
by Valéria M. Souza

Board of Trustees Room (BOT), Foster Administration Building
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All welcome!

Abstract. This dissertation examines representations and the aesthetics of disability in Brazilian author João Guimarães Rosa's masterpiece *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (1956). Rather than reading disability allegorically, this study focuses on the material conditions of embodied disability. Taking an interdisciplinary approach that integrates Disability Studies, Queer Theory, Gender Studies, and Critical Animal Studies, it examines *challenging bodies*—bodies that break down, falter, fail, and malfunction. An analysis of these bodies, which include landscapes, human bodies, and animal bodies, exposes disability in GSV as a site of ontological crisis that works to actively destabilize traditional hierarchies of being and knowledge, resulting in the portrayal of an environment in which "normate" perceptual experiences are not prized. The significance of this assertion is that not only are human perspectives not privileged above those of non-human animals or even inanimate objects like rocks, but neither are able-bodied perspectives assumed to be inherently "superior" to disabled ones. Expanding upon this critical insight, my dissertation then further argues for the existence of an "aesthetics of disability" underpinning Rosa's novel.

Valéria M. Souza holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Portuguese Studies from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, where she has also been employed as a teaching fellow of Portuguese. She was a visiting instructor of Portuguese at Middlebury College (2011-12) and is currently a lecturer of Portuguese in the Department of Latin American and Iberian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Ms. Souza is co-editor of *Garrett's Travels Revisited* (2012), a volume which includes her essay "Tessera: Garrett's Travels in My Homeland and a Tale of Four Fathers," and recently had two additional articles accepted for publication: "Sô Candelário's Inheritance: Leprosy as a Marker of Racial Identity in João Guimarães Rosa's *Grande Sertão: Veredas*" will appear in *Livre Acesso*, a forthcoming volume on Critical Disability Studies in Latin American literature and film, and "‘Irate, with no grace of style’: Stuttering, Logorrhea, and Disordered Speech among Male Characters in Luís Vaz de Camões’ *The Lusiads* (1572)" will be featured in *Talking Normal: Speech Disorders in Literature, Film, and Culture* (Routledge, 2013). Her Master's thesis, which she defended in 2007, was entitled "Prosopopeia and the (Un)Making of Personhood in *The Lusiads* (1572)." Broadly speaking, her research centers on questions of language and embodiment in Lusophone literatures and cultures, with special attention to the sixteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

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