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Review: Anuário Brasileiro de Literatura Fantástica: Ficção científica, fantasia e horror no Brasil em 2005

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Abstract

The Anuário Brasileiro de Literatura Fantástica: Ficção científica, fantasia e horror no Brasil em 2005 (Directory of Brazilian Fantastic Literature: Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror in Brazil in 2005) is the second volume in a projected five-volume series of reference books to be dated 2004-2008 (published 2005-2009). It was written and edited primarily by the duo Marcello Simão Branco and Cesar Silva, both active or founding members of groups such as the Clube de Leitores de Ficção Científica (Science Fiction Readers' Club) and the Sociedade Brasileira de Arte Fantástica (Brazilian Society of Fantastic Art) and both founding editors of Brazilian fanzines of the 1980s and 90s such as, respectively, Megalon and Hiperespaço. For the most part each section of the Anuário is attributed to either Simão Branco or Silva. Other contributors to the 2005 volume are Jorge Candeias, who provides an overview of the fantastic literature published in Portugal in 2005, and M. Elizabeth Ginway, author of *Brazilian Science Fiction: Cultural Myths and Nationhood in the Land of the Future*, who contributes an invited essay.

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Silva, Cesar and Marcello Simão Branco. Anuário Brasileiro de Literatura Fantástica: Ficção científica, fantasia e horror no Brasil em 2005. São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo: Hiperespaço / Sociedade Brasileira de Arte Fantástica, 2006. 194 pages. ISBN n/a. (LCCN: 2007-317711).

The Anuário Brasileiro de Literatura Fantástica: Ficção científica, fantasia e horror no Brasil em 2005 (Directory of Brazilian Fantastic Literature: Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror in Brazil in 2005) I is the second volume in a projected five-volume series of reference books to be dated 2004-2008 (published 2005-2009) . It was written and edited primarily by the duo Marcello Simão Branco and Cesar Silva, both active or founding members of groups such as the Clube de Leitores de Ficção Científica (Science Fiction Readers' Club) and the Sociedade Brasileira de Arte Fantástica (Brazilian Society of Fantastic Art) and both founding editors of Brazilian fanzines of the 1980s and 90s such as, respectively, Megalon and Hiperespaço, For the most part each section of the Anuário is attributed to either Simão Branco or Silva. Other contributors to the 2005 volume are Jorge Candeias, who provides an overview of the fantastic literature published in Portugal in 2005, and M. Elizabeth Ginway, author of Brazilian Science Fiction: Cultural Myths and Nationhood in the Land of the Future, who contributes an invited essay.

The Anuário is itself a microcosm of the challenges and the developments of Brazilian fantastic literature today as fields of publication and study. Simão Branco and Silva

have produced the *Anuário* in their spare time as a labor of love, and the result is, in the words of Brazil's only full time critic on the fantastic, "an amateur publication that does - with great honor and altruism - that which a professional publisher should do" (Sousa Causo, Rev. 2005). With a print run of one hundred copies and a print quality that makes details such as accents difficult to discern, the *Anuário* exemplifies the problems Brazilians face on the supply side of fantastic literature in securing professional publication and distribution services, and, on the demand side, the difficulty of access on the part of potential consumers. While there are at least two copies of the *Anuário* in US research libraries (the Library of Congress and the Cushing Library's Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Collection at Texas A & M), it is absent from the collection of the National Library of Brazil. This fact is a tangible sign of the relative lack of recognition of the fantastic genres in Brazilian scholarly and literary circles. In its models, its references, in the fluctuating distribution of the geographic emphases in its various sections, and in the very title of the editors' introduction ("A luta continua" [The Struggle Continues]) the *Anuário* also contributes to the ongoing debate in Brazilian culture - exacerbated in Brazilian fantastic literature - of originality versus influence, as its writers continue the quest to define and establish a Brazilian voice and a Brazilian tradition in an arena long dominated by Northern writers and their works.

The "Noticias" (News) chapter of the *Anuário* contains sections on prizes and obituaries for the previous year. The six-line subsection on Brazilian prizes states starkly that no prizes were awarded in 2004: the Clube de Leitores de Ficção Científica cancelled its Argos Prize (no explanation given), and the committee for the Sociedade Brasileira de Arte Fantástica's SBAF Prize determined that "no work merited the prize" (1). The subsequent inclusion of seven pages of prizes awarded in the US and Great Britain (among them the Hugo, Nebula, World Fantasy, Locus, British Science Fiction, and British Fantasy awards) is justified by the editors by the long tradition of these awards and because the lists provide a reading guide for those who read English and "a reliable reference on the state of the genre in its two most important markets" (1). The "Obituary" section of the *Anuário* is written from the point of view of the Brazilian reader/fan. It contains three tributes to Brazilians: a writer, a translator, and a fan/collector (concern is expressed that his collection of ten thousand books be preserved intact). The obituaries of ten prominent foreigners include notes on which of their works have been translated into Portuguese and mention of any connections to Brazil.

The centerpieces of the *Anuário* are the chapters surveying the publication of fantastic literature in Brazil and Portugal in 2005, including tables of statistics (with breakdowns by genre, literary category, publishing house, national origin of writer ["Brazilian" and "Foreign"], and variations thereof), bibliographies, book reviews, and an overview of the Brazilian periodicals scene. The usefulness of these sections is hampered to a certain extent by a number of factors. It is difficult if not impossible to identify meaningful patterns and trends in statistics from only two years, particularly when it is uncertain to what degree the statistics for both 2004 and 2005 were affected by isolated events such

as Hollywood superproductions based on works of fantasy (Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings [LotR], Narnia) and republications of the works of "an author who is a catalyst for publication" (this was the case with Stephen King's work in Brazil in 2004 and with Jules Verne's in 2005) (33-34, 38). In addition, limited budget and lack of staff meant that the editors had to operate with a potentially wide margin of error for the statistics given, that some information for the bibliographies was obtained secondhand, and that inclusion in this volume was in part determined by which authors and publishers sent their publications to the editors (v, 44) .

These sections do, however, provide an invaluable and otherwise unobtainable x-ray of fantastic literature in Brazil today. Among the vital statistics revealed here are that the total size of the country's market for fantastic literature is approximately 7.5% of that of the US market, that within the Brazilian market only a third of the works published are by national authors, and that the works of foreign authors may outsell those of Brazilians by as much as four to one (30). The disparities between Brazilian and foreign fantastic fiction are explained in part by the cachet the traditional dominance of Northern fantastic fiction has long lent to its authors and works, but Simão Branco also explains these phenomena in local terms: "Of this total of 54 [Brazilian fantastic works published in 2005] there is a little of everything, with a generally uneven level of quality, [...] works published by obscure publishers and suffering from very poor distribution" (29). The major trend identified in this statistical section of the Anuário is that while, as in the US, the number of works of fantasy published in Brazil is greater than that of science fiction, which is in turn greater than that of horror, fantasy enjoys a far greater preeminence there. It is unclear how much of this primacy of fantasy in Brazil is due to the impact of the aforementioned recent Potter- Lo tR-Narnia events, but Simão Branco concludes that fantasy, unlike sf, has found a "niche market" in Brazil (36). Recent literary reactions of Brazilian fantasy writers to the LotR phenomenon are explored in greater depth by Ginway in her essay "O gênero fantasia brasileiro de 2001 a 2005: Globalizando e abrasileirando O senhor dos anéis" (The Brazilian Fantasy Genre from 2001 to 2005: Globalizing and Brazilianizing The Lord of the Rings) . Ginway describes authors' attitudes as ranging from "Brazilophobia," or an avoidance of Brazilian content, to an overt "Brazilianization" of Tolkien and medieval fantasy (187).

Of the thirteen reviews included in the Anuário, ten are of works by Brazilian writers, one is of a Portuguese work, and two are of works by foreigners. Standouts among the works reviewed include an anthology compiled by the Clube de Leitores de Ficção Científica in honor of its twentieth anniversary and another compiled by Roberto de Sousa Causo; a work of criticism by Bráulio Tavares; and novels by the established writer André Carneiro and the up-and-coming Carlos Orsi Martinho (also interviewed for the "Personality of the Year" section of this Anuário) . The chapter of the Anuário devoted to Portugal is relatively short. Some highlights of the Portuguese scene are the magazine *Bang!*, a horror novel by David Soares, and a new foray by Nobel laureate José Saramago into the borderlands of the fantastic.

The editors declare their intention to collect the "Efemérides" (Chronology) sections once their series is complete in 2009 and to use them in the publication of "a chronology of the fantastic genre in Brazil, from its first works until today" (vi) . In the "Chronology" section, some of the same features used to analyze the Brazilian fantastic fiction of 2005 are applied to works written between 20 and 150 years ago. It consists of a chronology of pertinent genre publications, magazine launches, movie openings, and more from 20, 25, 30, and so on years in the past; of a retrospective article (in 2005, "One Hundred Years without Jules Verne") ; and of four new reviews of Brazilian works from the past. In the review of the 1930 novel *A filha do inca* (The Incas Daughter), Cesar Silva highlights Menotti Del Picchia's use of Brazilian elements, citing them as evidence of a Brazilian fantastic long before Ivan Carlos Regina's call for it in his 1993 "Manifesto Antropofágico da Ficção Científica Brasileira" (Cannibal Manifesto of Brazilian Science Fiction) .

Finally, throughout the 2005 Anuário there are scattered indications of the changing landscape of the Brazilian fantastic. The era of multi- volume collections is over, and the internet is changing - for better or for worse - both publication options and avenues for attracting new readers. There is a seeming trend toward publishing works in the fantastic genres without genre labels on the covers and for the fantastic to appear more often in mainstream works. "For those who are interested in and who like the genre," Simão Branco concludes, "there are books to read within this new context" (42). While the genre still faces many challenges in Brazil, the hard work of scholars and of dedicated fans such as the editors of this Anuário is establishing a firmer foothold for the fantastic there. In the words of Carlos Orsi Martinho in his interview with Simão Branco and Silva, "I think that the tradition we don't have, in which new authors know that other authors came before them and understand that they are part of a history, is perhaps finally beginning to come about" (148).

RACHEL HAYWOOD FERREIRA

Note

1 All quotations in this review are translated from Portuguese. All translations are mine.

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