

Interview with Lyslei Nascimento and Raquel Teles Yehezkel

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Lyslei Nascimento holds a PhD in Letters from UFMG, professor of Theory of Literature and Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Letters at UFMG. Coordinator of the Nucleus of Jewish Studies at UFMG, editor of Maaravi Files: Digital Journal of Jewish Studies at UFMG and has a Scholarship in CNPq Productivity.



Raquel Teles Yehezkel is director of the Brazilian Cultural Center at the Embassy of Brazil in Israel. Graduated in Letters (UFMG), she was a researcher at the Nucleus of Jewish Studies at UFMG (2004-2009), editor and executive editor of Editora Leitura in Belo Horizonte (1995 - 2010).

Interview with Lyslei Nascimento and Raquel Teles Yehezkel on the International Seminar on Brazilian Jewish Literature, an event promoted by the Center of Jewish Studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil) and by the Brazilian Cultural Center CCB-Tel Aviv (Israel)

The main objective of the International Seminar on Brazilian Jewish Literature was to promote Brazilian Jewish writers and their works. The invited authors were: Ana Cecília Carvalho, Cíntia Moscovich, Leila Danziger, Halina Grynberg, Leonor Scliar-Cabral, Luana Chnaiderman, Noemi Jaffe, Paulo Rosenbaum, Ronaldo Wrobel, Juliano Klevanskis, Luís Sérgio Krausz. The program also included lectures by professors from the universities UFPA, UFU, USP, UFMG and from Centro Centro Universitário de Formiga given by Profa. Dr. Sandra Almada. Several master's and doctoral students presented communications. The opening conference was presented by Prof. Márcio Seligmann-Silva (UNICAMP) with the theme "Leila Danziger or the task of 'anarchizing' the rubble of Jewishness in the diaspora", and the closing one with Prof. Maria Zilda Ferreira Cury (Post-Lit / UFMG) addressing "The right to the body in the novels by Bernardo Kucinski and Julián Fuks".

1. Raquel, tell us, briefly, how the event's initiative was created:

With the social isolation measures adopted in Israel since March, the activities of the Brazilian Cultural Center in Tel Aviv (CCB Tel Aviv) have been adapted to the new virtual and online modalities, both the Brazilian language and culture courses and the cultural activities that we offer, always related to Brazil. So, in May, we invited professor Lyslei Nascimento (UFMG) to organize, with us, a virtual event at CCB Tel Aviv on the theme "Writers and Jewish literature in Brazil", of which she is an expert as coordinator of the Jewish Studies Center from UFMG and I was a researcher myself during my entire undergraduate course in Letters at UFMG.

2. And, Raquel, how was it to organize an event like this, in the midst of the pandemic- COVID-19?

Lyslei was enthusiastic about the invitation and the idea of a virtual event grew for an International Seminar, as this moment proved to be an excellent opportunity for us to carry out a broader joint work, involving both writers, specialist professors and researchers, and which remained on internet platforms as permanent reference material. With the idea launched, we obtained the support of the Embassy of Brazil in Israel, of which CCB Tel Aviv is an integral part, and then also the support of the Graduate Program in Letters: Literary Studies at UFMG and the Department of Studies Latin American University of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). In this exchange between CCB Tel Aviv and NEJ / UFMG,

we suggest three researchers in Brazilian Jewish literature who study at Israeli institutions.

3. Lyslei, how were the guest writers and speakers selected?

For this seminar, among the many Jewish writers of Brazilian literature, those who, at first, may be a panel of that literature were selected. However, any choice implies waiver, so writers who did not enter this first event will be invited to the second edition.

4. Comment, Lyslei, about the greatness of the Seminar as a source of knowledge for the participants.

Jewish writers compose a very special face of Brazilian literature: it instigates coexistence, challenges our "cordiality" towards otherness, fosters cultural diversity and so many other benefits that the encounter with the other can add.

5. Could you tell us a little about the importance of Jewish Literature, Rachel?

Reading, discussing and researching Jewish literature is just as important as finding out about Brazilian, English or any other literature of any people, country or ethnicity. Through literature we are able to get to know the culture and customs of a community and, in this way, get to know them better, put themselves in the other's place, generating empathy and exchanging experiences.

6. And, Raquel, what is it possible to glimpse with the reading of Jewish literature?

In the same case, the reading of Jewish writers enriches our view of what Brazilian literature is and that certainly teaches us to coexist with empathy, the understanding that there are other Brazils within Brazil, enabling us to live with the different within ourselves. In these readings, we glimpse what these writers still hold as "strange", from foreigners, from different, ancestral customs, but also from assimilations, acculturations and attachment to the national territory, and thus we understand better the mosaic and the diversity of our multicultural heritage.

7. Lyslei, about the event, tell us about the importance, the subjects covered, mainly, related to the writer Clarice Lispector, who in 2020 completes the centenary of her birth.

Certainly Clarice's memory is important, her inscription in the Brazilian literary tradition is unquestionable today, and she showed the way for other writers: Cíntia Moscovich, Ana Cecília Carvalho, Leila Danziger, Luana Chnaiderman, among many others, but above all, for a scriptural quality that is also in writers like Moacyr Scliar and Samuel Rawet. We are, therefore, facing extraordinary writers, committed to literature, in its maximum

expression, forming, with their point of view, a face of the country. Thus, the look of each of them to Brazil, to the various Brazils, in their ethnic, cultural and artistic exuberance is of fundamental importance for the understanding of ourselves.

8. And about the supporters, Lyslei, highlight the importance of these for the event to happen.

The seminar was supported by the Graduate Program in Letters: Literary Studies at UFMG, our partner in several other events. In a unique way, the university has been a constant partner in order to give visibility to the research of the Center for Jewish Studies. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem is our new and important partner and we hope to be able to count on this partnership in other ventures. When the university establishes itself in teaching, research and extension, international agreements of mutual cooperation, only enrich the community inside and outside the walls. An event held virtually, in this case, only expands this opportunity.

9. Lyslei, could highlight the participation of professor Sandra Almada, in this international seminar, to raise the name of UNIFOR-MG, the institution where she works?

Professor Sandra Almada is a researcher at the Center for Jewish Studies and arrives, with an innovative and important research on one of the most intriguing Brazilian Jewish writers, Halina Grynberg. The focus chosen by the teacher, the question of food in dark times, such as the Holocaust, is a topic dear to literary studies and Jewish studies. Your contribution, both in the event and in the future publication, will certainly enrich us all.

10. Raquel, could you comment a little about your performance, outside Brazil, at the Brazilian Cultural Center?

BCCs are part of Itamaraty's cultural diplomacy. In the BCCs, we spread the Brazilian language and culture to different countries in the world through Portuguese courses, of the Brazilian variant, at different levels. Along with classes, we also promote cultural events related to music, cuisine, literature, cinema, capoeira, plastic arts and many other cultural events in Brazil. This disclosure allows culture to become a source of income for a large part of the Brazilian population that survives from it, whether in Brazil or abroad.

Programming: videos are available at the link:
http://www.lettras.ufmg.br/padrao_cms/?web=nej&lang=1&page=3522&menu=2274&tipo=1