

*Spaces and Ways of João Guimarães Rosa:  
Regional Dimensions and Universality*

edited by Ligia Chiappini, Marcel Vejmelka and David Treece  
(Rodopi oder Legenda)

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(26 essays + Introduction, circa 300-320 pages)

***Space and Ways of João Guimarães Rosa: Regional Dimensions and Universality***  
**Edited by Ligia Chiappini, Marcel Vejmelka, David Treece**

**Description:**

The volume *Space and Ways of João Guimarães Rosa: Regional Dimensions and Universality* unites the contributions originally presented at an international symposium under the same title, held in December 2008 in Berlin, Germany, on the occasion of the centennial celebrations of one of the most important and influential writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil and the world: João Guimarães Rosa. With a literary work comparable to best writers in world literature, like James Joyce, Marcel Proust or Jorge Luis Borges, Guimarães Rosa is also remembered for his activities as a diplomat during the Second World War, specifically between 1938 and 1942, when he helped numerous Jews to escape from National-Socialist Germany, facilitating visas for Brazil.

In parallel to the Berlin symposium, different universities and embassies in Europe as well as in Brazil organized various academic and cultural activities centred around Rosa's work, with incentives to (re)present this oeuvre specifically to the younger generations. The meeting in Berlin, soon after one held in London, was an excellent opportunity for Brazilian and European experts to present their analysis and to compare their perspectives on Guimarães Rosa, enabling the youth and the general public to better know and understand the works of a selection of world's best specialists in the Rosaesque universe. Two dimensions of this universe were treated in a systematic and dialectic manner: the local-regional and the universal dimension, which connects directly with the adventure of translation, its possibilities and limits, in the case of a language that combines the regional dialect of the national language, while they poetically summarize the tradition of literary art of all times and places.

As occurs with all great writers, the spaces and ways that this book invites us to follow are of geographical, social and symbolic nature. Here one connects not only with the rural world of the Brazilian backlands and the urban world of a Brazil that modernized itself rapidly in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also with other social and cultural dynamics triggered by globalization, as the current phenomenon of banditry in major cities or the conquest of the city of literacy by some representatives from its borders. These spatio-temporal connections amplify and refer to a very broad range of knowledge, perceptions and sensitivities that are constantly deterritorialized and re-territorialized. Therefore, asking for spaces, paths and voices of the "Rosean" narrative is simultaneously questioning the meanings of literature today. Why read and reread Rosa today, and above all: why read him in Europe? These are two key issues that directly or indirectly guide the collection of texts, trying to respond to them.

Given the valuable participation of outstanding scholars from Brazil and different parts of Europe—who also participated in other European events dedicated to Guimarães Rosa in 2008—, as well as the non-existence of a collective volume in English dedicated exclusively to this author, the editors opted for the publication of the symposium's results in English and by an internationally renowned and distributing publishing house. *Spaces and ways of João Guimarães Rosa: Regional Dimensions and Universality* will be a means of divulging Rosa's work and thought as well as a fine selection of the contemporary Rosa Studies internationally and beyond the boundaries of the specialized (and Portuguese speaking) readership within, e.g. Brazilian or Lusophone Studies. One major aim of this book is to address and interest scholars and students from neighbouring disciplines as Comparative Literatures, the different Philologies, Cultural Studies and Social Sciences throughout the world and particularly in Europe.

### **Structure and contents:**

The book contains 26 essays and the editors' introduction, with a calculated total of circa 300-320 pages. It is divided in four parts of different extension, covering the central areas of interest and research on João Guimarães Rosa, and each one featuring one text based on the key notes presented during the symposium by internationally renowned senior scholars who establish the vital link between the "classics" of Rosean studies and their contemporary generations (see also the attached table of contents).

The first part "**Legacy, reception, translation**" opens with a global overview by prof. Walnice Nogueira Galvão on contemporary receptions of Guimarães Rosa's oeuvre in Brazilian cultural production (literature, theatre, film, music etc.), followed by a section dedicated to the translations of Guimarães Rosa into different European languages. David Treece resumes the reception of Rosa in English translations and in the British literary system, relating his own experience as translator of the novel "My Uncle the Jaguar," Horst Nitschack reflects on the cultural dimensions of literary translation from Latin America and Brazil within the German context, Vlasta Dufkova explains her strategies for translating two of Rosa's novels into Czech, and Roberto Mulinacci, translator of "Meu tio iauaretê" into Italian, analyses the correspondence between Guimarães Rosa and his first Italian translator Edoardo Bizzari regarding the entanglements of authorship and translation. The second section turns towards general receptions and mediations of Rosa's work in the global context. Marcel Vejmelka retraces Rosa's linguistic and narrative innovations in Lusophone African writers as Luandino Vieira and Mia Couto, Jacquelin Penjon comments on the historical reception of Rosa in France, Lélia Duarte presents a balance of the three international symposiums on the author she organized at Catholic University of Belo Horizonte (2001-2007), Pilar Gómez Bedate resumes her experience as co-editor of the *Revista de Cultura Brasileira* in Madrid, a central organ for literary mediation between Brazil and Spain, as well as her and her late husband's (Ángel Crespo, translator of *Grande sertão: veredas* into Spanish) friendship with Guimarães Rosa, and Stefan Kutzenberger analyses the presence of Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy in Rosa's works.

The second part "**Rosa's short stories**" is dedicated to Rosa's short fiction, its dimensions and particularities. Ettore Finazzi-Agró shows how a story of apparently only anecdotal character ("O cavalo que bebia cerveja") contains critical insights into the implications of recent Brazilian and global history, focusing on the destiny of an Italian partisan emigrated to the *sertão* of Minas Gerais. In the only section of this part, Ligia Chiappini analyses the author's vindication for "interiority" in fiction under the conditions of peripheral modernization and in contrast to the regionalist engagement of his time. Lucia de Sá presents an overview of Indigenous characters and linguistic elements in Rosa's writing, as a means of retracing one of Brazil's constitutive cultural components. Roberto Vecchi links Rosa's literary project to Gilberto Freyre's conception of Brazil as originated from plantation paternalism, comparing it to the work of Cornélio Penna; Cleusa Rios analyses aspects of sex and gender through selected female protagonists and narrators in Rosa's stories, and Sandra Vasconcelos resumes the important discussion on Rosa's criticism of modernity, mediated primarily through his valorization of popular culture and oral traditions in the *sertão's* hinterland.

The third part "**Rosa as novelist**" is conceived as complementary to the second part, and dedicated to Rosa's novelistic work. Here, the opening text by Francis Utéza embraces Rosa's dialogue between erudite and popular culture as mirrored by his effort to establish a dialogue between the philosophical and literary tradition of the Occident and the Orient, namely by analysing Rosa's creative appropriation of Taoist thought. The first section then mirrors the focus of the section in Part II, beginning with Vincenzo Arsillo exploring the narratological role of two letters within *Grande sertão: veredas*. Kathrin Rosenfeld compares Machado de Assis and Guimarães Rosa in regard to the use they make of irony and metaphysics in their writing; Flávio Aguiar resumes the central lines of interpretations of *Grande sertão: veredas*, from esoteric and metaphysical readings to cultural critique and *écriture engagée*; and Clara

Rowland ventures into the metanarrative and metaliterary dimension of Rosa's writing. The second section turns to the connections between Rosa and contemporary Brazil. Willi Bolle relates his experiences with a dramatic reading workshop adapted from a scene in *Grande sertão: veredas*, which has been performed in such different contexts as universities in Brazil, France and Germany, in Brazilian favelas, *sertão* villages or the Parisian *banlieue*; Luiz Roncari situates Rosa's oeuvre within its historical context of political and economical modernization in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; Ute Hermanns captures the passage from this period to contemporary Brazil within the transition of Rosa's work from text to film; and Ana Luiza Martins delivers an introduction to the most recent cinematographic adaptation of Rosa's novel *Campo Geral* in the film *Mutum*, where she participated in the script and production. The final part on "**Memory**" consists of an exclusive contribution by the author's daughter, Vilma Guimarães Rosa, herself a renowned writer, who merges the portrait of the beloved father with her particular insights into his processes of writing and ways of understanding the world.

**Short remark on the prospective readership:**

As already mentioned in the description, there is no collection of essays dedicated to Guimarães Rosa circulating on the English speaking academic book market, neither in Europe nor in the Americas. The aim of the proposed book is to address a readership outside the specialized circles of Luso-Brazilian Literary Studies, where the predominant language is Portuguese. With an internationally operation distribution system, it will be possible to have the book circulating across national, continental as well as linguistic and disciplinary borders. For the above exposed reasons, the proposed book will not have to compete directly with another circulating title on Guimarães Rosa. On the contrary, it would take advantage from a possible demand for studies on this author in English and also from the growing academic market on Latin American and Luso-Brazilian Studies, specifically in Europe and North America.

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