

O QUE FOI ISTO, COMPANHEIRO?

"O que foi isto, companheiro?", in this context, refers to a strong reaction we had to Ilha do Desterro n° V. It came from a reader we didn't even know we had conquered. "The reviews", he wrote, "What about the reviews? They were the most interesting thing you had in the magazine? It was the BEST WAY to have an idea in Brazil of what is being published in the U.S., besides the establishment writers/poets!!! "And he concluded: "You have become just another dead-author magazine!!!"

It was a strong criticism indeed, but all those who read the first FIVE issues of Ilha do Desterro know that we have an answer to this reader. The conflict between what should be published and what should not is not new among those involved with the magazine's destiny and development. It in fact started with the very first issue, when two statement of origins had to be written. As with the first issue, we have never come to a definite agreement about it, but we felt that we needed each other, so we decided that we would be more receptive of the GOOD OLD writers in the future issues, especially if so many wanted to do that and if that insisted on being the main line of research of our graduate program. But we never really gave up the idea of exploring/discovering unestablished authors. And as we had announced in Ilha V, the reviews are back - a whole lot of them. And we shall stick to this promise as long as we have books to review and people willing to write these reviews.

But there is one thing I have to disagree with. Invisible authors are not necessarily non-establishment authors. Just think of cooption! On the other hand, there

are invisible authors who were borne dead, as there are some who are in their tombs for centuries but still very much alive. I know, it's a long discussion! However, without any intention to renounce freshness and newness - I believe we should reconsider our notion of DEADNESS. This may take some people out of their tombs and put others in their place. Invisibleness by itself is not a strong enough criteria for anything. We cannot shift from the "não li e não gostei" to the other extreme - "não li e adorei". Neither of these attitudes pleases me. All the good it can do is harm/castrate a significant part of literary activity.

Should we prefer another, more sarcastic writer's approach? Once he told me with a mixture of irony, sadness and sarcasm: "Look! If I don't write, nobody says a thing. If I WRITE nobody says anything either. Therefore I write!!" Maybe. Personally, however, I would like to see Ilha do Desterro less concerned with visibility or invisibility, good, bad, old or new literature and more as a CHANNEL of discussion (just that) of those literary issues which concern literature teachers and students today. That is why this includes not only reviews as Ilha nº 4 did. That is also why Ilha nº 6 again includes very-contemporary/invisible authors. But this is also why Ilha nº 6 includes people like Marguerite Yourcenar, Joseph Conrad, Kozinski - all side by side. It's getting to be truly Whitmanesque, isn't it? With one common core in this diversity - the promotion of literary discussion. It won't always be a peaceful coexistence. But peace among intellectuals reminds me too much of academic deadness. And it is still too soon for THAT. It is always too soon. Just think of how much one can learn with the quarrel of the mountain and the squirrel,

especially if there is more than the cracking of nuts
involved. But ask Emerson about that.

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