹ schools, all in his homeland (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 23-25; Nunes, 2000: 6). In 1895, he packed up and moved to São Paulo city. His destination: the Instituto de Ciências e Letras¹², which provided exams that allowed his enrollment in the preparatory course for entering the higher education institutions. However, “he flunked in Portuguese and had to change his way: he went back to the Paulista school and to Taubaté. And that’s where he debuted in print, as a contributor to *O Guarany*, an improvised students’ newspaper” (Lajolo, 2000: 14, our translation).

Lobato returned to São Paulo city in 1896. After passing the exams, he was enrolled as an intern at the Instituto de Ciências e Letras. He remained there for three years, flunking only once, in Latin. During this period, he contributes with students’ newspapers – *O Patriota*¹³ and *A Pátria*¹⁴ – under the pseudonym of Gustavo Lannes, which he also uses to sign papers that circulate in small newspapers published in Taubaté. Furthermore, “not satisfied with the fact of contributing to his friends and hometown papers, he founded his own newspaper, which he names ‘H2O’. It was a handwritten newspaper that was read by its own author on Saturdays, during the break, inside a square of defense” (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 52, our translation).

It belongs only to Edgard Cavalheiro (1955a: 52) the assertion that Lobato, in the period from 1896 to 1899, contributed at distance with small newspapers in his hometown. No other record mentions such fact and the own Cavalheiro does not say which are these publications. It is understood, therefore, that the biographer should not have located no copy of these newspapers – which most probably were handwritten - making use of oral records to make such assertion. Moreover, *H2O*, referred to by him, it is also not identified by other authors. The possible reason is that it was not exactly a journalistic publication, but rather a joke of students (perhaps taken seriously).

In a span of less than a year, between June 13, 1898 and June 21, 1899, Lobato lost his father and mother, respectively (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 88). An orphan at age 17, his custody – as well as his sisters’, Ester and Judite – was assumed by the Viscount of Tremembé, who decided his future. “Trampling an assumed calling of his grandson for the Fine Arts, the Viscount forces him to enroll at the Law School, course in which at that time flowed all the sons of the Brazilian aristocracy” (Lajolo, 2000: 16, our translation).

9 American, in a free translation.

10 From São Paulo state, in a free translation.

11 St. John the Evangelist, in a free translation.

12 Institute of Science and Languages, in a free translation.

13 *The Patriot*, in a free translation.

14 *The Motherland*, in a free translation.

The higher education course was taken at the School of Law of the Largo São Francisco¹⁵ in São Paulo city, where he lived from 1900 until 1905. In this last year, more precisely in January, he returned to Taubaté, where he started dating Maria da Pureza de Castro Natividade, that he always called Purezinha and to whom he married in 1908. They had four children: Martha, Edgard, Guilherme and Ruth.

¹⁵ *San Francis Square*, in a free translation.

Notoriety and prominence, Monteiro Lobato has already got at that time [1908]. Public Prosecutor in Areias, a quiet town where nothing happened, he had plenty of time to dedicate himself to reading and to the written articles for newspapers. This quiet life did not last long. Lobato, at age 29, inh (...). Given this fact, Lobato leaves the peaceful life in Areias, moves with his family to take over the farm Buquira (...). At the same time, he gets involved in a business of railroads and opens a day-school in Taubaté. Lobato's versatility is his trademark. Always ahead of his time in search of modernity (Marçolla, 2002: 78, our translation).

Lobato lived in Taubaté from 1911 until 1916 (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 197). In that year, after selling the farm he inherited from his grandfather – driven by the decline of the coffee production – he moved with his family to São Paulo, where he lived – except in the periods in which he stayed out of the country – until his death in September 4, 1948.

Throughout his life, he published much more than 50 books to his credit, which alternate between literature for children and for adults. He also translated a considerable amount of works, and has left numerous single works, originally published in the press, especially in the newspaper *O Povo*¹⁶, *Minarete*¹⁷ and *Jornal de Taubaté*¹⁸, edited in the region of Vale do Paraíba (Cavalheiro, 1955b: 741-763).

¹⁶ *The People*, in a free translation.

¹⁷ *Minaret*, in a free translation.

¹⁸ *Newspaper of Taubaté*, in a free translation.

In the words of Rosângela Marçolla, Lobato always “questioned, looked for answers. He put his words into the mouth of the doll Emília, who still talks up to the present” (2002: 94, our translation). Not only of the Emília's obviously. His words, for a long time, echoed in the pages of newspapers and magazines, with texts that he insisted on signing with his own name, or else with pseudonyms. This was the way it was formed the image of the journalist which is intended here to evoke.

THE JOURNALIST LOBATO

Monteiro Lobato's performance as a writer, translator and/or editor of books has already been – although perhaps not in all of its possible facets – properly analyzed by Brazilian intellectuals – both for those related to academic institutions, as those who have dedicated themselves to exploring the life and work

of the writer from Taubaté with no ties to the university professorships. In the list of these contributions are included, for example, the emblematic works of Alice Mitika Koshiyama (2006), Marisa Lajolo (2000, 2009), Cassiano Nunes (2000) and Alaor Barbosa (1996), inexhaustible sources of discussions that give visibility to the work done by Lobato along with the book industry and which claim the recognition for the innovations he introduced in the literary system in the Brazil.

Nor can one fail to mention works that offer an in-depth and broad panorama about his career, in tones of biographies. Form part of this list, especially the dense work of Edgard Cavalheiro (1955a, 1955b) – split into two volumes and that probably constitutes the most widely and complete material on the subject – and the work done by Carmen Lucia de Azevedo, Marcia Camargos and Vladimir Sacchetta (1998) – which, in addition to presenting a detailed chronology, recovers a rich collection of photographs and facsimiles of many original works already out of circulation.

The debates over the work of Lobato are still complemented by reflections of sociopolitical nature, such as the brief volume *O Último Sonho de Lobato: o georgismo*¹⁹, by Cassiano Nunes (1983) – which outlines the writer's predilection for the ideas of the political economist Henry George (1839-1897), whose philosophy proclaims that everyone is the owner of what can create, but everything that is provided by nature belongs to all humankind - and a special edition of the publishing *Cadernos da PUC-RJ*²⁰, dated 1982, which is dedicated exclusively to the contributions offered by Lobato to children's literature, with emphasis on the ideological character of his texts.

Certainly there still are sporadic initiatives and scattered in the libraries of universities in Brazil, usually in banks of theses, dissertations and monographs of the courses of Languages. Not to mention clippings provided by other areas or sub-areas of the knowledge, as in the case of the Folkcommunication – scientific discipline dedicated to the study of the folk media communication (Marques de Melo, 2004: 11) – duly rescued in the work of Rosângela Marçolla (2002), which identifies marks of oral tradition in the children's books of the writer.

Therefore, it is not hard to see that discussions regarding Monteiro Lobato the writer, intellectual, businessman and editor of the publishing industry can be easily found. The same, however, cannot be said of the journalistic facet of the man from Taubaté. Not that many of the works mentioned here fail to mention his activities at the agencies of the press. But, it should be noted that there are few references that focus exclusively on this item.

One of the first resources we know in this field is the articles of Eliane Freire Bastos de Oliveira and Robson da Silva, previously mentioned. It should

19. *The Last Dream of Lobato: Georgism*, in a free translation.

20. *Journals of the Catholic University, PUC, of the state of Rio de Janeiro*, in a free translation.

be pointed out that they were the first to leave registered that the figure of the journalist Lobato had never received the same attention from the researchers, compared to other areas of activity that characterized his life.

[Monteiro Lobato] wrote, throughout 52 years, in more than 20 newspapers and magazines in the country and abroad. Unlike the writer, the journalist has no further analysis of his intellectual production. Some texts are cataloged in several biographies, but there is no work that brings together all the material, mainly small articles published in the newspapers of the interior in the early career (Oliveira; Silva, 1999: 43, our translation).

One of the reasons attributed by Oliveira and Silva, in the late 1990s, to the lack of a dense interpretation of the journalist Monteiro Lobato is the fact that he used many pseudonyms to write in newspapers, including some female ones, which could hinder a complete survey of its production in the periodical press. The authors mention some of these aliases: Mem Bugalho Pataburro, Lobatoyewsky, Josbem, Edelweiss, Hélio Bruma, Rodanto Cor-de-Rosa and Olga Lima²¹ (Ibid.). However, they themselves make clear that this list does not include all the names that Lobato invented. In the words of Edgar Cavalheiro, “Lobato confessed himself not being able to specify how many pseudonyms he used. He claimed he had never made choices for the pseudonyms were not born from vanity, but rather from a great shame of appearing in public with a natural face” (1955a: 87, our translation).

21 These are pseudonyms that can not be translated.

Although without dedicating a work of prospecting and cataloging the material dispersed in various journalistic vehicles, these authors were able to, subsequently, identify traces of the critical view of Monteiro Lobato on issues that involved, in the first half of the 20th century, environmental issues, and which reflect, in considerable portion, the present models of the citizenship concept, linked to the construction of a Brazilian identity (Oliveira; Silva, 2000: 44).

If the researchers of the University of Taubaté (Unitau) warned that it was ‘necessary to rescue this little known and publicized side’ (Oliveira; Silva, 1999: 54, our translation) of Lobato, with the realization of “a systematic study of his journalistic work, in order to understand him like a model” (Ibid.), one cannot fail to recognize that it was Thiago Alves Valente, of the State University of São Paulo (Unesp), in the city of Assis (in São Paulo state), who managed to accomplish such a feat. Enthusiast of Lobato’s work, he devoted his PhD to the focus here highlighted, defending in 2009, the thesis *Monteiro Lobato nas páginas do jornal: um estudo dos artigos publicados em O Estado de S. Paulo (1913-1923)*²².

22 Monteiro Lobato in the pages of the newspaper: a study of articles published in O Estado de S. Paulo (1913-1923), in a free translation. The newspaper indicated in the title of the thesis of Thiago Valente can be freely translated as *The State of São Paulo*.

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23. Monteiro Lobato, journalist, in a free translation.

Previously, the author had published a modest work titled *Monteiro Lobato, jornalista*²³, in the annals of the 6th Congress of Reading of Brazil, held in 2007 in the city of Campinas (in the São Paulo state). In that material, especially his research project for the development of the thesis, Valente (2007: 10) inserts Lobato in a dated sociohistorical time, looking for theoretical anchors to discuss the scenario of action of the journalist. The answer to his questions, obviously, does not appear in that paper. It emerges, more recently, in the final outcome of the thesis.

Selecting as the *corpus* of his analysis the texts that Lobato published in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, from 1913 to 1923 – period of “consolidation” or “professionalization” of the press, in his view (Valente, 2009: 12, our translation) – the young doctor confirms the perceptions of Oliveira and Silva which signaled the affection of Lobato for that newspaper, due to “his condition of oppositionist to the government” (1999: 45, our translation).

Thiago Valente realizes also that Monteiro Lobato could move freely among the roles of writer, journalist and editor, looking for in each of them, elements that could fill gaps that each of them could not cope. For this very reason, he never stopped being any of the three. He always was the three. Furthermore, the author comes to the conclusion that the ideas and the ideals, outlined by the journalist in that periodic²⁴, do not flee from the interests of the newspaper itself and most probably, from other intellectuals of that time.

24. It is important to explain that, before starting writing for *O Estado de S. Paulo* in 1913, “his first articles in the mainstream press were published in the *Tribuna de Santos* [*Tribune of Santos*, in a free translation], in 1909, and the *Correio Paulistano* [*The Mail of São Paulo State*], organ of the PRP – Partido Republicano Paulista [Republican Party of São Paulo State]” (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 102, our translation).

Lobato was not alone in his endeavor for a better, richer and more efficient country. The ideário of the newspaper in which he started writing in 1913, whose texts actually passed to the history of literature with the articles in 1914, was known of the grandson of the Viscount, as well as of the other members of the group of the newspaper *O Estado*. Far from imagining a relationship of subservience, the “sapos”²⁵ of the newsroom were undoubtedly the soul of the journal in the first decades of the 20th century. Which did not mean giving up the object commercially viable (Valente, 2009: 256, our translation).

25. Author’s note: Valente refers to the jargon “sapo” (frog) of the newsroom, as explained in the following paragraph.

It must be said that in addition to the contributions of Oliveira and Silva and of Valente, Carmen Lucia de Azevedo, Marcia Camargos and Vladimir Sacchetta devoted an entire chapter of their book to the relationship of Lobato with the press. In fact, it is curious to note that the unit that carries the suggestive title *Sapo de redação*²⁶, alluding to the “jargon used to define those who attended the writing almost every night and stayed there up to dawn” (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 102, our translation).

26. *Frogs of the Newsroom*, in a free translation.

If there is an agreement among the authors revisited here is that Lobato’s relationship with the press – or, more precisely, with the role of journalist – was

sometimes contradictory. In some moments, he insisted on acting as a *sapo de redação*, leaving the working office to meet particular fact in the place of its event, as it happened at the time he devoted himself to writing about the fires – in his controversial article “Uma velha praga”²⁷ of 1914 – or in 1918, when he went *in loco* to listen to the complaints of the farmers who had lost their coffee plantations because of a severe frost that devastated the countryside of São Paulo. On the other hand, there were times when he seemed discouraged to continue with the journalistic work, like in 1918, when he complained to Godofredo Rangel – in one of the letters he used to exchange with his friend – who wrote in the newspaper just under the influence of indignation and that, therefore, felt that he was not good for journalism.

27. “An old plague”,
in a free translation.

The circumstances, however, would soon deny it. During the Spanish flu that struck São Paulo in the second half of 1918, keeping away the entire dome of the newspaper *O Estado*, Lobato would see the need to take charge. The first to fall ill was Nestor Pestana, followed by Plínio Barreto and Pinheiro Júnior. With the leadership out of combat he runs the positions of chief editor, secretary and editor, ensuring the circulation of the newspaper (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 102, our translation).

Lobato thus did not abandon the press, although he considered, in a way, an inconvenient obligation to write every day (with or without will). Because of this, after the experience of closing some editions of *O Estado*, he decided to focus his work in a publication that was not daily. So, “he intensifies his work in the magazine *Revista do Brasil*”²⁸, in which since the third number had been collaborating with short stories and articles” (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 108, our translation) and that he buys a short time afterwards, still in 1918.

28. *The Magazine of Brazil*,
in a free translation.

Coming back to the attempt to organize the existing references on the subject that is intended to be highlighted here, it is worth saying that Nelson Werneck Sodré in his anthological work on the history of the Brazilian press also gives attention to the work that Monteiro Lobato developed in publications from São Paulo. For the author, the starting point for the understanding of this fact is the repercussion of the article “Uma velha praga”, of 1914. In his view, it is from there that

the farmer José Bento Monteiro Lobato started sending to the newspaper what he had in the drawer and new things he wrote, short stories and articles, and the audience got used to admire his easy, fluent, simple and clear style, quite different from the writers who collaborated in the pages of that time. He found himself, the farmer was in São Paulo, running the *Revista do Brasil*, writing and

editing books, and especially revolutionizing, without thinking of the thing, the production, trade and distribution of books throughout the country (Sodré, 1999: 324-343, our translation).

In the works signed by Rosângela Marçolla (2002; 2005), there are also references to Lobato journalist. She reinforces, besides other points previously mentioned, the taste he cultivated for pseudonyms, as well as the work he realized for the magazine *Fon-Fon*²⁹, drawing caricatures.

29. *Horn-horn*, in a free translation.

Fernando Moraes also mentions the journalist who wrote the biography about Assis Chateaubriand, revealing his participation in the group of the tycoon during the 1920s. He argues, however, that although he admired the work of Monteiro Lobato, Chateaubriand complained about “the lack of attendance and the behavior of the bohemian writer from São Paulo” (2002: 147, our translation), who already had, in 1927, the same fixation for the environment of the newsroom. As recorded by Moraes, Lobato used to go to the newspaper *O Jornal*³⁰ – with which he collaborated regularly for over a year – to deliver his article and there, he stayed for hours, talking and “chatting with his peers” (Ibid.).

30. *The Newspaper*, in a free translation.

The journey of Monteiro Lobato, in the press, is not linear. It is marked by ups and downs, by moments in which he actually worked as a journalist and others in which he only made the newspapers a place to publish his literary production. The crossed paths are not surprising. At that time, as Oliveira and Silva remind, “journalism and literature walked together, basically there were no big differences” (1999: 53-54, our translation). However, the authors also certify that, “controversialist by nature, [Lobato] found in that vehicle [the printed newspaper] the space to discuss and design his ideas as an entrepreneur of the cultural industry and an organic intellectual connected to the system” (Ibid.).

It must be said also that although the article “Uma velha praga” is considered a turning point in the history of Lobato, such great was – as said – its impact, it would be naïve thinking that it was just thereafter – that is after 1914 – that the man from Taubaté indeed had “‘entered’ to journalism”, as well states Valente (2009: 123, our translation). Accepting this idea, according to the author, “is not only to ignore all his previous experience with the journalistic vehicle, but also to forget the natural way with which he has long transited in the editorial world” (Ibid.).

For this very reason, it turns out to be more than necessary to revisit the first steps taken by Lobato in the field of the press, so as not to take the risk of returning to the same erroneous deduction of some authors.

JOURNALIST OF THE VALE DO PARAÍBA

Although it has been in São Paulo city that Monteiro Lobato gained notoriety in the press, it was in the Vale do Paraíba region that he entered in the journalism field. The first experience – amateurish, obviously – occurred still in his teens, when he studied at the Colégio Paulista in Taubaté, as mentioned herein. “In this school, he completed his early studies and launched a small newspaper, *O Guarani*, in which he published his musings, with fourteen years old. He then used his first pseudonyms” (Nunes, 2000: 6, our translation).

However, without a doubt, it is in the period when he studied law in São Paulo (1900-1904), that the journalist-writer began to give the most significant contributions to the press of his region. At that time it was common for students to form discussion groups about issues of the most different kinds, one of these groups, founded by Lobato and by his colleagues, was the Cenáculo³¹, which brought together, among others, Godofredo Rangel – his friend throughout life – Ricardo Gonçalves – who committed suicide in 1916, whose death the friend from Taubaté wept admittedly (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 96) – besides Edgard and Jordanto, whom Lobato honored by giving his name to one of the children he had with Purezinha. Alaor Barbosa says that virtually all of these figures

they wrote for newspapers of the city of São Paulo and of other cities in São Paulo state (Pindamonhangaba and Caçapava³²). One of these newspapers was the *Minarete*: in it the members of the Cenáculo, mainly Monteiro Lobato, published most of their literary firstfruits. The *Minarete* existed for four years (1903-1907), in Pindamonhangaba (1996: 23, our translation).

Minarete it was the nickname that Ricardo Gonçalves gave to the students housing in São Paulo – a “cottage”, in the words of Barbosa (1996: 23, our translation) – which he and Lobato have attended for a short time. It was in this place, that Godofredo Rangel – who already lived there – joined the Cenáculo. Alaor Barbosa emphasizes that in the history of the Brazilian literature, the Cenáculo was also known as the “Minaret Group” (Ibid.).

Inspired in that environment, Benjamin Pine – who had already graduated in Laws and “determined to put down the political Pindamonhangaba situationism of” (Nunes, 2000: 9, our translation), with the ambition to be elected mayor (what, in fact, he managed to in 1905) – he created a homonym newspaper in that city in the Vale do Paraíba, with the support of Lobato and his friends, who used the paper to criticize the government and the Republic. The name of the journal was a suggestion of Lobato. According to Cavalheiro, so he said to Benjamin Pine:

31. Cenacle, in a free translation.

32. Author’s note: Pindamonhangaba and Caçapava are cities of the Paraíba Valley region.

— Well, give the newspaper the name “Minarete” (...). In the first issue we will explain to the people what’s minarete – those slender towers of the Islamic nations, whose top, at twilight, the muezzins summon the believers to the prayer. A newspaper is a minaret from whose top the journalist gives corn to the hens that subscribe it and to the one of the single sale. It fits well that name – and that name it is not spoiled (1955a: 86, our translation).

In fact, o *Minarete* was the result of a longtime dream of the group of students who, dissatisfied with the “well behaved newspapers from the capital” (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 85, our translation), a space in which craved, “with absolute freedom, they could say whatever they wanted” (Ibid.). This was done. The staff built up the texts in São Paulo and gave them to Pinheiro that, occasionally, sent them letters in this tone: “Zé Bento: I need a very strict article, attacking the Câmara because of a crack in the wall of the theater. And another one about the weeds that are on the streets” (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 86, our translation).

Interesting, too, is the definition given by Cavalheiro to the *Minarete*: an “indecipherable enigma for the readers of the small town” (1955a: 88, our translation). Apparently, in that newspaper there was “nothing, absolutely nothing that would interest a farmer, a merchant, nor even a gossipy pharmacist” (Ibid.).

Edgard Cavalheiro also explains that the collaborations of Lobato for the *Minarete* were divided between literature – with several stories that were later recovered and reworked to be included in books (in *Cidades Mortas*³⁴, of 1919, for example) – and opinionative articles on various topics such as smoking, bohemia, football, among others. “Sometimes he goes through philosophical field covering himself in high metaphysical considerations, concise in more articles” (1955a: 92, our translation). The historian Gilberto Martins, said in a document prepared at the time of the celebrations for the centenary of the birth of Lobato, in 1982 that the readers from Pindamonhangaba felt, in relation to what was published in the *Minarete*, “urge to vomit face of such literary schizophrenia. Many numbers were returned, with a sermon apart from it” (apud Oliveira; Silva, 1999: 44, our translation).

At that same time, the journalist collaborated with *O Povo*³⁴ – founded in March, 1903, in Caçapava, by José Pereira de Matos and Sinésio Passos – being even responsible for the elaboration of its heading (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 73). During this phase, Edmir Nogueira dos Santos (1988) ensures Lobato stands out as “a political man, concerned about the situation” and as a writer that gambled in the irony. So much is that in the newspaper of Caçapava, he published the first chapter of a novel entitled *Lambe-Feras*³⁵, but which was not welcomed by the readers.

Regarding the series, it is known that the director of the newspaper, Pereira de Matos, “dared not to proceed” (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 103, our translation) with

34 *The People*, in a free translation.

35 *Lick-beasts*, in a free translation.

the publication of the remaining chapters, because of the complaints from subscribers and from other stakeholders. “The biggest pressure came naturally from the Church, for the opening of ‘Lambe-Feras’ represents violent diatribe against the priests, which the author calls ‘females by the apparel’ and ‘pigs in judging incompatible with the life of sanctity the neatness’” (Ibid.). Due to the decision of the owner of *O Povo*, the writer had to publish the other chapters in the newspaper *O Onze de Agosto*³⁶, published in São Paulo by the Academic Center 11 de Agosto.

Edmir Santos (1988) highlights that Lobato collaborated with *O Minarete* and with *O Povo* at a time when it was common for intellectuals to seek in the press a way to promote their work. The author also identifies that in the first decades of the 20th century, the Vale do Paraíba was a favorable scenario for the exercise of critical and opinionative journalism, since the region was going through a difficult time, inherited from the imperial regime and based on a politics “dominated by the coffee oligarchy, which was reluctant to stay in power” (Santos, 1988, our translation).

In addition to the newspapers mentioned here, Oliveira and Silva (1999: 61) identify in the list of vehicles with which Lobato collaborated, three other publications in the region: *Jornal de Taubaté* (Taubaté), *Revista Parahyba*³⁷ (Caçapava) and *Tribuna do Norte*³⁸ (Pindamonhangaba). Cavalheiro, in addition, mentions that the journalist has published articles in *O Taubateano*³⁹ (Taubaté) and “numerous other small provincials newspapers” (1955a: our translation), many of which probably were edited in towns of the Vale do Paraíba.

It was in 1905 that Monteiro Lobato began writing for the *Jornal de Taubaté*. Having just returned to his homeland, after finishing college, he starts to sign the art critique of that publication (Azevedo; Camargos; Sacchetta, 1998: 89), in which also makes circulate in 1906, a series of poems dedicated to Purezinha (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 124).

There are few references about the relationship of the journalist with the *Revista Parahyba*. Founded in 1917, it seems to have received his collaboration early on because Azevedo, Camargos and Sacchetta (1998: 97) say that, from the third edition, it is Lobato who draws its covers. The magazine is also mentioned by Cavalheiro (1955a: 200) when he lists the press organs by which the writer passed before publishing his writings in books.

It is also possible to notice the lack of solid considerations about the possible role of Monteiro Lobato in the newspapers *Tribuna do Norte* and *O Taubateano*. Oliveira and Silva (1999: 51) mention only that he writes for the first in 1931; about the second vehicle, recalled by Cavalheiro (1955a: 161; 200), there is no indication when the journalist have published materials in its pages and neither of what was the content of his writings.

36 *The eleventh of August*, in a free translation.

37 *The Magazine of Parayba*, in a free translation.

38 *The Tribune of the North*, in a free translation.

39 *The Person From Taubaté*, in a free translation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It seems right the thought of Oliveira and Silva when they state that Lobato “learned to take advantage of this professional side” (1999: 53), that is, the journalistic activity. “If he did not have access to the newspapers, the writer possibly would take much longer to become known” (Ibid.). The authors’ conclusion goes in the same direction of the considerations of Koshiyama, who, referring to the remuneration that Lobato started receiving of *O Estado de S. Paulo*, in 1914, warns that: “Lobato was now seeing a more attractive reason than the possible remuneration for the articles he wrote for *O Estado*. The main reason for writing for this paper was the number of readers that he could achieve” (2006: 59, our translation).

So, if the Brazilian historiography is – or was, if it is considered the recent publications recently revised, which fill part of the lacuna – in debt to the memory of the journalist Monteiro Lobato, certainly is not due to lack of indicators showing his bond to the press. Even the dates outline the value of this relationship. After all, his entry into journalism took place still in his teens – with *O Guarani* – or, formally, at age 21, when he started collaborating with *O Minarete* and with *O Povo*. His first book – *Urupês*⁴⁰ – however, was not published until 1918, when the journalist-writer was already 36 years old (Cavalheiro, 1955a: 199).

So, for a considerable period of time, Lobato used only newspapers and magazines to publish his work. In this way, he intertwined, right from the start, two of his main facets: the journalist and the writer. For this reason and because of all the considerations made so far, it is noble to reinforce, once more, that it seems to be hardly possible to understand the work of such a figure without paying particular attention to these two points of his biography. ■

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40. This is a title that can not be translated.

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