Ce n'est pas un genre facile. Les éditions Colibri sont connues pour leurs publications de recherche universitaire, mais on a souvent l'impression d'avoir ici plus un précis diplomatique pour hauts fonctionnaires qu'une réflexion scientifique. Ainsi, le lecteur trouvera certes dans ce livre aux contributions fort inégales, l'écho de préoccupations actuelles en matière de politique étrangère et de défense mais n'y lira point de débat critique ou d'idées nouvelles sur les positions habituellement énoncées et défendues par les acteurs politiques et les auteurs portugais. Malheureusement, les problématiques diplomatiques et sécuritaires y sont décrites comme lieux communs et condensés d'affirmations politiquement correctes. Il n'y a pas eu d'effort pour renouveler la vision portugaise du monde et la place du pays au sein de la communauté internationale.

Malgré ces carences thématiques et de méthodologie critique, la lecture de l'ouvrage se justifie en ce qu'il est une source pour la connaissance de l'évolution de la politique étrangère et défense du pays depuis l'instauration de la démocratie.

Janvier 2006, **Francisco Santana Ferra**

Cristina Ferreira-Pinto, *Gender, Discourse and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women's Literature*, Indiana, Purdue University Press, 160 p., cross-reference index, 2004, ISBN: 1-55753-352-0 (paperback).

Central to this book is the argument that Brazilian women's literature has evolved against a literary establishment in which gender and race play significant roles. In the nineteenth century, both Romanticism and, later on, Realism and Naturalism shaped expectations and accepted forms of behaviour for both the white and the coloured woman. Myths of femininity promoted in these periods held a firm grip well into mid-twentieth century and their pervasive influence lingers on to the present day.

The opening chapter, "Female Body, Male Desire", sets the note for the work to come. It gives the reader a tour of Brazilian literary and cultural discourse in the nineteenth century. The focus is on four canonical novels. They were all written by men and became instrumental in creating the country's own social dynamics and national imagery.

First place is given to *Iracema* (1865), by José Martiniano de Alencar. Iracema, the attractive Indian woman, and Martim, the white warrior presumably of Portuguese descent, parallel the biblical story of the first couple in the garden of Eden. However, there are noticeable ambiguities. On the one hand, this woman's name is an anagram of "America" and she can be seen as a native Eve, in a reading of the novel as a genesis of the people of Ceará, and by extension the genesis of the new Brazilian nation. On the other hand, this female figure is obedient and submissive to Martim, the source of Christian beliefs and civilization, a higher presence in her natural habitat. Iracema is at one time seductive and devoted, Eve and Mary. In *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* (1853), Manuel Antônio de Almeida plays up a dichotomy between two types of woman and weaves together the representation of the female body and the dialectics of race. White Luisinha is the "domestic woman". She is respectful, virgin, ready and willing to get married and be a mother. Mulatto Vidinha is the sexually free "public woman".

She is synonymous with parties, dancing, laughter and pleasure. Aluísio Azevedo's *O cortiço* (1890) means literally a beehive. It is presented as a microcosm of Brazilian society, in particular its lower strata, and is portrayed as a live organism growing spontaneously, like larvae. In this "beehive", the higher the level of sensuality the lower is the capacity to work. Mulatto characters like Rita Baiana and her lover Firmo could not possibly be part of the ruling capitalist economic system. Portuguese Jerônimo is a hardworking man who comes to live in the Cortiço, but he becomes contaminated when he falls in love with Rita. He sinks into moral degradation and ruin. In *Dom Casmurro* (1899), by Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, Capitu fulfils in many respects the level of submission and obedience expected from a married woman. However, she has a strong personality. Her independent thinking and initiative are interpreted as signs of unfaithfulness by her jealous husband who accuses her of adultery.

Romantic characters Iracema and Vidinha were both non-white but belonged in different categories, the Indian and the African. A mythical Indian aristocracy could help define the origins and identity of the nation. It was something of which Brazilians could feel proud. It also enabled some individuals to dissociate themselves from an African slave past. In a process of ethnic misrepresentation, somatic features ensuing from the miscegenation of blacks and whites would often be attributed to one's Indian heritage. Thus Iracema enjoys a certain aura, but Vidinha is more akin to Rita Baiana, who is scrutinized through the lens of the Naturalist movement and classed as an inferior being by the tenets of Materialistic Determinism. The white European male is in general associated with rationality, enterprise, high socio-economic rank, and, in one way or another, seeks to conquer Brazil. Luisinha is the incarnation of the marriage-appropriate woman, while Capitu suffers the ill-effects of breaking with the consensual view of what a proper wife should act like.

These are key examples of the *statu quo* as described by Cristina Ferreira-Pinto. Brazilian women's literary production, she argues, can be seen as a counterpoint against the discourse of the established literary authorities which promoted a phallocentric domination of the Other – women, blacks, members of the lower classes, and other marginalized groups.

Brazilian female writers have met with difficulties to the extent that the nation's masculinist ideology has remained prevalent and hard to deconstruct, for stereotypes that were forged in the nineteenth century were repeatedly revisited and reinforced in the twentieth century. The theme of Almeida's *Memórias de um sargento de milícias* became a popular samba in the hands of Paulinho da Viola. The protagonist of Jorge Amado's novel *Gabriela, cravo e canela* (1958) is a mulatto girl in the same thematic line as Almeida's Vidinha and Azevedo's Rita Baiana. Gabriela became a very popular character through a cinematic version of the novel and a TV soap opera. Furthermore, at the beginning of the new millennium, the sensual mulatto woman is still one of the images most commonly used in the tourist industry to sell the country to foreign visitors.

The remaining five chapters in the book look at how Brazilian women writers have made inroads into the ruling ideology and literary establishment. Chapter 2, on "the search for an erotic discourse", argues that eroticism is at base a private affair. When expressed by a woman, it places her in the public sphere, that of the prostitute. In contrast, its "virile" expression by a man is acclaimed ostensibly

and widely. Some female writers have braved into this male prerogative, amongst them Gilka Machado, Marilene Felinto and Helena Parente Cunha. Chapter 3 analyses the novels of Lygia Fagundes Telles and Lya Luft in their use of “the gothic, the fantastic, and the grotesque”. These are strategies of self-representation. They are means of negotiating inner splits and clashes in the problematization of the female body and desire, in face of obstacles imposed by patriarchal social norms. Chapter 4 discusses how Sonia Coutinho exposes socio-cultural constructs on “aging and the female body” in her short stories. While in some societies elders are respected for their experience and wisdom, they are devalued in modern industrial capitalist societies. These value productivity measured in terms of economic profit and they privilege youth, physical appearance and sensual pleasure. Their mass media also promote double standards that discriminate against aged women. Sixty-plus-year-old male actors are frequently portrayed in a romantic liaison with a woman who is much younger. Coutinho’s middle-age female characters do not accept being stigmatized. They search for, and often find, ways of overcoming the generalized prejudice. Chapter 5, on “lesbian desire”, points out that female homoeroticism challenges radically the dominant gender relations, mainly because it grants women agency. Traditional taboos have resulted in author self-censorship, and covert forms of expression may require a “queer” reading to detect what is present between the lines. Names quoted include Lygia Fagundes Telles, Myriam Campello and Márcia Denser. Finally, Chapter 6 draws attention to the fact that “female agency and heterosexuality” coexist in some texts. A typical example is Marina Colassanti’s poetry, which celebrates female desire, agency and fulfilment in her relationship with a male partner. Written in the last decades of the twentieth century, it may also be a sign of changes to come in a society where gender interaction is still predominantly patriarchal and phallogocentric.

As Cristina Ferreira-Pinto explains in the introductory pages, most chapters are a revised and expanded version of former articles that appeared in scholarly journals. This may account for some overlapping and repetition. In fact, this volume is better read as a collection of thematically convergent contributions rather than a sequential series of chapters. Notwithstanding, it has been scrupulously organized. The main body of the book is preceded by a chronology of “Brazilian women in society and literature”. There is also plenty of support for the reader who is not conversant with Portuguese. Throughout, Portuguese titles and quotes are systematically translated into English. A translation for longer quotes and notes is provided in an appendix. This is followed by a bibliography of both literary authors and theoretical references. The final pages contain a cross-reference index by topic, author name and publication title.

Gender, Discourse and Desire in Twentieth-Century Brazilian Women’s Literature deals with multifaceted issues in connection with female eroticism and sexual life and examines how these issues have found expression in women-authored Brazilian literature. It also examines ties between constructions of sexuality, socio-ethnic dynamics and national identity. This book is both a valuable study and a stimulating invitation for further research on a number of demanding areas of inquiry.

January 2006, **Manuela Cook**