Bodies of Books: Literary Illustration in Twentieth Century Brazil

Abstract
This dissertation explores the nature and role of literary illustrations in twentieth century Brazil, not just in relation to their companion texts, but also in what ways they reflect defining characteristics of Brazilian literature beyond the chronological or theoretical limits of modernism, regionalism, magic realism, or postmodernism. Illustrations in new fiction — that is, writer and artist and editor collaborating on a book to be illustrated in its first or otherwise definitive edition — gained popularity in Brazil just as the form waned from existence in North America and Europe, where the "Golden Age" of book illustration was a nineteenth century phenomenon. Understanding illustrated books is key to approaching Brazil's artistic production beyond the strictly textual or visual. As expressions of periphery, autochthony, authenticity, and hybridity, interartistic works such as Brazilian illustrated fiction are a quintessential type of twentieth century cultural production.

In Brazil, visual artists shared the printed page with some of the country's most celebrated authors. The thematic and formal experimentation in these text-image pairings track evolving concepts of anesthetizing Brazilian minority groups. They also manifest the problems and paradoxes inherent to representations of class, gender, and race by writers and artists living in comparatively privileged circumstances. In short, illustrated fiction illuminates some of the deepest preoccupations of the Brazilian literature and art in the twentieth century.

This dissertation is structured around three artists whose illustration careers, among other artistic endeavors, span from the 1930s to 1990s: Tomás Santa Rosa Jr. (1909–1956), Napoleão "Poty" Lazzarotto (1924–1998), and Hector "Carybé" Bernabó (1911–1997). In works of fiction under consideration in this dissertation, illustrations by Santa Rosa, Poty and Carybé bring into view, literally and metaphorically, additional perspectives on major early twentieth century urbanization, massive national migration and international immigration, the power and danger of the sertão, class and racial tensions, and the legitimacy of Afro-Brazilian religions, myths and cultures.

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