

Book Review

Tennina, Lucía. *Cuidado com os poetas! Literatura e periferia na cidade de São Paulo*, translated by Ary Pimentel, Zouk, 2017.

Lucía Tennina opens her book, *Cuidado com os poetas! Literatura e periferia na cidade de São Paulo*, describing the surprise she felt sitting in a graduate course listening to Heloísa Buarque de Holanda introduce writers of the contemporary *Literatura Marginal* movement of São Paulo. Tennina was not surprised by the writing, but by the way Buarque de Holanda categorized the authors as the new marginal writers of Brazilian Literature. Buarque de Holanda went on to explain that unlike the marginal poets of the 1970s, today's marginal writers are labeled as such because of their disregarded status in society as residents of the urban periphery of São Paulo. It was this movement, known initially as *Literatura Marginal* and later as *Literatura Periférica* that captured Tennina's interest and became the focus of her book.

Cuidado com os poetas! Literatura e periferia na cidade de São Paulo shows how urban peripheral communities of the city, often all referred to erroneously as favelas in the media, are spaces where cultural and literary production flourish. A professor of literature at the University of Buenos Aires with a background in anthropology, Tennina combines literary analysis with first-person interviews to effectively counter popular discourses that associate these communities solely with criminality and drug trafficking. In doing so, her work becomes a piece of the movement itself and ends up challenging elitist ideas in the academy about what is and is not literature. Her interdisciplinary approach makes her book a much-needed and refreshing contribution to the field of Brazilian Literature because it underscores the politicized context and value of literary production.

Tennina begins tracing the development of the terms of the movement, from *marginal* to *periférica*, to explain how the latter communicates the socio-spatial hierarchy of São Paulo; or rather, the increased political, economic, and social marginalization that radiates from the center to the periphery of the city. Organized into four chapters, Chapter I "Os saraus de poesia da periferia de São

Paulo: posicionamentos de sujeito através da literatura,” describes how the regularly scheduled open mic events of the movement known as *saraus* are organized and the impact they have on peripheral communities. Tennina takes as a principle point of focus the concept of the poet and explains how in becoming poets through the *saraus*, ordinary community members who had always been categorically defined through their marginalized position in society now emerge as individuals. This recognition leads to increased feelings of self-esteem and pride that simultaneously revalorizes the individual and the community as a whole. Chapter II, “Saraus de poesia no plural: deslocamentos e negociações,” zooms out from the individual and compares the spaces and histories of different *saraus* throughout the periphery to show how these events create the affective circuit that constitutes the movement. This circuit is sustained through an autonomous system of writers, readers, and publishers that circulate works between one another, existing outside and alongside the dominant commercial literary market in the city. Tennina explains how in the past 17 years, since the first *sarau* began in 2001, these events have been used to build relationships between the periphery and the historically elite cultural spaces in the center of the city, such as Instituto Itaú Cultural and Biblioteca Mário de Andrade. This relatively new infusion of peripheral voices and experiences in elite spaces demonstrates a form of symbolic capital and increased visibility of the movement beyond the periphery.

Chapter III, titled, “As poetas de periferia: imaginários, coletivos, produções e encenações,” pays particular attention to the situation of women within *Literatura Periférica*, specifically the position of black women and their condition of double exclusion based on their class and gender. Critiquing the notion that there is a singular peripheral identity, Tennina highlights how women of the movement have fought to carve out spaces and produce works that combat stereotypical representations of submissiveness and sexual objectification. The recognition of works by women such as Elizandra Souza, Raquel Almeida, and Dinha is important, according to Tennina, because it localizes broader feminist struggles within the periphery and prevents the movement from repeating the same sort of hegemonic practices of which it is critical. The fourth and final chapter, “A figura do escritor, entre a proposta coletiva e o projeto individual,” analyzes the tension between marginalized writers of the movement and the recognition of their status as writer, without the adjectives marginal or peripheral,

within the larger field of Brazilian Literature. Using Ferréz and Alessandro Buzo as examples, Tennina traces how writers of *Literatura Periférica* have had to “deterritorialize” (244) their work and disconnect it from the periphery in order to be integrated into the already established world of Literature, and in doing so, run the risk of undermining the importance of a separate and autonomous literary movement. These writers are caught between writing for the community and for a larger public and, as Tennina points out, raise larger questions about literary legitimation.

The tone of the book is straightforward and does a wonderful job communicating what is a vast amount of information across space and time. Although the book would benefit from more thoughtful organization, as the references can be confusing if one is not intimately familiar with the geography and urban dynamics of São Paulo, her ethnographic descriptions transport the reader to the *saraus* and never let us forget that *Literatura Periférica* is a living and breathing movement. Her work shows as much academic rigor as it does genuine care for the people she writes about, and this makes the book a standout contribution that benefits students, scholars, and community members alike.

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