

# Theory and literary text: considerations about the tale “Venha ver o pôr do sol”

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## Abstract

*This article aims to analyze the short story Venha ver o pôr do sol, by Lygia Fagundes Telles, in order to understand how the compositional aspects of narrative contribute to the meaning of the text. Based on researches of authors like Saraiva, Eagleton, Salvatore D’Onofrio, Lygia Leite and Dino Del Pino, this study proposes a relation between literature and representation, presents the concept of narrative and, from its compositional aspects, analyzes the story, making inferences about the context. Therefore, it can be seen that the proper analysis of the aspects from the text allows for relevant reflections about its content.*

**Keywords:** Literature; representation; narrative; composition; meaning.

## 1. Introduction

The human being since birth seeks stability in the world which he/she lives. Moved by interpersonal relationships and with the intention of forming a social personality, the person constitutes its own personality. In this sense, this one aim to analyze the short story “Venha ver o pôr do sol”, by Lygia Fagundes Telles, in which a meeting between two different personalities, represented by Raquel and Ricardo, ends in a tragedy.

Lygia Fagundes Telles is the author of the short story “Venha ver o pôr do sol”, published in the book “Antes do Baile Verde”, in 1970. A representative of the post-modernist movement in Brazil, Telles is considered on of the greatest novelists and short story writers of that period. She was born in São Paulo, in 1923, and she represents in her work the feminist universe and the difficult condition of life in urban centers.

A man, a woman, an abandoned cemetery, an invitation to see the sunset. It is in this context that the narrative created by Telles unfolds and surprises the reader. Under a atmosphere of mystery and suspense, the reader is led to know the characters and realize the real intention of his strange meeting.

In a proposal for dialogue between theory and literary text, this analysis relates, firstly, the concepts of literature and representation, mimesis. Then, it presents the concept of narrative, highlighting its compositional aspects. By establishing the difference between the utterance plane and the enunciation plane, it correlates the theory with the exploration of the elements of the story. Finally, inferences are made about the events that involve the characters, recognizing traces of likelihood present in the tale.

## 2. Literature: the use of language to represent the real

Language is a natural property of human beings that allows them to establish a system of communication through a language, social convention. Ferdinand de Saussure (2012), the father of Modern Linguistics, states

that language manifests itself through linguistic signs that make up the text. This, in turn, as a unit of meaning presents signs loaded with ideas and values, constituting an utterance of a social nature and that presents multiple voices.

Literature, in this sense, presents itself as an act of language, which involves enunciator and receiver through an intentional, ambiguous, subjective text with gaps, which challenge the interaction with the reader. In this way, Eagleton suggest that “[...] ‘literature’ can be as much a matter of what people do with writing as what writing does with people” (EAGLETON, 2003, p. 10). According to Saraiva (2006), the reading of literary texts fulfills the function of activating the perception of the functioning of the language, providing the opportunity to experience what cannot be cognitively apprehended.

When citing philosophers, Eagleton (2003) states that literature is a functional term rather than an ontological one, as it speaks of what we do and not of the fixed state of things. Thus, the text assumes a role in a social context, in which it establishes relationships with the environment, the way it behaves, the purpose it can be given and the human practices that accumulate around it.

In this way, while literature provokes an exploration of language resources through words, it also allows a representation of the real through a fictional world. Already among the ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, art was understood by the concept of mimesis. For Plato, art follows the ontological conception, in which the essence of things was at the level of ideas, requiring reflection to understand them. His disciple, Aristotle, aimed at aesthetic pleasure and defended a process of learning, of transformation, that is, man comes into contact with the text and, from this reading, he thinks about the world. Therefore, Costa defines this concept:

From ontological, art comes to have, with it, an aesthetic conception, no longer meaning an ‘imitation’ of the outside world, but providing ‘possible’ interpretations of the real through actions, thoughts and words, of imaginary existential experiences. Far from perfection, divinity and primordial truth, mimesis asserts itself as the representation of what ‘could be’, assuming the character of a fable. (COSTA, 1992, p. 6).

In this way, Plato considered poetry as an imitation of imitation. In turn, Aristotle also saw poetry as imitation, but not as a copy of the real, but as a revealer of essences, as Leite explains (1985, p. 8): “Imitating, for Aristotle, is a way of knowing what it even differentiates man from other living beings and gives him pleasure”.

Likewise, though Aristotle’s *Poetics* (1966), it is understood that poet’s function is not to tell what happened, but to tell what could happen, what is possible, according to the principle of likelihood and of necessity. It is in this sense that history and poetry differ. The first expresses the particular, it reports something that has already happened. The second is more philosophical, it expresses the universal, something that could happen.

From all this it is evident that the poet must be a builder of plots more that of verses, since he is a poet due to imitation and imitates actions. And, if he happens to write about real events, he is no less a poet for that: nothing prevents some events that actually happened from being [possible and] credible and it is to that extent that he is his poet. (ARISTOTLE, 1966, p. 55).

Therefore, the philosopher believes that credible is not necessarily true, but what seems to be true, due to

the coherence of fictitious representation. In addition, the truth, in fiction, is not always believable, because, although it may be true, it may not convince the reader if it disrespects the conventions necessary for the autonomous set of the work (LEITE, 1985).

Although literature presents fictional facts to readers, the way of narrating allows the reader to establish relationships with reality. In this context, narratives emerge as fictional representatives, formed by mimesis and diegesis. Literacy theorists from Tolstoy to Henry James drew a distinction between telling and showing.

The act of narrating is part of the diegesis, of the telling plane, while the action of the characters is linked to the mimesis, of the showing plane. (LEITE, 1985). Under this approach, this work proposes the analysis of the tale “Venha ver o pôr do sol”, by Lygia Fagundes Telles. For this, however, it is first necessary to understand what the narrative is and to know the aspects that compose it.

### **3. Narrative and its compositional aspects**

Since childhood, human beings are encouraged to narrate stories. It is a common daily activity among people, after all, anyone can tell and write or listen and read the most varied narratives. The conversations, the radio, the newspaper, the drawing, the internet are vehicles for the transmission of these texts, which seek to narrate what happened, with whom, how, where and why the facts occurred. D’Onofrio (2007, p. 46) says that: By narrative we understand every discourse that presents us with an imaginary story as if it were real, constituted by a plurality of characters, whose life episodes are intertwined in a certain time and space.

These imagined stories are narratives that are intertwined with fiction. Proença Filho (1986, p. 45) emphasise that the word fiction “[...] means invention, pretence, simulation, imagination”. Pino (1970) also points out that fiction is present in the fanciful character of literature, it provides something new for the reader, something different from what he is used to witnessing daily.

In this sense, narrative is a type of text, fictional or not, that is conveyed in different discursive genres. These, in turn, have characteristics and specificities that allow them to be distinguished. According to Todorov (2017), it is the genres that allow the relationship between the work and literature. And, according to Genette (1969, p. 15, apud, TODOROV, 2017, p. 12), “Literary discourse is produced and developed according to structures that it can only truly transgress because it finds them, even today, in the field of its language and writing”.

Also, according to Saraiva (2000), the study of the meaning of the narrative should focus on the convergence between what is narrated and how it is narrated. As the author explains, history is only configured through discourse, at the level of enunciation, and discourse is carried out through the presentation of history, at the level of utterance, by diegesis. Thus, the level of history encompasses the events of the narrative through actions, characters, space and time, while the level of discourse is constituted through the analysis of the narrator, the narratee, the way of narrating and how the information is transmitted. Based on this proposal, the tale “Venha ver o pôr do sol”, by Lygia Fagundes Telles, will be analysed.

### **3.1 Venha ver o pôr do sol: the story level**

“Venha ver o pôr do sol” is a narrative of mystery and suspense that leads the reader in a curious way to unravel the end of a love meeting between two characters, Ricardo and Raquel, whose actions allow the following of the scenes in imagination.

The meeting takes place in an abandoned cemetery. The ex-valentines, now mistresses, chat as they walk around the place. For a moment, they remember times when they were together. At the same time, they are aware of danger they are facing if Raquel’s boyfriend found out about that meeting.

You know, Ricardo, I think you’re really a bit of a silly boy... But despite everything, I sometimes miss those times. What year that. When I think about it, I don’t understand how I put up with it for so long, imagine, a year! (TELLES, 1999, p. 126).

At one point, Ricardo explains about an alleged love between his cousin Maria Emília and him in adolescence. The two enter a vault that, according to Ricardo, belonged to his family. Upon seeing the photo of Ricardo’s cousin with the birth inscription dated May 1800, Raquel realizes the lie, however, it was too late. Ricardo locks her there.

A ray of sunlight will enter through the crack in the door, there is a crack in the door. The it goes away slowly, very slowly. You will have the most beautiful sunset in the world. (TELLES, 1999, p. 130).

Based on the plot, according to Saraiva (2000), the character can be analyzed from the point of view of functionality, in terms of the syntactic organization of the narrative, being classified through its participation in the sphere of actions. Starting from Greimas’ actantial scheme, the character Ricardo is considered as the subject of the action, since “The subject of the action is the one who, moved by wanting, seeks the desired object (SARAIVA, 2000, p. 54)”. Rachel then occupies the desired object position.

The narrative presents some explicit physical characteristics of the character Ricardo, such as “slender and thin”, with “grown and disheveled hair” and “a jovial student style” (p. 123). At the beginning of the story, the narrator presents him as “malicious” and “naïve” (p. 123). In addition, in conversation with Rachel, the character makes a comparison about his financial situation: “I became even poorer”, establishing a contact between past and present, that is, while he was dating Raquel, Ricardo belonged to a low social class and, now, the situation is even worse. The text also brings some clues about Ricardo’s behavior, which appears to be premeditated insofar as it is perceived that the crime was planned: “I know all this well, my people are buried there. Let’s go inside for a moment and I will show you the most beautiful sunset in the world.” (p. 124). The character shows pride when he does not accept that Raquel would pay the bill if they had gone to a bar: “With his money? I prefer to drink ant killer.” (p. 125). When calling Raquel “My angel” several times, Ricardo is ironic. The character also shows himself in a situation of subordination in relation to Raquel when he says: “You promised to give this slave of you’re a late afternoon.” (p. 126).

About the female character, there are only a few characteristics glimpsed by Ricardo: “You are a thing of beauty” (p. 123); “I know you would like to find everything clean, flowers in vases, candles, signs of my dedication, right?” (p. 129). At the beginning of the narrative, Ricardo comments: “I thought you were dressed in sports and now you appear in this elegance. When you walked with me, you wore some big shoes seven leagues” (p. 123), evidencing Raquel’s change after the end of their courtship. The character also compares

Raquel with her cousin, contemplating their similarities: “[...] but she had eyes... they were green like hers, like hers”; “I now think that all her beauty resided only in her eyes, so slightly slanted, like yours.” (p. 128).

The narrative also exposes Raquel’s boyfriend as Ricardo’s opponent. According to Saraiva (2000), the role of opponent is occupied by barriers imposed on the chap while searching for the object. As Raquel’s boyfriend is the cause of the couple’s separation, it is understood that he occupied this role.

It was a huge risk, Ricardo. He is very jealous. He is sick of knowing I have had my affairs. If he catches us together, then yes, I just want to see if any of your fabulous ideas will fix my life. (TELLES, 1999, p. 125).

In addition to Rachel’s boyfriend being presented as “extremely jealous” (p. 125), he is also praised by his girlfriend for being “extremely rich” (p. 126), which qualifies this boyfriend as unequalled. It is using adjectives in the augmentative degree that the girl’s speech becomes even more expressive.

As well as the characteristics of the characters, the detailing of the space in which the actions take place is fundamental to understanding of narrative. The description of the place is carried out both by the narrator and by the characters. At the beginning of the tale, Raquel goes up a “tortuous slope”:

As they advanced, the houses became rarer, modest houses scattered without symmetry and isolated in vacant lots. In the middle of the unpaved street, covered here and there by undergrowth, some children were playing in circles. The feeble children’s song was the only living note in the stillness of the afternoon.” (TELLES, 1999, p. 123).

Raquel complains about the meeting place for being far: “I had to get out of the taxi far away, he would never get up here” (p. 123). Furthermore, after a while, she realizes that they are walking towards an abandoned cemetery, the front of which is described by narrator: “He turned towards the old ruined wall. He indicated with his eyes the iron gate, eaten away by rust” (p. 124). However, Ricardo justifies the choice of this place: “There is no more discreet place than an abandoned cemetery, you see, completely abandoned – he continued, opening the gate” (p. 125). In addition, Raquel describes the space as “immense”, “miserable” and “depressing” (p. 126).

The narrator continues with the description of the place as Ricardo as Raquel advance in the cemetery. The undergrowth dominated everything. And not satisfied with having spread furiously through the flower beds, he had climbed the graves, greedily infiltrated the cracks in the marbles, invades the avenues of greenish boulders, as if he wanted with his violent life force to cover forever the last vestiges of death. (TELLES, 1999, p. 125).

The description of the undergrowth that covered all traces of the cemetery may be related to the culmination of the tale, after all, when Ricardo holds Raquel in the tomb, he is sure that this undergrowth will cover all traces of her death, that is, how the cemetery is abandoned, no one will ever be able to find her and no one will know they were ever there.

Along the way, the tomb, identified as belonging to Ricardo’s family by the character himself, is visited by the couple. This location is also described in detail by the narrator:

They stopped in front of a small chapel covered from top to bottom with a wild vine, which enveloped her in a furious embrace of vines and leaves. The narrow door creaked as he flung it open. Light invaded a cubicle with blackened walls, streaked with old leaks. In the center of the cubicle, a half-dismantled altar, covered by

a cloth that had acquired the color of time. Two faded opaline vases flanked a crude wooden crucifix. Between the arms of the cross, a spider had woven two triangles of broken webs, hanging like rags from a cloak someone had placed over the Christ’s shoulders. On the side wall, to the right of the door, an iron door giving access to a stone staircase, spiraling down to the catacomb. (TELLES, 1999, p. 128).

The minutiae of this description demonstrate the morbid atmosphere, the darkness, the abandonment, the passage of time. The spider’s web already broken shows that not even the spider wanted to remain in that place. The creak of the door agrees with the passage of time. The vine enveloping the chapel marks people’s forgetfulness that the place exists.

Regarding the narrative time, Saraiva (2000) stated that references to temporality can be constituted by reference to objects, elements of nature or physical phenomena, such as day and night, seasons. In view of this, it is understood that the short story under analysis presents chronological time. The actions start at sunset, when the characters meeting. Furthermore, the text gives hints that it is getting dark: “[...] in the stillness of the afternoon” (p. 123); “How cold it is here. And how dark, I can’t see” (p. 130); “Good evening, Raquel” (p. 131).

Another important point in relation to temporality is Raquel’s discovery of Maria Emília’s date of birth compared to the year in which the narrative takes place. “-Maria Emília, born on May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1800, and deceased... - she dropped her toothpick and remained motionless for a moment – but this couldn’t be your girlfriend, she died more than a hundred years ago!” (p. 130). It was this list of dates that made Raquel discover the lies invented by Ricardo at meeting.

### **3.2 Venha ver o pôr do sol: the speech level**

The level of discourse, at the level of enunciation, is constituted based on some questions such as: Who narrates the story? To whom does it narrate? When do you narrate? How is information transmitted? What are the evaluative angle(s) that permeate the act of narrating? (SARAIVA, 2000). Therefore, according to the author, the discourse only takes shape through the mediation of the narrator.

Thus, the short story “Venha ver o pôr do sol” presents a heterodiegetic narrator and, although he is responsible for the enunciation of the story, he is absent from it, constituting a neutral omniscient narrator. [...] the omniscient narrator, or neutral narrator, speaks in third person. It also tends towards the summary, although there the use of scene for moments of dialogue and action is quite frequent, while the characterization of the characters is often done by the narrator who describes and explains them to the reader (LEITE, 1985, p. 32).

This position is expressed in the narrative with the verbs conjugated in the third person: “she climbed”, “children played in circles”, “he laughed”, “the undergrowth dominated everything”, “she crossed her arms” (TELLES, 1999).

In this sense, the tale uses indirect speech as the narrator tells the actions performed by the characters, describes the environment, comments on the position of the speakers. “They walked along the long, sun-drenched avenue. Their footsteps resounded like a strange music made to the sound of dry leaves crushed on the boulders” (p. 125-126). At the same time, it uses direct speech when presenting the characters’ lines in a

dialogue that comprises a good part of the plot. “-You promised to give this slave of yours a late afternoon. – Yeah, but I was wrong. It can be very funny, but I don’t want to take any more risk” (p. 126).

Moreover, Saraiva (2000), when citing Genette, clarifies that the focus is the way the narrator makes the events known. Thus, the tale under analysis has zero focus, that is, the narrator is distant from the events he narrates, but dominates omniscient knowledge. It establishes, therefore, a view behind the narrator – character relationship.

In addition to delimiting the role of the narrator in relation to the text, there is also, in terms of enunciation, the narratee. According to Saravia (2009), the narrator can address the narratee expressly or tacitly. “In the first case, the narratee is invoked directly; in the second, its presence is revealed only in the speech, which registers the narrator’s reactions to his interpreter.” (SARAIVA, 2009, p. 37). In the case of “Venha ver o pôr do sol”, the narrator addresses the narratee tacitly, since the narrative does not present a market narrator, constituting an “extradiegetic narrator”, whose participation in the enunciation process is characterizes as an auditor or reader.

Finally, at the level of discourse, narrative temporality manifests itself in a linear and one-dimensional way. Unlike time at the level of history, the time of discourse allows us to situate the voice of speech in the face of diegetic events (SARAIVA, 2009). In the tale under analysis, it is noticed that throughout the narrative some marks of anticipation of the outcome are registered, although the narrator may realize this after the end of the story, a phenomenon called prolepsis, “[...] a fact before its occurrence in history” (SARAIVA, 2000, p. 59). As examples, the following can be cited: “I swear I had to see all that beauty once more, feel that perfume” (p. 123); “Abandoned cemetery, my angel. Living and dead, they all deserted. Not even the ghosts were left” (p. 124); “Let’s go inside for a moment and I will show you the most beautiful sunset in the world” (p. 124); “There is no more discreet place than an abandoned cemetery, you see, completely abandoned” (p. 125); “This perfect death, no memory, no missing, not even the name. Not even that” (p. 127); “But I have already said that what I love most about this cemetery is precisely this abandonment, this solitude. The bridges with the other world were cut and here death was totally isolated. Absolute.” (p. 129).

#### **4. The exploration of meanings in narrative**

“Venha ver o pôr do sol” is a fictional tale that draws the reader in from the start. An invitation to see the sunset is romantic and attractive, but the meeting place being a cemetery makes the invitation strange to say the least. Ricardo’s justifications for choosing the place try to convince the narrator that an abandoned cemetery would be ideal due to the discretion that that act required, after all, it was Raquel’s betrayal of her boyfriend.

The detailed description of the space allows the reader to follow the scenes and reveals some conditions related to the crime planned by Ricardo. First, the cemetery was located at the end of a “tortuous slope”, where “the houses were getting rarer” and there were “vacant lands”, in a silence that you could only hear the children singing. When Ricardo says that he knows the cemetery well and that his “people” are buried there, it is understood that he knows where he will take his mistress. When saying “Let’s go inside for a moment and I will show you the most beautiful sunset in the world” (p. 124), Ricardo makes it clear that he planned the

crime, because it was there, inside the cemetery, locked in the tomb, that she would see the sunset. This hypothesis is confirmed at the end of the story, when Ricardo turns the key around, pulls it out of the lock and jumps back saying “A ray of sunlight will come in through the crack in the door, there is a crack in the door. Then it goes away slowly, very slowly. You will have the most beautiful sunset in the world.” (p. 130).

The detail of the “undergrowth” that dominated everything can be compared to Raquel’s end of life planned by Ricardo. It was the undergrowth that would cover the traces of Raquel’s death. Furthermore, “On top of the moss, the roots will still come, the leaves... This perfect death, neither memory, nor mistress, not even the name. Not even that.” (p. 127). With no one around, she would die in that abandoned cemetery and, no matter how much she screamed, no one would hear, and the undergrowth, the moss, the roots and the leaves would cover that tomb and hide their meeting.

By telling Raquel that the sunset is seen from the tomb of her “people”, Ricardo confirms that he had planned the crime in advance. When presenting the tomb of the alleged family, Ricardo emphasizes the word “powder”: “Well, there are the drawers. And in the drawers, my roots. Dust, my angel, dust” (p. 129), assuming that this was Raquel’s future in that place. When commenting “I swear I had to see all that beauty once more, feel that perfume” (p. 123), the use of “yet once” reveals that it would be the last time the couple would meet.

Ricardo’s premeditation of the crime is also noticeable when he mocks the use of the expression “My angel” several times throughout history. As it is linked to a celestial being, the choice of expression can be justified by the role that Raquel would play in Ricardo’s life after his death.

In the comparison between Raquel’s love and the love of a cousin, the girl makes it clear that she liked Ricardo. Meanwhile, he argues that he loved her and continues to love her, establishing a difference between two types of love. In this context, the narrative presents a sick love, characterized by Ricardo’s revenge after being exchanged for a rich man. In this way, the author Lygia Fagundes Telles addresses the issue of violence against women through a fiction that scares the reader and, at the same time, is an alert that allows reflections in abusive relationships in society. As in many cases in real life, the love that Ricardo felt for Raquel becomes unhealthy, an obsession, so much so that, for not accepting the end of the relationship, the character plans a revenge that ends her life. What draws attention and makes the narrative even more expressive is the fact that the author of the tale is a woman and proposes a story in which the woman is violated, from a feminist point of view that puts the situation faced by this character in evidence.

Despite complaining about the space they were in, Raquel continued to believe in Ricardo and remained in that place. This fact demonstrates that despite being separated, she still trusted the boy a lot, so much so that she believed all his lies. “Purple but obedient, she let herself be led like a child” (p. 126). The culmination of the story reveals that Ricardo did not accept the decision made by the female character and, in the search for revenge, he thought of a way for her not to “belong” to anyone else but him.

On the other hand, Ricardo’s submission to Raquel can also be seen when he says: “You promised to give your slave a late afternoon” (p. 126), clarifying that sometimes Ricardo already did everything his beloved wanted.

In this sense, the tale “Venha ver o pôr do sol” provokes a reflection on human behavior through literature. Although the text is fictional, its narrative contributes to the critical analysis of the real world. Saraiva (2006)



considers:

Certainly, not all works have the power to essentially modify their reader, but many leave marks that give a broader meaning to the lives of those who make reading a solitary dialogue with their interiority and with the outside world. (SARAIVA, 2006, p.38-39).

Under this approach, the analyzed tale allows a dialogue between the fictional and the real, making the reader seek an identification with the outside world. The shock with crime at the end of the narrative frightens and warns the possibilities of abuse in relationships.

## **5. Conclusion**

Lygia Fagundes Telles' detailed take is remarkable for its surprising, with a language that takes the reader to enter the story and imagine it in front of him/her. The relationships can be true to the world than external relationships in the tale.

Ricardo and Raquel, though a direct speech, approach the reader who creates the most varied feelings throughout the reading of the text. In the end, it is impossible for the reader not to be angry or, at the very least, scared by the crime and the cold attitude of Ricardo.

The adequate analysis of this text, paying attention to the compositional aspects of the narrative, supports the possibilities of inferences about its plot. Significantly, the characters of the tale are intertwined in a narrative that exposes violence against women, alerting to the crimes committed daily in society.

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