

Laços entre animais e humanos em *As Vinhas da Ira* de John E. Steinbeck, *Vidas secas* de Graciliano Ramos e *Porteira Fechada* de Cyro Martins

Bounds between animals and humans in *The Grapes of Wrath* by John E. Steinbeck, *Vidas Secas* by Graciliano Ramos and *Porteira Fechada* by Cyro Martins

Isabel Speggorin DEVINCENZI

Abstract: *The relation between animals and human beings was analyzed in three novels – Vidas Secas (1938) by Graciliano Ramos, The Grapes of Wrath (1939) by John E. Steinbeck and Porteira Fechada (1944) by Cyro Martins – as possible reflections of social and economic transformations in the countryside during the decades of 30's and 40's. The Grapes of Wrath portrays the period of the Great Depression in the United States, and Vidas Secas and Porteira Fechada, the period of Estado Novo (1937-1945) in Brazil. First, it was analyzed the animal characterization of the novels' characters; secondly, how animals were present in the work order in the countryside; thirdly, the relation between the novels' characters and animals. This study may indicate that the relationship between the characters and the animals in the selected novels are marked by rupture, as some groups of the Brazilian and the American society were experiencing a rupture of values at that time.*

Key-words: *Literature; man-animal relationship; rural work; Estado Novo; The Great Depression.*

Resumo: *A relação entre animais e seres humanos foi analisada em três romances – Vidas Secas (1938) de Graciliano Ramos, As Vinhas da Ira (1939) de John E. Steinbeck e Porteira Fechada (1944) de Cyro Martins – como possíveis reflexos de transformações sociais e econômicas no meio rural durante as décadas de 30 e 40. As Vinhas da Ira retrata o período da Grande Depressão nos Estados Unidos, e Vidas Secas e Porteira Fechada, o período do Estado Novo (1937-1945) no Brasil. Primeiramente, foi analisada a caracterização animal dos personagens dos romances; segundamente, como os animais estão presentes na ordem de trabalho no campo; terceiromente, a relação entre os personagens e os animais nos romances. Este estudo pode indicar que a relação entre os personagens e os animais nos romances analisados é marcada pela ruptura, assim como determinados grupos da sociedade brasileira e americana experimentavam uma ruptura de valores naquele período.*

Palavras-chave: *Literatura; relação homem-animal; trabalho rural; Estado Novo; A Grande Depressão.*

1. Introduction

The present study proposes to analyze the relation between animals and human beings in three novels, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), by the American author, John E. Steinbeck (1902-1968), *Vidas*

Secas (1938), by Graciliano Ramos (1892-1953), and a novel which composes the second part of a trilogy named “Trilogia do gaúcho a pé”, by Cyro Martins (1908-1955), entitled *Porteira Fechada* (1944). The hypothesis is that the man-animal relationship portrayed in the selected novels may reflect social and economic transformations in historical periods that serve as background to the novels: the great depression in the United States after the crash of the stock market in 1929, and the period of *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) in Brazil.

2. Literary Review

Although each of the selected novels are inserted in particular context, both socioeconomically as in time and space, they all have as motif the journey of families through a unknown land looking for work and conditions for live.

The American economy experienced an economic boom after the World War I – according to the historian Cláudio Vicentino (2005): “Os Estados Unidos eram responsáveis, em 1918, por mais de um terço da produção industrial mundial e, em 1929, passaram para mais de 42%.” (2005:435) – which was followed by the crash of the stock market in 1929, caused mainly by financial speculation, and the Great Depression.

The historical context of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the United States after the crash of 1929. The economic depression is portrayed in the rural scenario while the mechanization of crops is being introduced, replacing, in large scale, human labor.

Besides, during this period, an event called Dust-Bowl aggravated the situation for rural workers in the USA, during this period. Dust-Bowl was a climatic phenomenon caused by years of improper management of the soil that reached especially the area of the Great Plains in the USA, during the decade of 1930, and lasted for almost ten years. Due to the Depression, farmers wanted to compensate the loss of income by increasing production, which led to the exhaustion of the land. The Joad family from *The Grapes of Wrath* was from the state of Oklahoma and, like many other families, was left in great damage, so they decided to try their luck in California, where it was said a huge amount of workers was needed.

The narrative of *Vidas Secas* is situated in the northeast of Brazil in the decade of 1930, when, historically, the country was leaving a period of oligarchies centered in coffee, during the *Republica Oligárquica* (1894-1930), to the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945). In the period of *Estado Novo*, Brazil was marked by a populist age through the figure of President Getúlio Vargas, and State intervention in the economy, according to Vicentino (2005:469), with emphasis on a policy of “industrialização por substituição de importações”.

In *Vidas Secas*, however, the motivation of the family’s journey is not related to an industrialization process, but to the very dry and unbearable climate of the region of the northeast of Brazil during the phenomenon of drought, which makes food very scarce due to the climatic

conditions, and obliged the family to a crossing towards the south. The family crossed the dry country looking for a farm that could shelter them and offer them jobs; therefore, food.

To understand the social and economic discrepancies among the Brazilian states, a reference to the constitution of the Brazilian Federative Model is valid. Stepan (1999) analyses differences among federal republics, beyond the USA model:

“If we look at the federal systems that actually exist in the world, we see that not all federal systems are demos-constraining to the same degree. American-style federalism is demos-constraining, and Brazil is the most demos-constraining federation in the world.”

(STEPAN, 1999:24)

One of the differences between federalism in Brazil and in the United States is that, in the USA different unities were oriented by the same political authority; therefore, constrained to a majority rule. In Brazil, however, the main objective in the formation of a federative model was that Brazilian states gained autonomy from a central government that resided in Dom Pedro II Empire, in other words, a monarchical regime. This forged in Brazil a so called pseudo-federalism, in which some states have more importance than others, São Paulo and Minas Gerais, in the period of the *República Oligárquica* were more central and economically important than states from the northeast of Brazil, which were impoverished, as these states were not politically and economically influential at the time.

Porteira Fechada, on the other hand, according to Aguiar (1984 apud Martins, 2010:116), portrays a scenario of a almost constant crisis, of the region of the frontier of Rio Grande do Sul after World War I. Aguiar explains that, at first, the War favored the cattle breeders, with the reduction or the suspension of imports; but later, the economic difficulties came, and credit and exports were suspended. Boris Fausto (2006), historian, considers that:

“A crise mundial concorreu também para o desprestígio da democracia liberal, associada no plano econômico ao capitalismo. O capitalismo, que prometera igualdade de oportunidades e abundância, caíra em um buraco negro do qual parecia incapaz de livrar-se. Em vez de uma vida melhor, trouxera empobrecimento, desemprego e desesperança.”

(FAUSTO, 2006:194)

The crisis of the coffee in Brazil, also attached to the crisis of 1929, in the USA, was reflected in economic changes in Rio Grande do Sul: the power of big farmers from the region of *campanha* was shaken by the crisis, and the *estância* became susceptible to financial speculation. *Porteira Fechada* is a reflection of the political changes during the *Estado Novo*, a period that Fausto

(2006:201) defines as having the objective to promote industrialization without major social shocks. However, the historian presents data comparing agricultural production and industrial production between 1920 and 1940 in Brazil:

“Em 1920, a agricultura detinha 79% do valor da produção total e a indústria 21%. Em 1940 as proporções correspondiam a 57% e 43% respectivamente, como resultado de taxas anuais de crescimento da indústria bem superiores às da agricultura.”

(Fausto, 2006:216)

An agricultural state such as Rio Grande do Sul suffered with these transformation, as industry demonstrated enormous growth, especially in the most modernized state at the time, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul suffered from the competition for markets. *Porteira Fechada* portrays a movement where many families were expelled from their holding, so that the land would be more profitable if incorporated to large estates, in this aspect, a similar process occurred in *The Grapes of Wrath*, distinguished by the fact that in this novel, agricultural machinery was being introduced in the country, in large scale, a scenario that is not portrayed in *Porteira Fechada*.

The landowner of João Guedes' ranch sold the property to a major farmer of the region, Julio Bica, who intended to congregate whole other properties to raise cattle. As João Guedes could not find any other occupation as a land keeper in the countryside, he was obliged to move with his family to the surrounding areas of a city called Boa Ventura. In the novel, Flávio Aguiar (1984 apud Martins, 2010) perceives that, despite Julio Bica still maintaining status, the later generation, represented by his son, Helio, could not see any future in the *estância*.

3. Methodology

This study proposes to analyze the problematic of the value of animal life and human life in the referred novels as an indicator of social and economic transformations in the historical period contextualized in the novels. For this, the question of this study will discuss three topics.

First of all, how human and how animal are the characters in the novels, as it is perceived and will be later explained in this article, in *Vidas Secas* and in *Porteira Fechada* the characters express themselves sometimes with manners and language of animals, as they refer to others by using expressions and characterizations of the animal world.

Secondly, how animal work force is perceived in the everyday life of these characters, in means of work and subsistence. To explore, for example: how were animals present in the everyday life of the Joad family from *The Grapes of Wrath* before and after the process of mechanization and later expulsion of their holding; how the figure of the horse in *Porteira Fechada* is seen before and

after the family's arrival to the city; in *Vidas Secas*, how was Fabiano's relation with animals, especially with cattle and the horse, since this relates to his way of living as a *vaqueiro*.

Third and last, to search if the characters of these novels have an emotional relation with animals or not, how this is demonstrated through their actions and speech, and how this could affect their judgment of value on human and animal life.

3.1 Animal characterization of humans

3.1.1 *Vidas Secas*

The critic Álvaro Lins in the preface to *Vidas Secas*, questions what would lead the author Graciliano Ramos to choose this title for his work. According to Lins (1947 apud Ramos, 2001:136): “Sem dúvida, todos os seus personagens são de fato “vidas secas”. Os seus personagens e este estilo em que se exprime o romancista.” The critic refers to a style which he defines as “admirável estilo e concisão, unidade entre as palavras e os seus sentidos, rígido ascetismo tanto na narração como nos diálogos (...)” (1947 apud Ramos, 2001:136).

According to Lins, if in previous novels like *São Bernardo* (1934) and *Angústia* (1936), Graciliano Ramos' characters were given no compassion or possibility of salvation in the hands of the novelist, in *Vidas Secas* (1938), he attests that the narrative in third person is a sign of the author's identification and sympathy with the people from the northeast of Brazil in the novel. Although a possible identification or sympathy towards the characters is covered by their rudeness and little capacity of expression, Lins considers that:

“O Sr. Graciliano Ramos movimenta as suas figures humanas com uma tamanha impassibilidade que logo indica o desencanto e a indiferença com que olha para a humanidade. Que me lembre, só a um de seus personagens ele trata com verdadeira simpatia, e este não é gente, mas um cachorro, em Vidas Secas.”

(LINS, 1947 apud Ramos, 2001:137)

Paradoxically, besides all the animal metaphors present in *Vidas Secas* to characterize humans, the novel is considered the most humane of Graciliano Ramos' books by Lins. This family, marked by the phenomenon of the drought in the northeast of Brazil, and intrinsically connected to the earth, promotes moving and interesting reflections about their social condition. Each character is given a chapter in the book, which is led mostly by interior monologues combined with episodes. Each chapter is a complete unity and works autonomously. In the chapter entitled “Fabiano”, the father, a *vaqueiro* comes to a resolution:

“- Fabiano, você é um homem, exclamou em voz alta.

(...) E, pensando bem, ele não era um homem: era apenas um cabra ocupado em guardar coisas dos outros. Vermelho, queimado, tinha os olhos azuis, a barba e os cabelos ruivos; mas como vivia em terra alheia, cuidava de animais alheios, descobria-se, encolhia-se na presença dos brancos e julgava-se cabra.

Olhou em torno, com receio de que fora os meninos, alguém tivesse percebido a frase imprudente. Corrigiu-a murmurando:

- Você é um bicho, Fabiano.

Isto para ele era motivo de orgulho. Sim senhor, um bicho, capaz de vencer dificuldades.”

(RAMOS, 2001:18)

This passage, from the beginning of the novel, describes, at first, Fabiano bragging himself: “Fabiano, you are a man”, he says aloud. He had come with his family on a difficult journey through *sertão*, starving, eating only roots, and they had succeeded: Fabiano had found work on the farm and, then, the family could eat. Fabiano, for a moment, has the impression that his sons overheard him, so he flatters. We can perceive, however, that, in a dramatic change, Fabiano realizes that, not having anything of his own, no land, no animals, he could not consider himself a man. Even though being redhead and having blue eyes, different physical characteristics of the population of the northeast of Brazil, who have brown skin and hair, he felt intimidated by “white people”. In Fabiano’s conception, he was an animal, a *cabra*, and that was a reason of pride. Having the strength and the endurance of an animal was positive to Fabiano, as he explains, later on, the drought reached everyone, even Seu Tomás, the farm owner to whom he worked for.

An important aspect that deserves consideration on the analysis of how animal the characters of *Vidas Secas* are presented is to observe the use they make of language. The characters lack vocabulary and they very often communicate with each other by emitting guttural sounds.

Fabiano, for example, through his work as a *vaqueiro*, is attached to the animal world and the land in a special way. Considering that, dealing with cattle, a *vaqueiro* guides the cattle by using sounds, riding on a horse and making maneuvers. Graciliano Ramos, portrays this image perfectly: “Vivia longe dos animais. (...) Montado, confundia-se com o cavalo, grudava-se a ele. E falava uma linguagem cantada, monossilábica e gutural, que o companheiro entendia.” (Ramos, 2001:19) The narrator explains that Fabiano very often used the same expressions that he spoke to animals to direct to people, using exclamations and onomatopoeias. When trying to catch the attention of his sons, he would clap hands and yell: “*Ecô! Ecô!*”, an interjection commonly used to direct to animals.

In another episode, when confronted by a soldier, Fabiano sees himself defenseless due to his lack of argumentation. After being provoked, he curses the soldier’s mother and, not able to express himself properly, he is beaten and thrown in jail. In the chapter entitled *Soldado Amarelo*, Fabiano imagines himself chasing the soldier who he has had the conflict with, but could not retaliate, then he

hallucinates killing him with the fury of an animal. He feels his eyes were bloody and he could kill him that moment: “Podia matá-lo com as unhas.” (Ramos, 2001:10)

Fabiano, after passed his delusional state, submits, containing himself. It seems possible the interpretation that, due to Fabiano’s feeling of inferiority, which in this situation is confirmed by his experience in jail, he does not assures himself as man for confronting the soldier, but a weak creature for submitting to the humiliation of, after being beaten, having to take off his hat to salute the soldier when he saw him again in the village.

3.1.2 *The Grapes of Wrath*

In the novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, during their journey to California, when the Joad family arrives to New Mexico, they are warned by a man who had embarked on the same journey as they, but had lost everything, including his wife and children, and revealed that California was not the idyllic place people thought it was. He warns the Joads that, in California, there would be no future for people like them: they would be considered “low class”, degraded people, and would be mistreated and underpaid, without any possibility of obtaining property. The protagonist, Tom Joad, is called “Okie” and is harassed by a group of men from the region that did not wanted his family’s presence there. The experienced man explains to Tom Joad the meaning of the term “Okie”:

"Well, Okie use' ta mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're scum. Don't mean nothing itself, it's the way they say it. But I can't tell you nothin'. You got to go there. I hear there's three hundred thousand' of our people there—an' livin' like hogs, 'cause ever'thing in California is owned. They ain't nothin' left. An' them people that owns it is gonna hang on to it if they got ta kill ever'body in the worl' to do it. An' they're scairt, an' that makes 'em mad".

(STEINBECK, 1976:264-265)

These novel characters’ were given no value, they were treated as “disposable”, undesirable population, since there were thousands of families willing to do the same job they were, each time for a lower price, for an activity that was seasonal. After finished the harvest, landowners wanted them to, precisely, disappear, as well as the general population of that region and the law force wanted, who did not want them to stay wandering the area, starving and causing problems.

The man the Joad family met during the journey refers to people who own land in California as being scared, as he mentions before, the perception that hungry men could get raging and start organizing riots was a cause of alarm. So all the wrath and indignation of thousands men like them, “living like hogs”, and seeing all that wasted land, if united, were a threat to landowners.

As we can observe in the selected passage, the animal characterization is not perceived in *Grapes of Warth* in the same way as in *Vidas Secas*, or as will later be exposed, in *Porteira Fechada*. A comparison between men and animals is made: men and hogs. This is a comparison of depreciative character, exclusively, to illustrate a social condition of misery and squalor experienced by thousands of men in that condition of decay.

3.1.3 *Porteira Fechada*

In the presentation of *Porteira Fechada*'s edition of 2010, the critic Flávio Aguiar writes about a dual degradation in the usage of terms of cattle management to the description of humans. According to Aguiar (1984 apud Martins, 2010:6), firstly, there is the degradation of the human being, and, secondly, the degradation of the ethics of the livestock world:

“Exposto a um vocabulário que é próprio do mundo equino, os personagens ilustram seu processo de reificação. Mas como o cavalo é o centro metafórico dos valores positivos do mundo da pecuária, esta exposição de seu universo semântico à condição de degradação da peonada (...) também ilustra a degradação ética que atinge esse mundo como um todo.”

(AGUIAR, 1984 apud MARTINS, 2010:6)

In this novel, differently from *Vidas Secas*, the animal characterization does not provide the characters with advantages in the new order they are inserted in. In the village, men from the country would be in an outclassed position, since most of their abilities are no longer valid in the urban scenario and they have to downgrade themselves performing other activities.

João Guedes, consumed by alcoholism in *boliches*, brings the vocabulary from the *campanha* to this degrading environment, representing his downfall, as well as the downfall of the countryside universe. In a situation in which João Guedes steals his first sheep, entering the world of smuggling – after stealing he would resell the *pelego* to the *boliche* owner, Fagundes – he perceives that this was point that marked his process of degradation, not when he arrived in the city, but when he appealed to such a vile act, that went against the ethics of the *campanha* and the *gaúcho*. In the following passage, Guedes invests in the frenetic intent to capture and kill a sheep taking the form of a furious animal:

“Não desanimava, porém. Pelo contrário, encarniçava-se cada vez mais, embora começasse a sentir que o montado esfalfava. (...) Suado, exausto e furioso, Guedes arrancou da faca e sangrou-o como quem sangrasse um inimigo.”

(MARTINS, 2010:128)

3.2 Animals and the work order in the country

3.2.1 *Vidas Secas*

In *Vidas Secas* the cattle is the center of the family order concerning work. Fabiano is a *vaqueiro*, also responsible to take care of the animals of the farm, to feed them, treat them if they get injured or get sick, and to capture the ones who escape.

In an episode described in the chapter “O Menino Mais Novo”, the youngest boy tries to tame a mare to impress his older brother and the dog Baleia, but he falls from his horse and almost gets seriously injured. Fabiano, then, concludes the task and amazes their boys: “Fabiano era terrível. No chão, despidos os couros, reduzia-se bastante, mas no lombo de uma égua alazã era terrível.” (Ramos, 2001:49) – the youngest son thought.

It is interesting to observe that the perception that Fabiano became more impressive when united to a horse is not only of the *vaqueiro*, who seems more comfortable handling with animals than interacting with humans. Fabiano, properly dressed with his leather suit, represented an amazing and imposing figure, impressive to his son.

3.2.2 *The Grapes of Wrath*

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Joad family subsisted on plantation, for that they used traditional manual methods of plowing and cultivating the land. With the coming of the tractors in the countryside, this situating changed completely. The land owners saw no profit in maintaining tenants to cultivate their land, because a task such as cleaning and preparing the field for plantation, which used to take many families several days, one man operating a tractor could perform it in few hours. In the next passage the narrator describes this social and economic transformation, making reference to “the monster”: the banks that were going bankrupt with 1929 crisis and demanded their tributes:

“And at last the owner men came to the point. The tenant system won’t work any more. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop. We don’t like to do it. But the monster is sick. Something has happened to the monster”.

(STEINBECK, 1976:42)

This change of the animal and human work force in the field to machinery force, allied to the phenomenon of Dust-Bowl in Oklahoma during the 30’s, it made several families, like the Joads lose everything without notice, as Steinbeck portrays in his novel: “The tenant men looked up alarmed. But

what'll happen to us? How'll eat? You'll have to get off the land. The plows'll go through the dooryard.” (Steinbeck, 1976:43)

The Joad family was attracted by brochures that promoted a large work offer in the west, especially in California, and deluded by the possibility of a better life, even with the possibility of ownership and easy and pleasurable jobs like fruit picking, they embarked on a crossing through the desert towards the west, a dangerous journey at that time. For this, they needed a way of transportation, so they sold whatever they possessed of value, including their animals and their paraphernalia.

The narrator describes a scene of huge opportunism by car sellers, who used any kind of strategy to deceive humble people, with few or any knowledge about cars and mechanics, because the sellers knew that a whole contingent from the country would need a car, any kind that promised to hold up until the west. In the cities sellers would try to pass on cars with broken pieces, old and damaged, charging exorbitant rates, convincing the “pickers” to sign contracts of many installments. Observe the scene when a car seller mocks a man who wants to trade his mules for a car:

“Got a pair of mules I’ll trade.

Mules! Hey, Joe, hear this? This guy wants to trade mules. Didn’t nobody tell you this is the machine age? They don’t use mules for nothing but glue no more”.

(STEINBECK, 1976:82-83)

We can perceive that, in the previous passage, a significant aspect is the transformation of the animal work force to machinery. Also, there is the car seller’s contempt, who downgrades the value of strong and skilled animals, by saying they would not serve for anything more than glue and dog food to explore as much as possible the rural worker.

3.2.3 *Porteira Fechada*

In *Porteira Fechada*, João Guedes, a man of the country, is a land keeper in the *campanha*, his job is to maintain the land of a major farmer or *estancieiro* called Júlio Bica. He needs to look after the animals and the property frontiers, so this way he is permitted to settle on that land, to build a ranch, raise a few animals and cultivate the necessary land for his family’s subsistence. He is a tenant and the bounds of this contract are very fragile, as we perceive by the way João Guedes and his family were expelled from the ranch:

“- Então já sabe que lhe botei pra fora daqui? (...) De tantos anos que morava ali, quase se esquecera que aquele pedacinho de campo não lhe pertencia, que ele não passava dum simples arrendatário.”

(MARTINS, 2010:28)

After passing all sort of misfortune and disgrace, like misery, alcoholism, jail, the death of one daughter due to tuberculosis, and having another one running away with a boyfriend, Guedes sees himself obliged to sell his companion, his horse, the *matungo*, an old horse, already in bad shape, skinny and injured, because living in the city, Guedes could not maintain it himself anymore.

Later on, Guedes' situation continued to get worst, as his wife Maria José, who had been working as a seamstress, lost almost every client she had because none would approach a family that lost someone due to tuberculosis. With no escape out, Guedes ruptures with the last bound he still maintained with the world of the *campanha*, a very important attachment to the *gaúcho*: he leaves home decided to sell his horse' harness, already kept dusty under the bed, to the first person who offers him a decent price. Guedes accepts his pitiful destiny: “desígnio doloroso de gaúcho “de a pé”” (Martins, 2010:123).

Cyro Martins created the expression “*Gaúcho a pé*” and used it as a contestation, in his words, a “bandeira reivindicatória” (Martins, 1983:109). According to Martins (1983: 109), “gaúcho a pé” it is an abbreviated expression and a metaphor for the he man from the country of the Rio Grande do Sul who was out of place, out of his “natural environment”, the *campanha*. Due to social and economic transformations the broken country man was pushed to an outcast position:

“Com efeito, aquela brava gente, que ainda alcancei a ver arriscando-se briosamente nas lides do campo, apagou-se em grande parte no marginalismo suburbano. Foi empurrada, como ressaca humana, para os arredores das cidades, à medida que os latifúndios se estendiam vorazmente.”

(MARTINS, 1983).

In this movement the *gaúcho* loses a prominent aspect of his characterization, the horse, which relates to “de a pé”, that means “by foot”.

3.3 Relationship between animals and humans in the novels

3.3.1 Vidas Secas

In the novel *Vidas Secas*, the family had two pets, one parrot and a female dog, Baleia. In an extreme situation, when they could not find any food for days during their journey, the parrot was eaten by the family, and its bones were destined to Baleia. The parrot was practically mute, as the family spoke very little, therefore it was considered worthless by Sinha Vitoria, who accomplished the

task of killing it; however, in the future, she would not talk about this episode anymore; it was something that she would avoid, as a bad memory.

Once, Fabiano compared Sinha Vitória to a parrot walking on the patent lather shoes she used to put on for party days. She felt very offended and saddened by her husband's comparison. She already had the impression that she looked ridiculous in those shoes, but the comparison reminded her of the parrot she had killed. She felt sorry for the animal, but most of all, his memory reminded her of the desperate times during the drought, when they had nothing but roots to eat, sometimes not even that. After they arrived on the farm it was like her whole life had changed, and the reference to the shoes made her sorrow.

In the following passage, we perceive through Sinha Vitoria's words that, despite the extreme circumstances they found themselves at that time, she had affection for the animal; she still remembered of the subtle mannerism of the parrot as if it was a human being, as herself, when stumbling on hells:

“Olhou os pés novamente. Pobre do louro. Na beira do rio matara-o por necessidade, para sustento da família. Naquele momento ele estava zangado, fitava na cachorrinha as pupilas serias e caminhava aos tombos, como matutos em dias de festa. Para que Fabiano fora despertar-lhe aquela recordação?”

(RAMOS, 2001:43)

The family also had a dog, Baleia, adored by the children. The boys did not have problems on demonstrating their affection for Baleia, they would suffer with her absence, enjoy her company and loyalty, pat her and kiss her, and even tell her stories. In one episode, in which the oldest son is mistreated by his mother, who lost her temper because of the boy's annoying questions, he finds comfort in Baleia:

“Todos os abandonavam, a cadelinha era o único vivente que lhe mostrava simpatia. Afagou-a com os dedos magros e sujos, e o animal encolheu-se para sentir bem o contato agradável, experimentou uma sensação como a que lhe dava a cinza do borralho.”

(RAMOS, 2001:56)

In the novel there are not portraits of scenes of affection or tenderness between the parents and their children, nor even between the couple Sinha Vitoria and Fabiano that involve actual physical touch. So the comparison that the boy makes between a nice feeling of touch and acceptance is to a sensation of warmth, and the one that he resembles is the one hot ash gave him.

Fabiano demonstrated differently his affection to Baleia. His most important considerations about the dog are in the chapters “Baleia” and “Fuga”. In the chapter “Baleia”, the narrator describes how Baleia was in poor shape: she had all kinds of wounds and swellings, and appeared that she was going to die. Fabiano decides to kill the dog with his shotgun, so that she would not suffer any longer.

Sinha Vitoria locks herself in their hovel with the two boys, who sense the danger and feel very afflicted for Baleia. The narrator intervenes for the dog: “Ela era como uma pessoa da família: brincavam juntos os três, para dizer bem não se diferenciavam (...)” (Ramos, 2001:85). Sinha Vitoria, though afflicted: “Ela também tinha o coração pesado” (2001:86), accepted Fabiano’s decision as fair.

In the chapter *Fuga*, Fabiano perceives that it was necessary to leave the farm, the landscape was changing and was showing signs that the *seca* may come. Since Fabiano did not have the money to pay his debts with the farmer, the family needed to leave without notice. But, more than to escape from their debts and the *seca*, Fabiano needed to escape from the memories of Baleia. In the next passage, we can perceive Fabiano’s disturbed state of mind caused by the possibility that he had made an injustice: “Fabiano suspirou, sentiu um peso enorme por dentro. Se tivesse cometido um erro? (Ramos, 2001: 114)

Fabiano starts wondering if Baleia’s soul would not have been wandering the camps, he feels that he needs to convince Sinha Vitoria to leave, to convince her, also, that he had not made an injustice by killing the dog. Fabiano concludes that it is necessary to abandon that land, “Aqueles lugares amaldiçoados” (Ramos, 2001:115). A place that obliged him to kill someone that had been nothing but good and faithful to him, that accompanied him daily, barking while he conducted the cattle, someone that when Fabiano would think about doing disgraceful things, like killing the Soldado Amarelo, he would be contained by the memory of his family: “Pensou na mulher, nos filhos *e na cachorrinha*”. (Ramos, 2001:32-33; italics mine)

3.3.2 *The Grapes of Wrath*

In *The grapes of the Wrath*, the Joad family had, among many other animals, some dogs in their ranch, the family took only one on their truck to California, and the others were left under the cares of a neighbor, Mulley so that they do not starve, which was father Joad’s concern.

Mulley was the only one of his family that resisted to the idea of moving to California, so he stayed around the area of his old ranch all by himself, hunting small animals, sleeping in holes in the dirt and running from the patrol cars during the night, because after losing his land, he was, then, trespassing.

The only dog the family took with them was hit by a truck as soon as they reached the highway. It seems that everyone that embarked on that journey was condemned to have a poor destiny. When the dog was crushed on the highway the father concludes: ““Le's get outa here," he said. "I don't know how we was gonna feed 'im anyways.”” (Steinbeck, 1976:167).

A man camped on the side of the road promised to bury the dog in the corn field. When grandfather Joad died due to the stress of the journey, which caused him illness, the family decided to bury him at the side of the road, because they could not afford a funeral or the expenses of taking him to a coroner, and having the proper certificates of death. They also had a desperate hurry to carry on with the journey and guarantee their jobs in California. Therefore, in this aspect, there is little distinction between animal life and human life, as dog and man needed to be forgotten so that the journey continued.

3.3.3 *Porteira Fechada*

In *Porteira Fechada*, João Guedes had a dog, Amigo, his mate, “companheiro das madrugadas” (2010:25), that was very faithful to him:

“Levantara, como de costume, ao clarear do dia. Logo ao pisar fora da porta, foi festejado pelo Amigo, um cusquinho malhado, já velhusco e trôpego, mas se conservando ladino e de confiança.”

(Martins, 2010:25)

When Guedes is arrested, for stealing sheep – an incredible shame and perpetration for a man of the country, punishable even with death in the old time, as infers Aguiar (2010:7) – the dog suffers with the absence of its owner, and when Guedes returns, the dog receives him happily (2010:118); although the whole family was dull.

In the end of the novel, Guedes commits suicide, and at his funeral the narrator describes the scene as if the dog was also affected by Guedes’ death. The other characters are portrayed as saddened, but most because of the perception of the irreversible downfall they are suffering, while the dog was the only one who seems to sorrow exclusive because of the absence of its owner: “O Amigo rosnou, mexeu-se, entortando a cabeça, e fixou a porta como se alguém fosse chegar.” (2010:162)

4 Results

Through the analysis of the socioeconomic and historical context that each referred novel is inserted, and through the analysis of selected passages of the literary texts, it is possible to infer conclusions of three different orders, following the topics arranged in this discussion.

Concerning the first aspect, the animal characterization of the novel’s character, it may be partially positive and partially negative in *Vidas Secas*. Positive because it represents an advantage for overcoming difficulties in the hostile environment of the dry country in which the characters are inserted, but negative because as they gain this endurance they become less sensitive to communicate

and interact in the human language, as none bothered to give them voice, configuring a process of dehumanization.

In *Porteira Fechada*, this characterization is doubly degrading, since the novel stresses the transition between the *estancia* and the village of Boa Ventura, the narrative mainly takes place in a scenario where the characters are displaced and put in an inferior position. Therefore, the animal characterization of humans through the use of the semantic universe of equines, when given in a scenario of degradation, is not positive, as reference to traditionalism, for example, but depreciative for the human and the ethics of the *campanha*, as a whole.

In *The Grapes of Wrath* animal characterization is negative, as this comparison it is purely pejorative and stands for a state of humiliation and inferiority the characters find themselves in.

Concerning the second aspect, the usage was the animal work force, if in *Vidas Secas* animals are still portrayed as the center of the work and economic order, in *The Grapes of Wrath*, a scenario of drastic transformation from the animal work force to machinery is portrayed. In *Porteira Fechada*, if the image of the cattle and the sheep is perceived as the center of the economic order in the region of *campanha* in Rio Grande, the novel also presents the degradation of the equine world and the rural workers, as the prelude of the downfall of the universe of the *estancieiros*.

Concerning the third aspect, the emotional interaction between humans and animal, it may be given more stress in *Vidas Secas* and *Porteira Fechada*, through the characters Baleia and Amigo – which the novels' respective narrators portray as having positive characteristics, such as sensibility, great empathy for humans, consideration an loyalty – which were considered members of the family, not secondary figures as in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Baleia, for example, is given space to discourse, in the chapter “Baleia”, Baleia's death is presented from her point of view in the story, configuring one of the most empathic scenes of the novel.

Meanwhile, the relation the characters established with each other and with animals is a reflection of the collapse of a previous order. At some point of each narrative there is a rupture of bounds between animals and humans, caused by death or abandonment: in *The Grapes of Wrath* there is the running over of the dog, and the abandon of some of the family dogs at the beginning of the journey. In *Vidas Secas*, there is the death of Baleia and the killing of the parrot. The abandonment of the animals by their owners is also present: the exchange of mules for a car in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and the sale of the Guedes' old horse in *Porteira Fechada*. The death of their owner, which would also configures a type of abandonment, is the case of the dog Amigo, left out by Guedes from *Porteira Fechada*, who committed suicide.

The value of human life and the value of animal life in the referred novels are sometimes distorted due to the dehumanizing adversities the characters go through. The necessities and priorities of each family changes when they experience a downfall from the way they used to life and engages on a journey of survival through an unknown destiny and land.

In *Vidas Secas*, the family goes through a state which they have safety while living in the farm, where they had an income, a shelter and ate poorly, but regularly, to the total uncertainty of a crossing through the dry country with few supplies. This is a point, besides the hostility of the drought, which demonstrates the unpreparedness of the State to manage a recurrent situation, culminating in the total indifference for this population.

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the animal work force is practically useless in the new world of machinery in the field. Workers have to adapt to this new order or they become worthless, a huge contingent of cheap labor, in which men worked sometimes for food, and when the harvest ended they would lose their shelter and have to move until they are stopped by illness, famine or death.

In *Porteira Fechada*, João Guedes and his family are expelled from their ranch to open space to cattle fattening. Animal life is, in this case, much more valuable than human life, since Guedes' family suffers every kind of privation and goes through an irreversible state of degradation, which even leads Guedes to suicide; meanwhile, in the *estância*, the cattle graze and fatten.

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