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Slightly illegal: female positions and perceptions of law from The Girl in the Photograph, by Lygia Fagundes Telles

Ligeiramente ilegais: posições femininas e percepções do direito na obra As meninas, de Lygia Fagundes Telles

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Resumo

Publicado em 1973 e ambientado na ditadura civil-militar brasileira (1964-1985), o romance *As meninas*, de Lygia Fagundes Telles, acompanha três jovens mulheres moradoras de um pensionato que constroem, a vozes alternadas, uma narrativa complexa capaz de abranger tanto o jogo do cotidiano quanto a realidade sociopolítica do período. Por meio de uma análise do direito na literatura, a presente pesquisa se debruçou sobre as posições das protagonistas do romance para investigar as muitas formas de que pode se revestir o Direito em sua relação com as pessoas, especialmente as mulheres – ou, de maneira mais específica, como sua presença (ou ausência) pode resultar em opressão e violência. Concluiu-se, ao fim, não só pelo potencial revolucionário da literatura de testemunho para o avivamento da memória coletiva e a denúncia das injustiças sociais, mas também – e principalmente – pela permanência das críticas extraídas do romance às estruturas sexistas, indiferentes e coniventes do Direito brasileiro.

Palavras-chave: Direito; Ditadura; Feminismo; Literatura; Testemunho.

Abstract

Published in 1973 and set in the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985), the novel *The girl in the photograph*, by Lygia Fagundes Telles, accompanies three young women living in a boarding house who build, in alternate voices, a complex narrative capable of covering both everyday life and the socio-political reality of the period. Through an analysis of law in the literature, the present research focused on the positions of the protagonists of the novel to investigate the many ways that Law can take on in its relationship with people, especially women – or, better, how its presence (or absence) can result in oppression and violence. It was concluded, in the end, not only the revolutionary potential of testimony literature for the revival of collective memory and the denunciation of social injustices but also – and mainly – the permanence of the criticisms extracted from the novel to the sexist, indifferent, and conniving structures of the Brazilian law.

Keywords: Dictatorship; Law; Literature; Feminism; Testimony.

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Introduction

Lygia Fagundes Telles, the lady of Brazilian literature, published her novel *The girl in the photograph* in 1973. The novel was narrated by and starred three young women, students at a college on strike, and residents of a boarding house run by nuns.

The book is a reaction to the socio-political context of the period: five years after the decree of Institutional Act No. 5, the censorship imposed by the civil-military dictatorship had already forced new patterns of creation with the strokes of pen and scissors; repression was institutionalized; and the violence of the regime had already driven a significant number of writers and artists into exile.

In the work of Telles, who graduated from the Largo de São Francisco Law School[1], this context is not merely a backdrop. On the contrary, the author sewed the work with the thread of this repression, marking the psyche and gestures of each of her characters, endowing the novel with a political and feminine nuance built between the lines and running through the entire plot.

Among the three usual ways of articulating law and literature, i.e., law *in* literature, law *as* literature, and law *in* literature, this article adopts the first method of approach. It is, therefore, not a question of exploring the literary nature of law, nor is it a question of how law normatively regulates literature. Rather, it is a question of analyzing law from the point of view of literature, in other words, examining the contributions that literature makes to understanding law.

This is achieved by exploring the capacity of Lygia Fagundes Telles' work to provide a refined understanding of the legal phenomenon, especially that which manifests itself in the Brazilian reality of the dictatorial era. The aim is thus to scrutinize how the novel makes a kind of historical record of different perceptions of the Law that crystallize how three characters explicitly or implicitly articulate their legal perspectives. A leap is made from *narration* to *norm*: the literary account serves as an instrument for elucidating the subtle interpretations of the legal phenomenon made by the novel's protagonists. At the same time, a relatively clear contrast can be seen between Lorena's legal idealism and Lia's legal materialism; a blurred legal vision can be observed in Ana Clara.

[1] According to a biography published by the Brazilian Academy of Letters (2016), of which the author became a member in 1985, Lygia Fagundes Telles graduated in Law and pursued her literary career in parallel with her work as an attorney for the São Paulo State Social Security Institute, a position she held until her retirement.

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In concrete terms, therefore, by examining the narrative, especially the words and thoughts of the girls, the article seeks to capture different conceptions of the Law, especially by demonstrating their articulation with the position of each of them in the context of Brazilian society at the time. The result is the acquisition of a body of legal knowledge that helps to grasp the mode of operation of a Law that acts by omission or in a hidden and disguised way.

To sum up, through an approach to law in literature, this article seeks to underline the critical nature of *The girl in the photograph*, investigating the denunciations of the Law formulated from the female positions occupied by each of the characters, which are articulated as mirror games and thus shed light on socio-political issues that are still relevant today.

The research is divided into three main parts: the first, an analysis of the historical and social context of the novel; the second, a detailed presentation of each of the characters; and the third, an analysis of their particular views on the legal phenomenon in the country.

1. First, a little history

For Lygia Fagundes Telles, the whole of her work could never have been put down on paper by a foreign author: "Take *The girl in the photograph*, for example. There it is, engraved in my characters, an instant of the greatest importance for the History of Brazil. It's the record, it's my testimony of an era" (2007, p. 84). Likewise, with more irony: "How could I write a lukewarm novel in the middle of 1970?" (2009, p. 298).

According to the National Truth Commission (CNV), the serious rights violations practiced by the dictatorial regime in Brazil (1964-1985) took place in a context of "[...] widespread and systematic attacks by the state against the civilian population" (CNV, 2014, p. 964). The human right to artistic expression, in particular, was systematically violated through instruments of censorship and persecution, which resulted in a huge diaspora of Brazilian artists, free thinkers, and teachers during the period.

There were countless cases of censorship, threats, arrests, purges, mass resignations, inquiries, dismissals of professors, destruction of universities, looting of public and private libraries; seizure of texts considered subversive... "[...] atrocious and at

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the same time pathetic facts, very ridiculous in their vain truculence, showing that, at first glance, the onslaught against culture was fueled above all by ignorance" (PELLEGRINI, 1997, p. 88).

As Manguel (1997, p. 314) explains, totalitarian regimes attach great importance to books: "[...] they know, much more than some readers, that reading is a force that requires a few initial words to become irresistible. Anyone who can read one sentence can read them all".

Despite all the violence, Telles remained: she published *The girl in the photograph* during a particularly repressive period and escaped censorship even though her work was densely political. For Santos and Fernandes (2016), the textual structure was mainly responsible for this escape: because her narrative style is mostly composed of streams of consciousness and is made even more complex by the alternation between three narrators, without explicit divisions, Telles was able to hide the ideological fullness of her work in digressions, reflections, and intrusive thoughts, which would have to be identified as loose fragments and then reinterpreted to reveal their real meaning.

Among other artists who also resisted and remained in the country, the marginal poets sought to break the silence by spreading their work in pamphlets sold and scattered throughout the cities - hence the name Mimeograph Generation - escaping the control of official publications and giving voice to ideas and feelings stifled by the dictatorship. The path chosen differed from that of Telles, who obscured the real meaning of her traditionally published novel, while the poets sought to reach the street directly. The cry for freedom, however, remains the same.

As Luis Olavo Fontes (2016, p. 198) wrote: "I have nothing with me/ only fear/ and fear is not something you say." For Cacaso (2016, p. 54), ironically: "Brazil has become modern/ the miracle has become modern:/ water no longer becomes wine/ it becomes straight vinegar". Ana Cristina Cesar (1999, p. 95), on the other hand, spoke about the power of fear: "I speak from sheer paralysis"; and Uchôa Leite (1979, p. 132) metaphorically lamented that his figure was the ellipsis.

At the end of it all, however, due to the 1979 Amnesty Law, Brazil saw the end of the dictatorship and waited for a collective catharsis that never happened. In other words, there has never been a deep understanding of the events that took place during this period or anything capable of explaining them and providing them with some meaning in the aftermath.

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The absence of reparations and the establishment of spaces for collective memory - such as museums, memorials, and other symbols of remembrance of the past - can be interpreted as an absence of justice and an acute way of silencing what happened.

In response, literature has performed the function of catharsis: it has revealed the dictatorship's semantics, explaining and laying bare more than any official documents could ever recover. In this way, the literature produced during the dictatorial period has supplemented the work of historiography, managing, in addition, to "[...] tell us the abject, managing to give us that nefarious and forbidden truth that the report or chronicle of events cannot and, perhaps, should not tell" (FINAZZI-AGRÒ, 2014, p. 181).

In the novel *The girl in the photograph,* it is reflected by Lorena's mother:

> I'm always meeting someone who remembers me on this or that date; the witnesses are so attentive, a memory! Why do people have so many memories? [...] I make that vacant face, I disguise it, but it's no use, the witness is a voracious beak tearing at the threads of my flesh, tuque-tuque, it won't leave its prey, a voraciousness (TELLES, 2009, p. 234).

For Seligmann-Silva (1998), it is in the difference between writing and reading that meanings are constructed; when reading, there are multiple updates and translations of the work in which the levels of intertextuality of the original are reconstructed. In its double temporality, therefore, the literature of testimony is only realized in its structural collapse and ongoing work of restructuring.

Taken as a story and memory in this way, *The girl in the photograph* breaks the tension between reality and fiction by provoking a return to the past through the lens of the present by revealing, in hesitation and silence, what could not be said before. It is a living memory that does not allow forgetfulness.

The relevance of this literary subversion of law lies in its ability to produce new meanings in counterpoint to the theoretical common sense of jurists (WARAT, 1994, p. 13) as a form of philosophical reflection in which knowledge and sensibilities are mobilized so that the legal field is open to criticism and reinterpretation.

As Trindade and Gubert (2008, p. 63) suggest, the figure of the jurist, in his fundamental defense of the legitimacy of the system in force, is historically contrasted with the poet who, clandestine or imprisoned, denounces the injustices and atrocities of that same system. As illustrated by Ost (2007, p. 13), the poet opens up the space of imaginary fiction; the jurist, on the other hand, reinforces the imperativeness of the order he establishes.

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Faced with this historical tension, especially about memory, and within the framework of the constitutional promises that guided the Brazilian state's return to democracy, the relationship between law and literature, in its intense mutual provocation, ends up inviting a critical look at national history and the role played by law in it.

It should not be overlooked that the role of art as counter-creation (OST, 2007, p. 33), as a challenge to the inherited world, is foreign to the jurist. His professional training suppresses his imagination, denying him the power to go beyond the law; the idea of any utopia, in its radicalness, is an impossibility for him in the face of his attachment to the network of powers, roles, and hierarchies that constitute his social legitimization, also serving as the basis for the material of his narrative lucubrations (COSTA, 2011, p. 199).

However, by opening up this utopian horizon, literature, as a space for imaginative and critical exercise - in its *disruptive* character, as Trindade and Gubert (2008, p. 13) call it - enables sensitivity to take on an intimate and political meaning. And, as Bittar argues, "[...] the practical and effective exercise of *sensitive reason* is necessary to confront *intolerance*, *violence*, *truculence*, *perversity*, *irrationality*, *oppression*, *brutality*, *barbarism,* and the *barbarisms* of everyday life" (2020, p. 325).

To break with the ban on jurists' imagination, literature thus invites us to rethink the meanings attributed to the world and also to law itself, which is why we have opted, methodologically, for an analysis of law *in literature* (OLIVEIRA, 2019, p. 397), so that a careful literary examination of the novel *The girl in the photograph* can open up the legal phenomenon to criticism.

It is from this perspective that we propose an interpretation of Lygia Fagundes Telles' novel as a reading of the dictatorship and the law that allowed it: as the adoption of a female point of view - marginal and concrete - to understand the past and the present, to open up a different path to the future.

2. The girl in the photograph

It is Mother Alix who is in charge of the boarding house where the girls live and who also vents, her hands open in amazement:

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> - You all seem so unmysterious to me, so uncovered, I think I know everything about you, and then I'm suddenly startled when I discover that I'm wrong and know very little [...]. How can I separate reality from invention?" (p. 143).

Lorena is responsible for most of the chapters and the work's open ending. That's why we start with her, and Lia and Ana Clara follow the opposite order of the passage that prefaces the book: "Ana Clara, don't get involved! - said Sister Clotilde when it was time to take the photo. - Tuck your blouse into your pants, Lia, quickly. And don't grimace, Lorena, you're grimacing! The pyramid (p. 10)."

2.1. Lorena Vaz Leme

Lorena Vaz Leme is a law student heiress to a wealthy family from São Paulo, attached to books, poetry, and the safe world she has built for herself. She even threatens to erect a sign outside her room: "Pardon the order, the cleanliness, pardon the refinement and the superfluity, but here resides a civilized citizen of the most civilized city in Brazil" (p. 63).

She calls her room a shell, where she lives like a "pearl in an oyster" (p. 69). She covered it with pink tiles, golden yellow paper, records, books, tea boxes, her fine items, and, in one corner, the collection of small bells fed by her diplomat brother.

> Outside, things may be black, but everything is pink and gold here. "You have to have an iron chest to endure this city," says Lião as she crosses the city in her blue espadrilles. [...] fear, not of the city (as remote to me as its people) but a fear that it will be born under my bed (p. 60).

The distance she imposes on herself enriches her imagination with ideas and confuses her perception of what is happening outside. Between the Latin quotations and the anguished wait for a phone call from her beloved, Lorena distances herself from people and the city as if she could take refuge in another world from her shell.

The distance doesn't take away the pain, which marks the anguish of the entire work - "[...] save the children, so strong and so fragile, we are all very fragile" (p. 108) - but, even aware of the seriousness of the political scenario in which she is immersed, Lorena is unable to join Lia's militancy.

In her defense, she does love the people (Lião doesn't have to look at her that way), but it's a cerebral love - "[...] what other kind of love can it be? If I don't blend in with the masses (I'm terrified of them), at least I don't snub them as Aninha does" (p. 64).

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With her lack of contact with what's going on outside, the exaggerated extent of the internal drama: the anguished wait for a phone call from M.N., the initials of the man she hopes to get involved with, a married doctor and father of five, with whom she corresponds in secret.

In her passion, the dilemma of virginity weighs heavily: Lorena is searching for the emancipation that she is sure will come when she stops being a virgin; simultaneously, she feels virtuous for remaining one. When Lia provokes her to solve her dilemma once and for all, she replies that she is trying, but

> [...] I answer myself in the dark, I don't think I want to, no. The joy I get from seeing the promiscuity of the sexes going on around me without love, out of affliction, despair. And mine. Virgo et intacto. I open my arms. What a wonderful day (p. 35).

On another occasion, Lia calls her "square and romantic, which is the same thing" (p. 163), to which Lorena replies that her blouse is inside out, unwavering. If Lia says that only priests and prostitutes want to get married, then who else? Lorena remains convinced:

> I meant: me, me! I'd love to marry M.N., there's no better idea, I'd like to marry him, I'm fragile, insecure. I need a full-time man. With all the paperwork in order, I'm a big believer in the paper, I inherited it from Mummy (p. 73).

She also inherited a trauma from her family. During her childhood on the farm, her brothers Remo and Rômulo played with their father's rifle, which they believed was unloaded but which resulted in Rômulo's accidental death.

Distraught, Lorena's father had to be hospitalized and died in the sanatorium - according to Ana Clara, without remembering anything else, not even his daughter (p. 38). For the mother, in a traumatic rewriting of the fact, her son Rômulo died when he was still a baby, so there aren't even any photos of him around the house.

Remo, the surviving brother, became a diplomat, sophisticated, wealthy, and also very distant, although Lorena has different memories of his nature: "[...] the intense gaze. You chasing flies to throw into Romulo's orange juice. Hiding the moth in my bed. Diplomat, Remo? The voice well impostured" (p. 58).

In a translation of the bourgeois life of appearances, the tragedy is not faced head-on by anyone in the family, even though it causes a deep fissure in the psyche of each of them. About her brother's rare visits, Lorena reflects that "[...] the first hour he was

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available, he started talking fast and loud. The mother began to laugh shrilly, both of us trying to cover the murmur that was rising from the brownish depths" (p. 123).

For her part, the girl reflects in her unfortunate affair the sense of loneliness that the accident caused her, both because of her father and brother's physical estrangement and her mother's emotional estrangement. She compares her long wait to the memory of going with her father to see a newborn calf on the farm: "[...] I hold out my hand, and no one else comes, I would hold it out until the end of time. *Ad saecula et saeculorum*. Nobody." (p. 208).

If it's Lia who points out an uncomfortable thought, regretting not having the time to explain better that she's fallen in love with a ghost - "That M.N., damn. Haven't you realized that he became your father?" (p. 209) -, she is also the one who causes the character's most heartfelt farewell. She knows that she will remember her as she sees her, "[...] without dust or sweat, looking at everything from inside her vague world" (p. 216).

2.2. Lia de Melo Schultz

Lia de Melo Schultz is the daughter of a Bahian woman and a German, Herr Paul, an ex-Nazi turned into Seu Pô, a quiet businessman in love with Dona Diú. Part of a large family, the girl moved to São Paulo in a cry for space, embodying Clarice: "Freedom is not enough. What I desire still has no name" (LISPECTOR, 1992, p. 36).

For her, her father is as much a Nazi as he could have been a communist, "[...] pure passion, capable of vibrating for a uniform, an anthem. A rather crazy German. When he discovered Nazism was not what he had imagined, he ran so fast that he ended up in Salvador. Saravá, my brother!" (p. 236).

Lorena sees both her parents in her expression and her way of being: remedying a sour comment with an allusion to Che Guevara, she sees in her friend's meltdown her two complementary sides: "[...] the Nazi water became a dove, a coconut tree, a coconut tree in Itapuã, a coconut tree! Her mother, Dona Diú, smiled in the hammock" (p. 117).

Lia is an active communist activist. A failing social science student, she found herself directly involved in the subversive activities of the so-called "group", dedicating herself to the intellectual education of her classmates - she arrived in São Paulo with *The Capital* barely hidden under her arm - and to political demonstrations and violence.

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She uses the codename Rosa, in homage to Rosa Luxemburg, and tears to pieces the fiction book she had been writing, frustrated with the passivity of intellectuals - "[...] too moved to speak, they just shake their heads and drink" (p. 32) - and with the hopelessness of the struggle.

The indirect reference to the kidnapping of American ambassador Charles Elbrick by far-left forces (which resulted in the release of fifteen Brazilian political prisoners) means that the novel is set in 1969, and the girl's boyfriend, Miguel, is fictionally one of the freed prisoners. It is this liberation that renews her:

> I pick up a pebble that I squeeze so hard in the palm of my hand; oh, it holds up, I can keep squeezing it until the end of time, and it's still intact. What joy do I get from things that resist like this. I put it in the bag, and now I must shout at the sun, Miguel! We will save you, world. We'll save you - I repeat, and my eyes are swimming in tears (p. 165).

Her most frank conversation about her convictions is with Mother Alix, with whom she surrenders when she recognizes that not violence but the union of all for dialogue is perhaps the true revolution. Inflamed, she asks permission to read the testimony of a worker who dared to distribute leaflets in a factory, and it is at this moment that the narrative opens up, in a very direct way, to the depravity of the regime's violence: Lia reads with solemnity the account that describes the torture scene in detail, from the electric wires to the beatings, death wish and humiliation, to the barbaric cruelty of the macaw stick (p. 148).

It is the only scene of documentary content in the work, the only moment in which the narrative exposes the state's violence vibrantly and in detail. However, when Lia folds the page, Mother Alíx stares at her.

> Her gray eyes have an affable expression.
> - I am aware, child. That boy's name is Bernardo. I've been with his mother often; we went to see the Cardinal together (p. 149).

The conversation ends after Lia is stunned by a request from Mother:

> - Can I give you an epigraph? It's from Genesis, do you accept? - she asks and smiles. - Leave your land, your kindred, and your father's house, and come to the land I will show you. That's what you're doing," she added. She hesitated for a moment. - That's what I did (p. 150).

Having already left Bahia, Lia ends the novel by also leaving Brazil. She leaves for Algeria, where she will be reunited with Miguel, and it is in the exciting plans for this future that her uncertainties are also drawn, and the impulse to leave home is reborn.

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Despite the bad lenses through which she sees the traditional family that her parents sought for her - "[...] engagement in the living room and wedding in the church, with a lampshade dress. Rice at the farewell. The grandchildren multiplying, crammed into the same huge house; it had so many rooms, didn't it?" (p. 34) - and which, in the end, led her to leave Bahia, Lia finds herself in conflict with her own desire for her family.

She perceives Miguel as a more rational person, who has already told her that he doesn't want children, and, even though she has agreed, at one point, she envies the fat, pregnant cat she sees resting in the boarding house's garden, "[...] full to the brim, so penetrated and intent on her pregnancy that there isn't even room in her crowded body for a speck of straw" (p. 217).

In the meantime,

> [...] My face flushes red when I imagine pulling Miguel into the window at the winter sale and shutting him down, wasting his strength and patience on the trinkets of everyday life, refusing the word of encouragement on his day of disenchantment, negative presence, no! If I'm going to fail like so many have, let the winds blow my plane with all the force of their cheeks towards the sharpest peak of the cliffs, all the passengers saved except for a young student from Bahia who plunged into the abyss—end (p. 219).

Immersed in the social conflicts she wants to resolve, Lia vehemently questions her condition. She thinks of Lorena, "[...] a good girl. Ana Clara is a good girl too, I'm a good girl too" (p. 32). She knows she can't conform to social rules, but even the freedom offered by the revolution seems insufficient: she needs answers that suit her desire for motherhood, her idea of romance, and full freedom.

Her passage through the novel is like a hurricane, completely at odds with Lorena's well-organized and very clean shell. It is Lorena, however, who sees Lia from the right angle at the beginning of the novel in a way that unfolds right to the end: "[...] she opened the gate with an unabashed, heroic gesture, the gesture of someone who assumes not her path, too prosaic, imagine, but her destiny (p. 235).

2.3. Ana Clara Conceição

For Lorena, it's all in the details, especially the origins. "I don't know about mine," Ana Clara tells him. "I don't even want to know" (p. 24). But it is in the search for these origins that the girl (ironically nicknamed Ana Turva) finds herself caught between fantasy and the harshness of life, which she tries at all costs to remedy.

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She finds a solution in marrying a rich man because "[...] with money and married, I wouldn't need any more help or analysis. No more problems in sight. Free. I'd unlock the enrollment; I'd do a brilliant course. The books I'd have to read. Discoveries about herself. About others" (p. 44).

From an unknown father, Ana Clara has only one surname, and the fact weighs heavily on her; she thinks it's possible to conquer it with a fortune, convinced that, with a bag of gold, Pilate would never have washed his hands: he would have taken a horse, and Jesus would have fled out the back, with an escort to the border (p. 88).

> No more names, no more everything. New times, my doll. [...] I tear up the certificate with the unknown and ignored father and just want to see it. New certificate: I pay for a new certificate with a known father. I baptize my father to get married, can't I? Emperor's name (p. 84).

With her psychology degree on hold and amid a drug addiction, she has a drug-dealing lover named Max, once a very wealthy young man. Her fiancé, however, is someone else: a man she calls *scaly*, for whom she is deeply disgusted, and who has promised her marriage only if she is a virgin - "[...] he's been with all sorts of sluts, but not before. Bastard. That's right. If you want me to, I'm the one" (p. 50).

What Ana wants is hymen reconstruction surgery, a procedure that Lorena has promised to subsidize. According to her, "[...] in December I sew, and in January Valdo makes the dress. I want white." (p. 45). What worries her, however, is the fear of a new pregnancy: she has already had an abortion in a clandestine clinic before, with Lorena's hand in hers, and she is unprepared for another one.

She believes she is destined for a better life (one could even say a *happy* one), often relying on her appearance with blatant racism:

> No more questions, don't you see my red hair? My skin? All authentic. Very white. Lyon is very suspicious. And even Loreninha with her bandeirantes. Shaking Max: - You're white too, love. We have nothing to do with those underdeveloped people; we're white, do you hear me? (p. 85).

The search for an imagined superiority comes from a need for self-affirmation based on her impoverished childhood, in which, as the daughter of a prostitute mother, she also suffered all kinds of physical, emotional, and moral abuse - "[...] I was a child and the bastards. I couldn't defend myself or anything, I was a child." (p. 134).

She watched her mother kill herself with formicide, possibly after trying to cause another abortion. On several other occasions, she had "[...] been beaten like a dog and

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now she was lying down and curled up moaning oh my Jesus oh my little Jesus. But Jesus wanted to get away from us" (p. 86).

> It's nice that the glorious ones tell us in their interviews that they rummaged in the can with the rats when they were children. Brave, huh? Beautiful. But you have to have four cars in the garage, caviar in the fridge, and a villa in the countryside for a confession to be interesting. You must spit dollars to make it funny, Mother Alix, my holy saint. Not yet. When I get structured, I'll tell you everything. Do you know what structuring is? Getting loaded of orienhid (p. 91).

Orienhid is the word for *money* backward, Lorena's sympathy adopted by the other two friends. "I'd take them both to the beach house, I quite liked those two beasts. Yes, I would." (p. 97). Especially Lorraine: "A snob, she thinks she's very special. But she's my friend, how could she not?" (p. 176).

It is Lia who asks her about her addiction, and it is she who replies, in the rapid verbiage of her mind:

> So what? I'll stop everything when I want to. I will be on the cover of a magazine and marrying a millionaire. Stay there because next year. Since I'm good, I can still help you and your life; I help everyone. I'll give you a house for your meetings; I'll give a house to Loreninha, who will be left with nothing with that little mother squandering her fortune; it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter. I solve everything. So I stay true (p. 91).

None of this is said out loud, like most of Ana Clara's thoughts. She uses the term "*roque-roque* " to signal the tension of her mind spinning all the time, fidgeting, hurting, and always bringing her unpleasant things: "[...] if I could wash my head from the inside. With brush. Rub rub rub until blood comes out" (p. 56).

Ana would like to have a grandmother like Mother Alix because "[...] to have a grandmother like Mother Alix is to have a kingdom" (p. 39). When Lorena gives her one of M.N.'s letters to read, which Lia considers cheesy and old-fashioned, her reaction is different: "[...] halfway through, she stopped. Her eyes filled with tears. 'I'd like to be loved by a man like that, damn" (p. 206). She also asks Max, through tears: "[...] give me your childhood! He gives me his tongue. I slip and run, that's not it" (p. 57).

At the end of the story, Ana Clara returns from some indistinct place to the boarding house, very dirty, with marks of violence on her body, and talking incoherently about the Sacred Heart she believes she has in her chest. Lorena bathes her, changes her clothes, and puts her to bed.

After slipping out to talk to Lia, trying to say goodbye to her friend who was leaving the next morning, Lorena returns to her room and finds Ana Clara silently dead.

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This climax is so close to the end of the work: absorbing the impact has to be done in a dazed manner by the reader.

3. Women's positions, perceptions of the law

Profoundly different from each other, Lygia Fagundes Telles' *The girl in the photograph* speaks volumes within the short chronological space of the narrative of just two days. For Tezza (2009, p. 208), the main point of attention of the work is precisely the limitation of each of its gazes: "[...] that is, they 'know little' and more or less lose themselves in the little they know". Therefore, it is up to the reader to follow the three perspectives simultaneously and give them a joint meaning.

Alternately, *The girl in the photograph* reveals to us how, at the time, social oppression was as multiple as the oppression institutionalized by the state itself. Divorce, for example, although it existed and was supposedly accepted, was still called *desquite* and caused the social ostracism of the woman involved, with much lesser consequences for the man. Racism and homophobia were everyday practices; female virginity had immeasurable value, and the *traditional family* was an institution of political, social, and economic weight.

In short, the status of women was marked by deeply sexist values, despite the universities, the internationalization of fashion, foreign music (exposed in the work by Lorena's Jimi Hendrix records), emancipatory discourses, and the growing prominence of women in the job market.

Lorena Vaz Leme best articulates this arrangement of contradictions and impossibilities, reflecting on the exchange of *being* for *being*. With the nickname Fainting Magnolia in college and despite the futility that marks her tone in the novel, she sees herself very clearly: "'I'm silly and fresh. But what if M.N. took it more seriously? Incredible, but when we take ourselves seriously we become very serious" (p. 104).

Concerning the society that accepts (almost demands) her name, her sweetness, and her purity and is grateful for her complacency - and quiet intelligence - the girl develops her theory:

> In the city, I disintegrate because in the city, I'm not, I am: I'm competing, and as within the rules of the game (thousands of rules), I need to compete well; I consequently have to be well order to compete as well as possible. To

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> compete as well as possible, I end up sacrificing my being (my own or someone else's, which comes to the same thing). Now, if I sacrifice being to just be, I disintegrate (essential and essence) to the point of total pulverization (p. 192).

Lia de Melo Schultz, for her part, won't give in, neither internally nor externally. If Lorena dissociates between what she is and what she needs to be, Lia is still looking for a space to be fully herself. She tells one of her colleagues in her subversive group how she got involved with a friend in Bahia; how they got involved by inventing each other as boyfriends, in a joke that became serious, so serious. "We were too embarrassed, you know? We hugged and kissed each other with such fear. We cried with fear" (p. 130).

In the end, the lies they had to tell for the sake of others contaminated them: "[...] we weren't lovers but accomplices. We were ceremonious. Suspicious. The game lost its fun, it became bitter" (p. 130).

In a conversation with Lorena's mother, Lia shared a little more of her experience by saying how cruel it is to worry about her children's sexuality: "[...] a prejudice as hateful as racial or religious prejudice. We have to love others as they are and not as we would like them to be" (p. 238). She tells us that her great-aunt became so overwhelmed by the weight of sex that she took refuge in a convent, and her aunt did so much that she became a prostitute. "The same fear, the same fear. If only we weren't afraid anymore" (p. 135).

The pressure from her family to have a heterosexual relationship, get married, and have children led her to leave home. Faced with the prospect of fleeing to Algeria, however, revolutionary ideals of independence (of a supposed liberation from these female obligations seen as bourgeois) also curtailed, on the other hand, her desire for motherhood and sexual freedom.

In this paradox, Lia resists and tries to find her space to completely be, intent on building it: to reinvent herself and try to make the world more elastic in new constructions of freedom that, at the time, didn't even have a name.

It is with Ana Clara Conceição, however, that the female position in the world - being, expectations from all angles - finds an ultimate condition: immersed in a situation of vulnerability and poverty from the beginning of her life, Ana Clara is the most direct victim of violence in the novel.

In a narratively disguised way - "Loreninha would say subtle" (p. 86) - Ana is the victim of two rapes in the short span of the book, one perpetrated by Max, her boyfriend,

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and the other by a man who found her lost and under the influence of drugs in a restaurant.

Her internal narrative is interspersed with the traumas of sexual, verbal, and physical abuse she has suffered since childhood. Desired for her sexual appeal and paradoxically valued for her longed-for virginity, as well as tormented by the need to have a name and money (the latter, she believes, capable of buying everything else) to be independent, Ana Clara is locked in a social scenario that imprisons her in much the same way as her mind. Her tragic death at the end of the novel signals her impossibility of even existing:

> Lião is always preaching that society expels what it cannot assimilate. The flaming sword threw off Ana; she said she had a foil on her chest, but it wasn't a foil; it was a sword, which means the same thing. Peaceful coexistence, the teachers teach. And in practice (p. 249).

However, each main character reveals a specific perception of the Law from their respective female positions in the world, even if, at first glance, the work seems to show little about how it works. Insofar as most of the plot takes place inside a boarding school, in the intimate space of *The girl in the photograph*, the legal phenomenon, as a neutral external form, seems to penetrate there only through its usual means of control by omission.

Not without reason, almost all external references arrive with some degree of imprecision and incompleteness. What goes on in the public space is relatively unknown and unpronounceable. In times of censorship and terror, bedroom sanctuaries become the only conceivable place for expression: "Yes, Pensionato Nossa Senhora de Fátima, a name above all investigation" (p. 21). The scenario is one of omnipresent insecurity. Even that female environment, run by nuns, carries something ambiguous: it escapes domination; it reinforces it.

In this grey area of escape and control, freedom and authority, voice, and silence, however, a collective process of *The girl in the photograph* gradually becoming aware, catalyzed by the critical articulation of their different private experiences. In a way, within the pension, "a (un)violable asylum"[2], they are beyond the reach of the law, although not completely illegal. There is nothing better, therefore, to understand *The girl in the photograph*' *legal situation* than to look at their *personal lives*. Hence, the feminist

[2] "And since mommy was in front and Sister Priscila was busy closing the window, he took advantage of this and put his hand on my ass." (p. 26)

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perspective of the work, which, more than reporting, is part of the effort to raise awareness among *The girl in the photograph*, revealing what is wrong with even the most ordinary events in their daily lives (MACKINNON, 2016, p. 826-829).

Lorena, in her way, a jurist by training, is the one who most explicitly reflects on the Law, even though she already sees a conflict between a *real Law* and an *ideal* Law.

"Bourgeois intellectual" (p. 44), she embodies the typical figure of the Brazilian bachelor, a product of the country's legal courses (cf. ADORNO, 2019, cap. 4). Coming from a wealthy family, a member of the national elite, *passionate about Latin*, she carries the unmistakable traits that mark the specific profile of the bachelor of Law: on the one hand, the *cultivation of linguistic erudition*, represented by the use of "pompous, sophisticated and ritualistic verbiage"; on the other, *adherence to ornamental knowledge*, marked by a profound ignorance of social issues (WOLKMER, 2002, p. 99-100).

Their liberal culture reflects an idealized legal conception marked by *contemplation* and *passivity*. How she sees herself - "She says she's a passive contemplative" (p. 175) - foreshadows her ideal portrait of Law. The legal liberalism adopted translates into at least four combined notes: a) *distance from social reality*; b) *indifference to the legal state of affairs*; c) *desire for security*; and d) *worship of the code*.

First, Lorena recognizes the abyss that separates her from the *city* and its *people*, with whom she does not identify. Protected in its privileged position, social reality is viewed from a remote perspective, like that of the *liberal state*, which, having supposedly established the minimum conditions for its autonomous reproduction, always accompanies it from a distance[3]. Ensconced in her dilemmas as a bourgeois girl, the social issues of the masses don't matter to her, even when it comes to challenges such as women's liberation:

> - Name, please.
> - Lorena Vaz Leme.
> - University?
> - University. Law.
> - Do you belong to any political group?
> - No.
> - Are you part of any of these women's liberation movements?
> - Neither. I only think about my condition.
> - Are you then an alienated young woman?

[3] "Against all possible forms of absolute State, Liberalism, at the level of the social and constitutional organization of coexistence, has always encouraged [...] the autonomy of civil society as local and associative self-government or as an economic (market) and cultural (public opinion) space within the State not directly governed by it." (MATTEUCCI, 2016, p. 700-701)

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> - Please don't judge me, just interview me. I can't lie; I'd be lying if I said I cared about women in general; I only care about myself; I'm in love. He's married, old, with thousands of children, completely in love.
> - An indiscreet question, may I? Are you a virgin?
> - Virgin (p. 160).

Lorena's view of social reality is similar to the *surplomb view of* the big house towards the slave quarters. Imported liberalism, which she adopts *ex professo*, does not constrain its deep-rooted and inadmissible patrimonialism (SCHWARZ, 2007, p. 11-31). Lorena feels disgusted by the members of the population. Deals with them as someone who is not only on the *outside* but also on *top*: "It's nice to look at the bright living room of an apartment up ahead, the people so harmless in their routine. They eat, and I don't see what they eat. They talk, and I don't hear what they're saying, total harmony without noise or anger." (p. 59). This *contemplative attitude* establishes a radical separation between the classes of citizens, "those who look on" and "those who are looked on", in a clear distinction between those with *over citizenship* and those with *under citizenship (e.g.,* CARVALHO, 2008 and SOUZA, 2003), is accompanied by a *passive stance*, marked by inaction and non-interference, characteristics that well define the option for a *spectator Law*. Let it be; let it do... Look, but don't act: "As soon as someone gets close, they can smell it. Voices. A little more, and you're not even a spectator; you're a witness. If they open their mouth to say goodnight, they go from being a witness to a participant" (p. 59).

Lorena tends to see the Law as an instrument for preserving the *status quo* because she distances herself from the problems that plague Brazilian society, encasing herself in herself and distancing herself from others. Her *antipathy to militancy*, her *dread of revolution*, her *aversion for sweat* (p. 105), etc. only corroborate her preference for maintaining the legal state of affairs, which hardly bothers her: "I don't know how long we'll have to carry these people on our backs, [...] I'm still thinking that if God isn't there, it's because He must have His reasons." (p. 23) In this way, Lorena is yet another cultural product of São Paulo's legal academy, responsible for the ideological formation of an *intelligentsia* that defended liberal postulates but had little affection for democratic principles: freedom! No equality... (ADORNO, 2019, p. 85-87 and 174-175).

Feeling *fragile*, *delicate,* and *defenseless*, very much in the mold of socially constructed and stereotyped feminine qualities[4], she needs the law as a protective

[4] "Research into sex roles, based on Simone de Beauvoir's insight that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes one', has revealed a complex process: how and what one learns to become one. It was perceived that gender, looking across different cultures, is a learned quality, an acquired characteristic, an attributed condition, with

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apparatus. For Lorena, being *free* means being *safe*. For this reason, it engenders a psychoanalytic process of transference that proceeds from the father figure to that of the *lover* and from the figure of the *lover* to that of the *law*, all of which are patriarchal[5]. As if it were made of *biscuit* (p. 123), what she expects from the rules of conduct is that they guide her with the care and confidence transmitted by M.N. behind the wheel: "I felt at ease there with him. His driving style also impressed me, I've never felt so safe in a car." (p. 195) In Lorena, too, the *liberal state* is a *guardian state*...

Her liberal juridicism leads her, on the other hand, to a certain cult of the code. The book often shows Lorena reading and repeating passages from the law and legal treaties (p. 193 and 200, for example). She reads, closes her eyes... Having recorded it word for word, she smiles: like Stendhal, who read a few paragraphs of the Civil Code *pour prendre le ton* (HAFT, 2002, p. 304), Lorena reads the dry text and, to Napoleon's delight, still gets excited (p. 155). Taking the pretension of completeness of modern codifications to the maximum (HESPANHA, 2005, p. 376-378), the law student goes to the frustrated height of intending to solve her love problem based on a legal provision on civil liability: "'Loss and damage,' Lorena repeated, looking for her image in the mirror. [...]. 'This is a norm, my beloved. Legal norm. Because of your negligence, I lost my joy,' she thought as she wrapped herself in her towel." (p. 200)

For her, the legal construct can also be the work of a positivization of reason or what she would subtly call a "cerebral love" (p. 64). *Order*, *cleanliness*, *security*... are more than psychological attributes of the *gens lorenensis*: they are part of the constellation of values of the modern spirit (cf. BITTAR, 2009, p. 53-67), which Lorena tries to find in the legal world: "[...] everything quiet in the drawers" (p. 155).

This seems to be Lorena's ideal conception of the Law, which is gradually shaken by tinges of reality, as when she expresses the opinion, presented in terms of universal observation, that studying Law, specifically legal norms, might make her "a wonderful psychiatrist":

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qualities that vary independently of biology and with an ideology that attributes them to nature. The discovery that the female archetype is the female stereotype exposed "woman" as a social construction. Its contemporary version in industrial society is docile, soft, passive, caring for others, vulnerable, weak, narcissistic, childish, incompetent, masochistic and domestic, made to look after the children, the house and the husband. The conditioning to these values invades the upbringing of *The girl in the photograph* and the models that are imposed on women." (MACKINNON, 2016, p. 819)

[5] "[...] although laws and regulations, higher norms and trivial disciplines proliferate, the need to refer them to a person or an authoritative text attests to this desire for a Father, or a legislator, who stands outside their action and infuses it with his majesty and justice or, in psychoanalytic terms, with his gapless and closed character." (DOUZINAS, 2009, p. 334)

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> Madmen reign over the living and the dead. The few who manage to hold the reins of madness will dominate; which ones? Polluted lungs and minds. An important role is reserved for psychiatrists. I believe in prophets even more. I think I'd be more useful if I studied medicine; what good will the laws be in the future if they're already what we know now. A wonderful psychiatrist (p. 192)

In a world of madmen, some more, some less, but all mad, the legal function lies precisely in keeping madness at a reasonable level: "The less crazy, those like us. A neurosis that doesn't attract much attention because it's part of the story. As long as the neurotic can work and love in this reasonable madness, what's the problem?" (p. 145-146).

The price paid for the legal administration of madness is the disintegration of personality. As we have already said, in the city, where the law dictates the rules of the game, you *are* not, but you *perform*. An assortment of rules results in the constitution of partial legal subjects, institutionalized in social roles that define their respective limits and possibilities for action. In a spectacular metaphor that Foucault could have well used, Lorena describes the mechanism by which the performance of the norm mediates the establishment of the normal[6]: "The annoying thing is that the delirious thought, so beautifully disheveled, ends up very combed. Triumph of rules of conduct" (p. 157).

Lia's way of looking at the legal phenomenon is to turn the "Lorenese" law inside out. From the outset, the field of perception changes as the perspective is reversed: from the *idealism* of Lorraine to the *materialism* of Lião.

In contrast to Lorena's distant and inert attitude, Lia is immersed in society's conflicts. Always busy with "more important things" outside the boarding house (p. 139), it is curious that most of what is known about her is said by Lorena. Rosa opposes her *militancy* from a *distance*. She is a communist militant. She is a feminist activist. She is a militant in the cause of all the oppressed: homosexuals (p. 238), Black people (p. 118), indigenous peoples (p. 139) - the list would be longer if there were more pages in the book. Her only prejudice "is against bad character" (p. 135).

[6] Márcio Alves da Fonseca (2012, p. 149) identifies how, for Michel Foucault, the processes of *legal standardization* and *normalization*, although unmistakable, are mutually "shelved": "And the description of this 'bottleneck' could only be made from the consideration of two concepts: the 'normativity' of the law and 'normalization'. While the former, despite the 'movements' it involves, always refers to limits and prohibitions, in other words, to the plane of a 'should-be', the latter refers to the notions of 'average' or 'measure', referring to the plane of 'being'. On the one hand, the 'normativity' of the law responds to the criteria of 'measure' given by the norm. On the other hand, the norm refers to the forms of the law in order to act concretely. [...] In this way, we see the reciprocal 'sliding' between the normativity of the law and the mechanisms of normalization."

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Her immersion in the city opens her eyes to the nonsense of an underdeveloped country: at the top, an arrogant, greedy, and gluttonous bourgeoisie (p. 72); at the bottom, dying children, illiterate people, slum dwellers, migrants, street vendors, etc., all of which, like garbage and dirt, need to drain into the manholes or be disposed of in the toilets until they reach a destination far away (p. 137). Open inequality in Lião cannot be reconciled with a right to conservation. Without believing in charity (p. 146), she opts for revolution: "I can't sit anymore, I get up. I take the risk." (p. 148)

Lia is, therefore, working to break down the consolidated legal-political framework and radically transform it. Although we can't find a clear position in the work, the character seems to move from an original Marxist stance, which calls for the abolition of the state and the legal form that corresponds to it *(see*, for example, MARX, 2001, p. 108), to the defense of a Democratic State of Law: "I confess that I'm changing, violence doesn't work, what works is all of us coming together to create a dialog" (p. 148).

At this point, Lia deconstructs the legal liberalism advocated by Lorena, denouncing its camouflaged authoritarian face. The alleged guardian state, which safeguards freedoms and protects individuals, is the one that generates the most insecurity: "- Security? But who is safe?" (p. 147). The state that protects and distributes negative subjective rights is the state that first tortures and then kills[7]... It was a period of dictatorship. Lia is not afraid of "the people" but of those who govern them.

For her, according to her Marxist lens[8], the codes are nothing more than reflections of the social infrastructure: "The social structure. According to Lia, the only one responsible was the social structure" (p. 107). Lião doesn't get excited, but she probably gets annoyed by them. Legal codes mirror social codes. "'The world of the bourgeois is the world of appearances', Lião repeated, I don't know how many times" (p. 195). In society, men, reduced to the goods they think they are transporting, but which in

[7] As Izabel Fávero reported to the National Truth Commission (2013, lines 152-159; 168-170): "I was very offended, as a woman, because being a woman and a militant is karma, you're not only tortured physically and psychologically, you're a slut, the word was 'slut', 'decent girl, look at your face, at that age, look what you're doing here, what education your parents gave you, you're a slut, you're no good', well, I don't remember if on the third or fourth day, I had an abortion, I was two months pregnant, so I was bleeding a lot, I had no way of protecting myself, I used toilet paper, and it already smelled bad, I was dirty. [...] I certainly miscarried because of the shocks I got in the first few days, on my genitals, breasts, fingertips, behind my ears, which obviously caused an imbalance."

[8] "My investigations have led me to the following result: legal relations, as well as the forms of the State, cannot be explained by themselves, nor by the so-called general evolution of the human spirit; these relations have, on the contrary, their roots in the material conditions of existence, in their totality, conditions which Hegel [...] understood under the name of 'civil society'. [...] The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis on which a legal and political superstructure rises [...]." (MARX, 2008, p. 47)

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reality transport them, are all masked in legally stylized and codified disguises. The way is to break with the patterns. With the militant protagonist, the social roles sanctioned directly or indirectly with the legal seal are imploded in their usual configuration. Indeed, the scene in which Lia teaches Pedro how to kiss (p. 137) collapses the male model of action, according to which "[t]he man fucks the woman; subject verb object" (MACKINNON, 2016, p. 834).

However, Ana Clara seems to feel the effects of a Law that, without assuming to be a *witness* or *a participant* in the "social spectacle", rubber-stamps, in its legal indifference, everything that happens despite itself.

More than a *verse-verse opposition*, which marks the relational status of Loreninha and Lião, a *regime of absolute separation* defines the preliminary spatial arrangement between Lorena Vaz Leme and Ana Clara Conceição. If you look at the main context of the work, you soon realize that the *girl with only one surname* wasn't supposed to be there. Her presence in the boarding house, which she can't afford, constitutes a kind of invasion - it breaks the longitude that Lorena would like to preserve. The "intruder" represents everything the Brazilian patrimonial elite abhors most: *Aninha is poor*. Although they are acutely aware of social inequality, Lião's unbelieving eyes cannot perceive her biblical traits as an *orphan* and a *foreigner*. Lacking a *father*, absent not only from her identity card... but also her *homeland*, since her roots are unknown, she is thrown into a situation of complete meltdown: "But isn't it impressive? Ana Clara has no relatives, no one in the world, no one!" (p. 268).

This is how, from a deserted condition, the girl is dragged into a state of near non-existence, which she confuses with freedom:

> How hidden we are. And how free it is. Why does that fool talk so much about freedom, damn? We're free - look, nobody knows what's in my pocket. Nobody knows what I'm swallowing. Thousands of people around and nobody. Just me. Many people are killing another bunch right now, and who knows (p. 185).

Through Ana Clara, Lorena's idealistic perception is dispelled: what she understands by *distance* is nothing more than a soft term for the harshness of *abandonment*. Without explicitly touching on any legal subject, the Law is present in the character's speeches through an eloquent silence. How could she talk about what she doesn't know? Dispossessed in its entirety, it is a testament to what an *absent Law*

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produces - what can be called a *precarious life*: a life that doesn't count as life, a life that doesn't count as human, a life that doesn't count... (BUTLER, 2019, p. 40).

It's her boyfriend who proves the kind of identification that's at stake. When he calls her by the supposedly affectionate nickname of "Rabbit" (p. 36, *v.g.*), he reaffirms her infra-human status: that of an "animal that has sex". Viewed as an animal available for copulation, the girl, deprived of her humanity, is also deprived of her rights, even the most basic ones, such as the right to sleep: "Why can't I ever get as much sleep as I want? Why is there always someone poking me, let's make love, let's make love?" (p. 37)

Although she is not blind to the problem of justice (p. 83), even showing a keen social conscience at times, such as in her reflections on poverty, she no longer wants to profoundly change the legal state of affairs, which has already been battered too much, what she wants is something much simpler and much more complex at the same time - the right to be happy: "I'm full of aggression, and I've had enough of it. Now I want presents. (...) I want to be silly. She was a madwoman with her demands." (p. 49)

Her desire to be happy, of an exclusive and individual nature, is very much in the mold of the subjective right constructed by modern jurists (cf. VILLEY, 2005, p. 250 ff.), does not imply a transformation in the collective reality of other people: that of the thousands of Anas scattered around (p. 103). *Ana Clara wants to be Lorena* (p. 133). For her, the only way is through wealth: "happiness" lies in the "freedom" of financial "security" (p. 45), even at the cost of dependence or a new annulment: that of being "legally and politically encompassed by her husband" (DAMATTA, 1997, p. 111).

Not included in the legal codes except through a deliberate omission, her way out of entering the world of Law, doomed to failure, is to marry a rich man who owns property, has rights, and whose actions are interested in being positively regulated, even if her abstract type of legal subject contrasts with her concrete type of scaly subject. Without any reverence for the system of norms that leaves her outside any protective apparatus and only reaches her directly when it comes to establishing prohibitions or obligations, Ana Clara shows no fear of *violating it*, as in the case of clandestine abortion, nor of *instrumentalizing it*, as in the case of arranged marriage.

Strictly speaking, it's as if she didn't exist - *as if Ana Clara were Ana Turva*... While Lião exposes the authoritarianism implanted at the heart of the liberal Brazilian state *(see* ADORNO, 1995), denouncing its *commissive violence*, which is particularly striking during periods of exception, Aninha's wounded body - and also her stunned brain - bear witness

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to the extremely material effects of its *omissive violence* in times of "normality": when the state withdraws, the men have a party...

Beyond the extremes represented by Loreninha and Lião, i.e., not fitting in on the right or the left, not fitting in as a bourgeoisie or as a revolutionary, not fitting in with the female stereotype of the strong woman or the fragile woman, Ana Clara is a kind of third term excluded from logic. At an extreme above easy polarizations, tearing apart legally institutionalized social roles, it finds itself on its terrain, the absolute otherness. In its ambiguous infinity, at the same time as it surrenders, it also evades:

> Ana Clara is the only one who gave herself without reservations. Because in front of her, I feel as useless as I do in front of you, reduced as I am to a tape recorder, I record what she tells me, and I accept the load, but when I try to influence, to change what must be changed, she escapes me like an eel." (p. 144).

Of course, the girl is removed from the bourgeois world of appearances. Her astonished, sunken, static face is the face of death. It's dead inside and withering outside. That's why Lorena's temptation, ultimately replaced by the obligation to give her a dignified death, is to kill her outright (p. 167): "[...] the face of the other, in its precariousness and defenselessness, represents for me both the temptation to kill and the call for peace, the 'thou shalt not kill'" (LEVINAS, 1995, p. 145). The end of the book is just the consummation of a crime carried out every day under the cover of the Law: girls dying; boys killing. The state, which can and should act, becomes an accomplice: "I had to do something. But what? Wasn't being understood being conniving?" (p. 107).

Certainly, in the heart of a *conniving state*, the legal consequences of the murder of a dead girl, found like this in a public space, which is not even considered a woman's space, will be minimal (cf. VENTURI; GODINHO, 2013). *A girl on drugs, hanging around the square, must be a whore!* - say the judges of someone else's southern zone. That's why the epilogue calls to unite *the girls in the photograph*, especially Loreninha and Lião, whose ideologies were initially opposed around the feminist cause. A reconciliation of different positions in the female world takes place based on an experience of mourning the loss of one of them. It is then that the title opens up to the radical nature of its meaning: rather than an individualized account of each of the protagonist-narrators, the work deals with a "knot" that is woven despite and from differences: "I just think that you'll never be like me and I'll never be like you, isn't that simple? And isn't it complicated?" (p. 216). The definite article in the feminine plural is a personal pronoun.

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The lost thread re-establishes awareness of the bond that unites them: the mourning and the *struggle*. They don't need to fully agree in the theoretical field to join forces in the face of *violence* perpetrated legally against women (BUTLER, 2019, p. 42 and 70).

One way or another, they all find themselves in some condition that isn't completely legal: "- Don't you study law? Damn, you know we're slightly illegal, don't you?" (p. 275). First of all, they are somehow beyond the reach of the Law insofar as they are reserved for the private sphere of the pension, the house, the bedroom, etc., places where the Law deliberately does not interfere under the legal basis of private autonomy, another name for the domain of man, be he God, father, husband, partner, lover, boyfriend, etc.

The artifice is quite effective: insofar as the male empire is already socially established, the law doesn't have to institute gender inequality by decree (MACKINNON, 1995, p. 293). The state legitimizes itself through non-interference and even reproduces the status quo (MACKINNON, 1995, p. 292). The negative state, which protects citizens against themselves, does not protect them against each other. In the private sphere, only the man is truly free; all kinds of abuse against women happen there, and no one interferes. Hence the precise statement from Catherine A. MacKinnon (1995, p. 301): “The scope of men’s private freedom is the scope of women’s collective subordination.” As long as things happen the way they want, without any serious embargo calling them into question, it is unnecessary to ratify them through express legal provisions. “The law only has to be passively present, reflecting the scene unfolding.” (MACKINNON, 1995, p. 300).

The liberal state, therefore, is not just the state that distances itself from society to allow economic relations to occur without intervention. Lorena fears her social participation. She prefers to be at home because, in society, she disintegrates. The liberalizing state imprisons women in the domestic sphere. There, however, in the circle of intimacy, where everything tends to be between the walls, at a distance from the Big Brother, there is a representative, free to dispose of the opposite sex without any shame. Passive, contemplative law doesn't need to close its eyes; it just needs to cover its ears. Everything is allowed! In this sense, *the girls in the photograph* are all, in some respect, in a zone of legal indifference.

Undoubtedly, however, each of the girls’ relationship with the legal world is not governed by isomorphism.

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By virtue of her class*, Lorena* is in a less illegal state than the others. As a member of a country where personal ties determine the weight of the law (BITTAR, 2014, p. 10-11), she may consider herself less affected: "A lawyer related to Lorena, all lawyers are related to her" (p. 183).

Lia, for her part, in an intermediate position, would be better off were it not for her critical stance towards the established, which leads her to a *contra legem* status. Her revolutionary option inevitably places her in the interest of legality. She is located precisely where the only way to establish a new order, by overthrowing the old one, implies relying on procedures, if not illegal, whose character cannot be considered legal (TELLES JR., 1955, p. 217-218).

Ana Clara, finally, is the one who is most removed from all the legal apparatus. Her legal existence has a spectral aspect. *After all, did Aninha exist, or was it all just madness?* You can see the concrete marks of an absent law that kills with contumacy in the purple stains on her breasts.

Tough? With women! With men? A bit lax... In a spasm of lucidity, Lorena finishes:

> "You know very well," thought Lorena, picking up the treatise on social legislation from the bookshelf. She shook it, rustling the long strips of paper that marked the pages. She read the notes on the end of one of the tapes. She leaned out of the window and stared at the garden. Law was born spontaneously, like those little flowers sprouting in the middle of the bush. "But the tricky men came along and complicated everything with their trickiness," she thought, pulling another tape out of the book. She read it carefully and broke it into small pieces like confetti. She blew it into her palm. "Was Jesus cavilous? Imagine. Those who came later made those clever faces and invented *sed lex*." And that deep down, it's not so tough. From Mother Alix, she had learned the word *cavilous*. "That cat of yours is so cavilous," she said, pointing at Astronaut, who began to toilet his parts at that moment. She went to the dictionary: tricky, sly, sophist (p. 154).

In recent decades, certain advances have been made in the legal sphere as a way of tackling gender inequality, thanks to the massive movements of women around the world for more equal and fairer living conditions. The modern world system, however, which reinforces women's submission and preserves representations and symbols that perpetuate women's oppression, cannot be changed by Law alone (cf. PALAR; SILVA, 2018).

It is, after all, an oppression articulated not only in the legal sphere but also in the political and ideological spheres, which can only be broken through a reconstruction of the concept of *power* itself, dissociated from the idea of domination and control over third

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parties, so that it can be re-signified within a world in which hierarchies are not the basis of human relations, as proposed by bell hooks (2019).

The need for attention increases, particularly with the advance of conservative and totalitarian forces. As Pedro, one of Lia's revolutionary colleagues, says: "I think I'm more afraid of the people back home than the police. My older brother is part of that wave of tradition and family; you have to see how hysterical he's become. I'm scared to death of him" (p. 134).

The contemporary revival of an ancient narrative, in which the symbols and discourses of the family, the church, female submission, repression, and authority (of a masculine and violent figure), as well as all their implicit and related values, are overvalued, is not only a questioning of progress but also a threat to it.

In this scenario, although the Law alone can't respond to all the necessary emancipations and social changes, on the other hand, its role in preserving the premises of a political-legal space in which the best and most appropriate forms of protection for human dignity are sought is undeniable - however challenging its opposition to state power may be, to which it is intrinsically linked, but also to which it is not reduced.

Final considerations

Amid such a repressive and homogenizing context, Lygia Fagundes Telles' *The girl in the photograph* embodies the female condition differently. While Lorena assumes, to some extent, her role in the repressive and bourgeois scenario in which she is conceived, hiding her impressions, Lia seeks, on the other hand, through militancy, struggle, and philosophy, to open up an alternative way of existing, with independence and freedom, based on the transformation of society and people.

Somehow so close and far from the two, Ana Clara, in turn, gives name and face to the tragedy of women who, for countless reasons, become directly more vulnerable to men's violence and social structures of subjugation, making it impossible for them to even exist.

Through an analysis of law in literature, the novel reveals not only a delicate portrait of women's lives during the civil-military dictatorship but, above all, complex

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critical perceptions of the legal phenomenon in Brazil through the marginalized eyes of the characters.

Through Lorena's sensibility, the Law reveals itself as an institutional expression of paternal authority - which the character lacks so much and tries too hard to make up for by clinging to Latin, rites, and legal idiosyncrasies. Placing herself in a position of comfortable altitude, Lorena faces the Law with lucidity only on rare occasions, through flashes of clarity, without it being entirely clear to what extent the character *is*, and to what extent she *performs*, in a game of expectations and mirrors very well internalized by Lorena's philosophy.

In a diametrically opposite direction is Lia's perception of law, which looks at it with very fixed eyes, from the reality of the concreteness of life and the countless inequalities of everyday life. Seen through this materialistic prism, the Law is exposed as an instrument indifferent to the perpetuation of people's suffering, even though the character oscillates throughout the novel between seeking an absolute break with the legal order and trying to reconcile with it.

Ana Clara understands the Law so little, to the exact extent that she seems to exist without it as if her mere experience were nothing more than chance, an unpredictability on the fringes of careful and controlling normative regulation. On the margins, Ana Clara experiences legal neglect and, above all, the consequences of this abandonment, becoming a victim before she can pursue her intense desire for happiness.

In this way, *The girl in the photograph* denounces the reality of women of its time from its historical and literary position. However, it is also capable of shedding light on the nakedness and rawness of the Law by opening a fissure in the collective memories of the period of the civil-military dictatorship and, through it, allowing the expression of female subjectivities, secularly silenced and, in a not unironic way, revealed throughout the work in almost oblique ways, pierced through, partially hidden behind thin curtains.

It's almost as if the criticisms are made through a sidelong glance. Throughout the book, however, the pleas for attention grow louder: "[...] the truth is, my dear, that life, the world, always bends to our decisions. Let's not forget the scars left by death" (p. 75).

As testimonial literature and an invitation to a critical understanding of this violent period in national history, *The girl in the photograph* is relevant in the face of the barely contained advance of conservative and authoritarian forces in Brazil. For jurists, in particular, reflections on the law challenge their pretension to neutrality and distance,

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stressing, with the usual ease of literature, their refusal of imagination, and their mission of zeal for the established order.

In this scenario, even decades later, we can see the importance of the historical-literary lessons contained in Lygia Fagundes Telles' work, which are capable of leading to the sensitization that is indispensable for refining her readers' understanding of the world and, in the legal field, to the humanization that is essential for combating barbarism.

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