Literary Onomastics in Graciliano Ramos:
The Names of Characters in *Vidas Secas* and *São Bernardo*

Onomástica Literária em Graciliano Ramos:
os nomes dos personagens de Vidas Secas *e de* São Bernardo

Kleber Eckert

Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS),
Campus Bento Gonçalves, Bento Gonçalves, Rio Grande do Sul / Brasil
klebereckert@hotmail.com

Maiquel Röhrig

Instituto Federal de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia do Rio Grande do Sul (IFRS),
Campus Bento Gonçalves, Bento Gonçalves, Rio Grande do Sul / Brasil
leuqiam@gmail.com

Resumo: O presente artigo tem como tema um estudo interdisciplinar entre a Onomástica – ciência que estuda os nomes próprios – e a Literatura Brasileira, mais especificamente a prosa de Graciliano Ramos, escrita durante a segunda fase do Modernismo brasileiro. O objetivo central é a análise etimológica e simbólica dos nomes dos principais personagens dos romances *Vidas Secas* e *São Bernardo*, a fim de verificar se existe uma relação entre o significado do nome e o comportamento ou as características físicas desses personagens. Para tanto, discutem-se conceitos básicos de Antroponímia, que é o ramo da Onomástica responsável pelo estudo dos nomes próprios de pessoas, bem como questões relativas à Onomástica Literária, que é o campo dedicado à análise dos nomes dos personagens de obras literárias. Apresentam-se as características da segunda fase do Modernismo, mais conhecida como *Romance de 30*, e apresenta-se uma síntese do enredo de cada um dos romances. A análise etimológica dos nomes dos personagens, realizada a partir de dicionários de nomes e sobrenomes, possibilitou que se chegasse à conclusão de que existe, na maioria dos casos, uma estreita relação entre o significado dos nomes e as características dos personagens, o que leva a crer que a escolha dos nomes por parte do autor não foi fortuita e, sim, etimológica e simbolicamente motivada.

Abstract: This paper's main theme focuses on an interdisciplinary study connecting Onomastics (science that studies proper names) and Brazilian Literature, more specifically Graciliano Ramos' prose, written during the second phase of Brazilian Modernism. The aim is to conduct an etymological and symbolic analysis of the names of the main characters of the novels *Vidas Secas* and *São Bernardo* in order to verify if there is any relationship between the meaning of a proper name and the behavior or physical features of the corresponding characters. For this purpose, basic concepts of anthroponomy, the branch of Onomastics responsible for the study of people's proper names, are discussed, together with issues related to Literary Onomastics, the field dedicated to the analysis of characters' names in literary works. The characteristics of the second phase of Modernism, better known as *Romance de 30*, as well as a synthesis of the plot of each of the novels, are presented. The etymological analysis of characters' names, stemming from dictionaries of names and surnames, made it possible to conclude that there is, in most cases, a close relationship between the meaning of the names and the characteristics of the characters. This leads us to believe that the author's choice of names was not fortuitous, but indeed, etymologically and symbolically motivated.
Keywords: names; Literary Onomastics; *Vidas Secas*; *São Bernardo*; Graciliano Ramos.

1 Initial Considerations

This paper's theme focuses on Literary Onomastics, based on the novels *Vidas Secas* and *São Bernardo*, written by Graciliano Ramos. The aim of this study consists of an etymological and symbolic analysis of the names of the main characters of this author from Alagoas, Brazil, in order to verify if the names have any relationship with their behavior or physical features. To accomplish this, we begin by discussing the concepts of Onomastics, the science of proper names, and though this, Anthroponomy, which deals with people's proper names.

Next, a brief history about Literary Onomastics is presented, highlighting its interdisciplinarity, based on contributions from Barthes

(1972), Machado (2003), Mexias-Simon and Oliveira (2004), Marcato (2009), Santos (2015), and Seide (2016). After the reflections on the field of Onomastics, the main features of the *Romance de 30* are described and a brief summary of the plot of each novel is presented.

This study's methodology is based on a careful reading of the works, highlighting the names of the main characters and illustrating their main characteristics. In addition, this study conducted an etymological and symbolic analysis of the characters' names in order to verify if there was any relationship between the meaning of the proper name and the features of the characters based on dictionaries of names and specialized works, such as those from Guérios (1973), Andrade (1994), Obata (1986), and Oliver (2005). This study, therefore, follows a qualitative approach, which has been a tendency in Literary Onomastics studies, according to a survey conducted by Seide (2016).

Literary Onomastics is a field that has received little attention in Brazilian research, be it due to the bias of Lexicology, be it due to the few literary studies on the issue. In this light, the present study finds it justification, as, to the best of our knowledge, no other publication has focused on the names of the characters in the works of Graciliano Ramos. Some classics of Brazilian literature, however, have already been the object of study in the analysis of proper names, as exemplified below.

In 2003, Ana Maria Machado published the book, *Recado ao nome: leitura de Guimarães Rosa à luz do nome de seus personagens*, in which the author exhastively examined the semantic, phonetic, and etymological components of the proper names created by Guimarães Rosa. For Machado (2003, p. 23), what is of interest is

> to study the author's practice, examine the relationship between the onomastic system and the structuring of the narrative in his work. […] What we propose is only a reading of Guimarães Rosa in light of the names of his characters. A reading that is not only possible, but also essential.

Salgueiro (2006) published an article about the short story, "Noite de Almirante" (In English: "Night of the Admiral"), de Machado de Assis, in which he analyzes the relationships between the names of the characters and the history of Greek mythology that treats the characters, Odysseus, and his wife, Penelope, whose name yielded the variation of Genoveva, who is the protagonist in the short story mentioned above.

Salgueiro (2006, p. 7) concludes his text affirming that there is a playful nature in the relationship of Machado de Assis with the way in which he names his characters, affirming that "Machado played with earrings, with verbs, with the title, with the names."

The novel *Dom Casmurro* is analyzed in light of Onomastics by Santos (2015, p. 11), whose objective is to try "to comprehend how Bento Santiago's narrative in the first person is constructed and gains relevance through the names chosen by Machado de Assis for each one of his characters." Another study focuses on the work *Ubirajara*, by José de Alencar, whose names are analyzed by Eckert and Röhrig (2016) through its etymology and symbolic implications. For researchers, the novel in question can be classified as

> a meta-anthroponymic text, because, in addition to the characters presenting names given according to indigenous traditions, the author names these characters based on the etymology of words from Tupi and even adds reflections concerning this naming process. (ECKERT; RÖHRIG, 2016, p. 187)

This relationship between etymology and Onomastics is reinforced by Viaro (2014) when he explains that some people's proper names begin to be used as common names, while some common names begin to be used as proper names. The author explains that this movement between the two types of names has always occurred and stresses: "The aunt of Afonso I, the first king of Portugal, was called *Urraca*, a name that stems from the denomination of a bird, that is, "a pega", which, in Basque, is spoken as *urraka [...]*. Inversely, "a pega" is also denominated in other languages by other women's names (VIARO, 2014, p. 297), which he exemplifies with the Spanish *marica* and the French *margot.*

2 A Onomastics: the study of proper names

According to Correia and Almeida (2012, p. 11), the léxicon of a language is commonly defined by tradition or in a generic form, "such as the set of all words that they take part in." The lexicon is responsible, as Seabra (2006, p. 1953) stresses, "to name and express the universe of a society." Lexicology is the science that studies the lexical heritage of a language, one part of which is Onomastics, whose object of study is the origin, the formation, and the meanings of proper names, be they of

people or places. Hence, we arrive at two of the main areas of Onomastics (the study of proper names): Anthroponymy and Toponymy.

As mentioned above, Onomastics primarily contains two broad fields of investigation: Anthroponymy and Toponymy. The first, also known as Anthroponomastics, is that which includes people's proper names, that is, anthroponyms. The second, also called Toponomastics, is that which refers to the study of the names of places, that is, toponyms. For Dauzat (1950, p. 4), these two areas, though diverse, are close in some aspects:

> Names of places and names of people have always had, and still have, a relationship of interdependence between them, more or less indicated according to the time period. City or village, commonly called by the name of its founder or of the owner of the domain around which an agglomeration later formed. By contrast, individuals, or the family, are commonly denominated according to their location, their town, their homeland, according to their property or according to such a particular residence.

The considerations made above can be illustrated with the toponyms *Camargo*, *Novo Cabrais*, and *Vila Maria*. This deals with the three names of the towns of Rio Grande do Sul, which appeared due to the name or surname of the first inhabitants of the regions. Likewise, there is a abundance of surnames derived from the names of places, such as those that follow: *Bergamaschi*, from the Italian region of Bergamo, in Lombardia; *Schweizer*, resulting from Switzerland; and *Braga*, a city in the North of Portugal.

The proximity between the Anthroponym and the Toponym is also addressed by Seabra (2006, p. 1954), although she presents it from a slightly different viewpoint. For this researcher:

> athough they were constructed in semantic fields of varying dimensions of Onomastics – people and place – they have a relationship of inclusion in common, since one can find in the onoma, in an intersectional area: the vocabulary term when its ceases to have a full use in the language, moving on to the onomastic use, takes on the denominative character – in a deity or anaphoric use – and becomes referenced as a toponym or anthroponym.

As regards the characteristics of the onomastic sign, the object of Onomastics, Marcato (2009, p. 18) presents and highlights the concepts of the opacity and transparence of this sign. One transparent onomastic

sign can be verified when it is possible to relate, for example, the name to an element of the vocabulary of a language. When this possibility is impossible, it is because the onomastic sign appeared in a remote time period, when another language was spoken in the territory in which this sign occurred. In this situation, it is possible to say that the sign is opaque.

In the same vein, Guérios (1973, p. 16) also discusses the opacity and transparence of the onomastic sign, citing the anthroponym *Licurgo* as an example of an opaque sign, which today no longer refers to the primitive wolf hunter. By contrast, the toponym, *Bahia*, is an example of a transparent sign. Finally, Frosi (2015) points out that, many times, the transparency of the onomastic sign is apparent when it is created, but, over time, it becomes opaque. Thus, the name is quickly emptied of its primitive meaning. It becomes so sterilized that it becomes nothing more than an individual's label and is no longer understood in the etymological sense (DAUZAT, 1950, p. 10).

It is from this point of view that we find the analysis of the names of the characters from the present article, given that the core aim is to evaluate to what extent the etymological meaning of the characters' names is related to their behavior and/or physical features. Wethus speaks of a type of study that Marcato (2009, p. 26) calls 'Literary Onomastics' and that Seide (2016, p. 1154) calls 'Fictional Onomastics', which can even create onomastic trends, when literary names become famous and begin to be used as the names of a large quantity of newborn children.

This part of Onomastics is interested in analyzing the names of the characters of literary works, in addition to a part that is dedicated to the audiovisual works, such as cinema and television (MARCATO, 2009; SEIDE, 2016). In the present article, Literary Onomastics is understood as a division of Fictional Onomastics, since this field is broader than that of Literary Onomastics, as well as due to the fact that one of the characteristics of the literary text is it fictionality. In this sense, it is important to reiterate the main goal of this text, which is to analyze the names of characters of literary works and the meaning of these names in the formulation of the features of these characters.

The historical path of this discipline is presented by Marcato (2009), according to which the Literary Onomastics began to be developed in the beginning of the 1980's in Italy, with studies that took on the names of people and places from old and modern literary works, as, for example, in the studies of the works of Dante, Pirandello,

Manzoni, Boccaccio, and Petrarca. The author also adds that the Literary Onomastics acquired autonomy – freeing itself from literary or literary criticism – and expanding into research analyzing the different roles that the name plays in a work or in an onomastic corpus of a given author.

Through the analysis of a set of ten recent articles that use the theme of Fictional Onomastics, Seide (2016, p. 1156) presents the interdisciplinary character of the approach to the names, depending on the focus that the researcher wishes to give to his/her studies. For the author, some studies are more geared toward literature, in which "the study of the anthroponyms acts as an auxiliary discipline for the resolution of problems concerning literary studies." On the other hand, there are also studies that are connected to the literary environment with audiovisual techniques, creating a dialog between the literary and semiotic studies. In a similar perspective, Santos (2015), affirms that Literary Onomastics was developed as a line of research about proper names that turns to different areas of knowledge and that, in the literature, broadens the semantic horizons of the text.

Choosing the characters' names in a work should be a creative act by the author, since it can take into account the environment in which these characters live as well as the evocative and connotative power that these name have (MARCATO, 2009). Regarding this choice, Mexias-Simon and Oliveira (2004, p. 63) clarify that

> the name of the character takes on a concrete form, if it did not already have it. It is a message from the author to the readers, it traces the character of the characters, it is part of the plot, it begins to transform into a fully linguistic sign, with a significant and a signifier, if not understood, at least sensed. (MARCATO, 2009, p. 25)

The author also adds that the creativity can also appear in the nicknames of the characters, which is often an element with which the author adds details to their features.

As regards the relationship between the author of a literary work and the author's choice of the names that he/she will give to the characters, Machado (2003, p. 28) affirms that:

> When the author gives a Name to a character, he/she already has an idea of the role that the character will play. Of course, the name can begin to act upon the character and even change him/her, but

when this happens, such a fact merely confirms that the internal coherence of the text demands that the Name mean something. It is valid to presume that, in the majority of cases, the Name of the character comes before the written page. As such, it will be forced to play its role in the production of this page, in the genesis of the text.

Regarding the importance of the analysis of proper names of the characters of literary works, Barthes (1972, p. 58) explains that:

> The proper name contains the three properties attributed by the narrator to reminiscence: the power of essentialization (as it designates only one referent), the power of citation (as it is always possible, when so desired, to evoke all of the essence contained in the name, by merely uttering it), the power of exploration (as it is possible "to unfold" a proper name, as is done with a memory): to a certain extent, the proper name constitutes the linguistic form of reminiscence.

For Barthes (1972), the proper name of a character is seen as a sign that lends itself to be explored and deciphered, it is also an invitation to dive in in order to discover all of the reverie contained within it. This name is if it were a flower that should be opened so that one can smell its perfume. Santos (2015, p. 12) clarifies that Barthes "invites us to appreciate the proper name intensely, extracting from it all of the possible elements that often go unseen on the surface" of the literary text.

One example of this appreciation can be seen in Santos (2015), upon analyzing the name of the character narrator of Dom Casmurro – which appears with three different names as the narrative matures and moves forward. For the author, "each one of these names represents the changes in behavior lived by Bento and, to a certain extent, the different characterizations that identify him in each of these moments" (SANTOS, 2015, p. 13).

Finally, in line with that reported by Dauzat (1950) regarding the importance of these studies of proper names for the comprehension of linguistic phenomena, Literary Onomastics moves in this same direction. According to Marcato (2009), it assumes a value of documentation and/ or registration of linguistic aspects, since it attests to forms, variants, local uses that, if it had not been for the literary work, it possibly would not have been registered.

3 *Romance de 30*

Romance de 30 is the first period of Brazilian literature whose authors do not come from the economic center of the country. While the Barroque was developed in Bahia, driven by the riches coming from sugar cane farming; Arcadianism was written in Minas Gerais, due to the fortunes resulting from gold; Romanticism and Realism, in Rio de Janeiro, resulting from the arrival of the Royal family in that city; and Modernism, in São Paulo, due to the intense industrialization happening in the capital city of São Paulo, the literary movement of *Romance de 30* finds its main representatives in the extreme South and Northeast of the country. For this reason, in addition to the common denomination of the Second Phase of Modernism, it also received the nickname of "regionalist novel", given the displacement of the movement in relation to the Rio-São Paulo axis, the radiating center of our culture for more than 100 years.

The most representative authors of this period produced a revolution in the way people thought in Brazil. Since Romanticism, the literature, in some way, focused on the creation of national narratives, that is, texts that presented a nationalist spirit, in which the country was seen as a whole. In the literary movement of *Romance de 30*, what is seen is the region, not only in the scenery, but predominantly in the language and in the set of ideas and values implied within these narratives. The country begins to be seen, therefore, with a multiplicity of various Brazils.

According to Coutinho (1999, p. 275), the movement treats a moment in our literature, in the realm of contents, "the scenario dominates over man, be it the environment of the rural zones, with their geographic and social problems (drought, *cangaço* (in English: 'social banditry'), the latifundium, banditry, etc.), be it the urban or suburban, the life of the middle class and the proletariat, the class fight." As regards the form, the same authors (2004, p. 275) affirm that the novel of this time period "adopts, in general, the realist and documental technique."

Dacanal (1982, p. 13-15), by contrast, identifies seven fundamental characteristics of the *Romance de 30*, three linked to the form of the narratives and four to the treatment given to the themes. These themes include: respect for verisimilitude, linearity of the plot, language filtered by the urban cult code (although the scenarios are agrarian), content linked to historical structures (which are perfectly identifiable through their economic and social characteristics), plots involving

agrarian historical structures, novelists with a critical outlook, a content that pervades the novel with what the author calls optimism when one recognizes that the writers perceive the world in a rational manner and, therefore, by believing that it is possible to understand it, they see the possibility of transforming it.

As regards the work of Graciliano Ramos, Bosi (2006, p. 429) affirms, in discordance with Coutinho, that

> The realism of Graciliano is neither organic nor spontaneous. It is critical. The 'hero' is always a problem: he does not accept the world, not the others, not even himself. […] Thus, it seems precarious, if not false, this air of regionalism that most tend to give to the works as completely universal, as can be seen in *São Bernardo* and *Vidas Secas*.

In this sense, the analysis of the characters' names from the novels of Graciliano Ramos, and their role in the plots of the novels, will also attempt to achieve a more in-depth understanding of the controversy between the regional and the universal in the works of Graciliano Ramos, one of the most renowned authors in Brazilian literature.

3.1 The plots of the novels *Vidas Secas* and *São Bernardo*

Vidas Secas was published in 1938, but some of its chapters had come out in periodicals years before, in the form of short stories. This is the case with the unforgettable "Baleia", whose publication awakened in the author the interest in transforming the story of that migrant family into a novel. This circumstance may well explain the fact that the book was classified as a novel that could be dismantled, this because it seems possible, keeping the first and last chapters in their respective places, to reorganize the other chapters freely, without spoiling the overall sense.

The characters of *Vidas Secas* include a father of the family, Fabiano, his wife, Ms.Vitória,[1] their two children (the younger child and the older child), the dog Baleia, the yellow soldier, the boss, and, one can even include Mr. Tomás da bolandeira (In English: *Mr. Thomas of the Sugarcane Grinder*), who, however, is only mentioned in the text, with no narrative given to him, as well as some other secondary characters.

---

[1] The name is originally written in the novel as we wrote in the Portuguese version of this article: Sinha Vitória.

Regarding the study, this novel deals with a cyclical narrative that tells of the flight of the aforementioned migrant family, which is trying to flee the drought, their life as workers on a small farm that they encountered along the way, and once again their flight, trying, this time, to escape not only the drought, but also the debts contracted with the boss, who exploited them.

Within the main events of the plot, there is the imprisonment of Fabiano, who was wronged by the yellow soldier; the death of Baleia, sacrificied by Fabiano because it had contracted a disease; and the exploitation to which the boss submits them, with indications that he had cheated them in their accounts, putting the family in debt.

São Bernardo was published four years before, in 1934. Different from *Vidas Secas*, the narrative is in the first person, consisting of the life story of the protagonist, Paulo Honório, marked, above all, by two crucial circumstances: his fight for social ascension and his marriage to Madalena. The study revolves around these two questions, which is at the heart of the narrator's own existential problems: the irrepressible desire to become rich and powerful, the feeling that everything he had accomplished was useless without a woman by his side; the consequence that greed would transform him into a rude man; and the guilt felt because his personality had contributed to the suicide of the woman he loved.

Around this first-person narrative revolve other characters, especially Luís Padilha, teacher at the school on Paulo Honório's farm and a sort of confidant to Madalena; Dona Glória, Madalena's aunt and her only family tie; and Margarida, an old woman responsible for Paulo Honório's upbringing, since he had been abandoned by his parents.

One can claim that *São Bernardo* and *Vidas Secas* are works narrated in antithetic perspectives: of the boss and of the employees, respectively. One can see, however, in both, the technique of point and counterpoint. In the novel, *São Bernardo*, Madalena's point of view, which expresses an empathy toward Socialism, runs in direct contrast to Paulo Honorio's perspective. According to Dacanal (1982, p. 22), "she is a profoundly naive character, incapable of understanding the historical reality, much less the schemes of domination and power", which, to the contrary, are skillfully manipulated by Paulo Honório. By contrast, in *Vidas Secas*, the narrator assumes the perspective of the migrant family, as compared to the figure of the boos, who does not receive a proper name, precisely to emphasize his class condition.

In general, therefore, these works present differences between them, from the point of view of form and content, but they maintain a fundamental similarity: the issue of the shock between bosses and workers, between the oppressors and the oppressed. As regards the last scenario, Paulo Honório shows how each of these roles has pre-established rules, in such a way that, to get out of their humiliating situation, he needs to become an oppressor.

4 Etymological and symbolic analysis of the names

Fabiano: Regarding the etymology of the name, Guérios (1973), Obata (1986), Andrade (1994), and Oliver (2005) explain that Fabiano derives from Fábio, whose origin dates back to *faba,* literally, 'bean'. The name arose through the farming activities of this legume. According to Oliver (2005, p. 159), "*Fabiano* is the relative form of the name, sig. (belonging to; of the nature of) Fábio." The same author adds that, symbolically, the bean represents "the soul trapped in the matter" and "for the older generations, symbolized the first offering of the dead to the living – that is, the materialized reincarnation of the embryo" (OLIVER, 2005, p. 159). This interpretation can be connected to the behavior of the character, since he is unable to reveal his "self" due to his difficulty with the language, making him a prisoner of his own ignorance. On the other hand, as a common name, Fabiano is the male noun that means "any, unknown subject; guy", used as a synonym for "John Doe". This meaning is similar to the character's features, whose situation places him in such an inferior condition to the others to the point of being considered more animal than human. Fabiano is just another migrant affected by the drought, whose space could be occupied by anyone else and whose work could be performed by anyone. The character himself, in a self-titled chapter, within the limitations of his personality, reflects upon his condition, asking himself if he is a man or an animal (RAMOS, 2007, p. 18-19), and he sees, in this dilemma, more advantages as an animal than as a man, given that the animals are tough and brave enough to resist that type of life.

Sinha Vitória: According to Obata (1986, p. 193), the name Vitória comes "from the Latin *Victorius,* 'victorious'. The feminine form is an invocation to the Virgin Mary, referring to the victory over sin." In this sense, this qualification can be related to the motherly role performed by

the character. In addition, the view that Fabiano has of his wife allows us to infer that he considers her superior in terms of reasoning and language, which can be perceived when Fabiano needs to consult her before once again abandoning everything and moving on. "I needed to consult sinha Vitória to arrange the trip, free us of the troubles […] It is necessary to abandon those cursed places. Sinha Vitória would think like him" (RAMOS, 2007, p. 116). According to Guérios (1973) and Andrade (1994), the name Vitória refers to the Roman God of victory, which, to a certain extent, is the opposite of the character's life, given that, rather than winning, it repeatedly forces her to flee the drought.

Baleia: The name of the dog, Baleia, refers to cetaceans, animals that have three essential features: they are the largest animals of the world, they live in the oceans, and they feed themselves abundantly. It seems clear that the family chose this name to symbolize all that they lacked and most needed: food and water. It is also important to note that it, to contrary of the couple's children, has its own name, while the children are named only by their basic features. The chapter entitled "Baleia" presents the drama of Fabiano, who finds himself in the obligation of sacrificing the pet because it had contracted a disease, and contrasts Fabiano's rude manners and his linguistic difficulty with the delirium of the dog before it dies. Baleia dreams about a world full of guinea pigs, where the children can play with him in the mud and where a gigantic Fabiano will offer his hand to be licked (RAMOS, 2007, p. 91). A dream that contemplates, therefore, essential elements and that humanizes: the play, the affection, the abundance of food.

Younger Boy and Older Boy: The lack of proper names for Fabiano and sinha Vitória's children depersonalizes them. The manner of naming them is almost a simple denominational structure, created from a particular trait, in this case, age. According to Marcato (2009), the nickname brings with it a certain transparency, which allows for the immediate comprehension of its meaning, as occurs with regards to these two characters. In contrast to Baleia, the two boys do not have a striking personality of their own – and their future is conditioned, as they will do what their grandfather had done, and what the father currently does: fight for survival, herding the cattle in the middle of the Brazilian Caatinga, suffering the exploitation of a boss and the offenses of a yellow soldier. As the narrator says, reproducing Fabiano's thoughts: "The boys were

rough, like their father. When they grow up, they would take care of the head of cattle of an invisible boss, they would be stepped on, mistreated, battered by a yellow soldier" (RAMOS, 2007, p. 37).

Paulo Honório: According to Obata (1986, p. 158), the name comes from the Latin "*Paulus,* 'small', in the sense of 'humility', not as a reference to the physical feature. It is a name used by Saulo de Tarso after his conversion to Christianity." This sense corroborates with what the character says about himself, characterizing himself as a man of "boyish heart, gaps in my brain, nerves that are different from those of other men. And with an enormous nose, an enormous mouth, and enormous fingers" (RAMOS, 2007, p. 221). By contrast, the second name, according to Oliver (2005, p. 193), Honório, comes "from the Latin *Honoriu,* from the noun *honor* (honor, reputation), plus the suffix, *io,* sig. 'honorable man; reputable man'." Likewise, Guérios (1973, p. 127) affirms that the name means he who "has honor, respect, esteem, glory." This second name reveals everything that the character accomplished throughout his life, achieving reputation and even admiration, since he was successful due to his own efforts: he comes from nothing and reaches the top of the socio-agricultural hierarchy. However, the presence of the sense of the name, Paulo, keeps him prisoner to the psychosocial point of view: a man that, despite the wealth and achievements, is still small.

Madalena: Guérios (1973), Andrade (1994), and Oliver (2005) present the toponymic origin of the name, as a person from Magdala, city on the coast of Galileia. Magdala, itself, comes from the Hebrew and means "city of towers". Guérios (1973, p. 149) adds that the name, in Hebrew, means "person with combed hair" and that became common because of "Maria Madalena, the converted sinner". Obata (1986, p. 2) affirms that the name "was used as a qualifier of Maria, the famous repentant sinner, influencing the meaning, today, of the 'repentant woman' or 'weeping woman'. This final interpretation is similar to what happens to the character: she marries Paulo Honório and, after truly getting to know him, repents to such an extent that she commits suicide. Before, however, Madalena went through a long process of depression, which brings her closer to the idea of the "weeping woman".

Margarida: Guérios (1973), Obata (1986), and Andrade (1994) present the origin of the name as coming from the Greek form that arrived in

Latin as *Margarita,* with the meaning of pearl. According to them, the name is also linked to a flower or to a mollusk that has a mother-of-peal shell. Oliver (2005, p. 449) goes further and affirms that it is a "name that the Greek borrowed from the Persian *murvarid, murwari,* and that originally meant 'creature of light'." In the novel, Margarida is the woman that brings up Paulo Honório, since he had never met his real parents. After becoming rich, Paulo Honório sends for her and builds a house for her on his property in order to compensate her for what she had given him in his childhood: "It costs me 10,000 reis per week, an amount that is enough to compensate the bit that you gave me. It's been a century, and one day I will buy you a shroud, and I will have them bury it near the High-Altar of the Chapel" (RAMOS, 2007, p. 16). The idea of the "creature of light" present in the name is associated with the moment in which Margarida assumes the upbringing of Paulo Honório, and opposes herself to the figure of the blind man, another character who Paulo Honório followed as a child. The longevity of the character, to a certain extent, is linked to the symbolism of the pearl, an organic jewel of great durability.

Dona Glória: According to Obata (1986, p. 94), the name comes from Latin and means fame and reputation. In addition, "it is a Christian name, allusive to Easter Resurrection or the Glorious Sunday; an invocation to Our Lady of Glory". Oliver (2005, p. 409) highlights that the name is of a religious origin and is "lent to one of the invocations of Our Lady, generally given to girls born on the 15th of August, when the Virgin is adored." The name of the character is not related to any of these three possibilities of interpretation mentioned above: Madalena's aunt benefits from neither fame nor reputation, and there is also no reference to her religiosity and birth date. Therefore, in this case, the name becomes a mere label.

Luís Padilha: According to Oliver (2005, p. 229), the name Luís comes "from the German *Hlodoviko, Ludwig,* from *hlot, hlut* (famous, illustrious, renowned) and *wig* (battle), sig. famous in battle; famous warrior (illustrious, renowned)'". Padilha, himself, according to Guérios (1973, p. 173), is a surname of Spanish geographic origin, stemming from Padilla – Castile, the old. According to the author, the surname was already used in the 16th century in Portugal. As can be seen, both the character's name and the surname seem not to have any relation to his

features, thus being merely an identifying label, since Luís Padilha does not present any feature that would link to the idea of "warrior", much to the contrary, he goes through a series of defeats, and even loses his only property that he had inherited from his parents.

5 Final considerations

This article's aim was achieved, since it analyzed the names of the main characters of the novels *Vidas Secas* and *São Bernardo*, and relationships were established between the etymology of these names and the acting of the characters in these plots. Having found the features of the characters and of the meaning of their names in specific dictionaries, this study reached some conclusions, which are detailed below.

First, the majority of the names of the characters are not used as mere identifying labels, as they have relationships with their behavior and physical features. As proven in other studies on literary classics, according to that cited in the introduction regarding Guimarães Rosa, Machado de Assis, and José de Alencar, the creation of characters' names, in the works of Graciliano Ramos, proved to be the object of reflection by the author in the formulation of the characters and their relationship with the plot. Thus, one can see that this concern seems to be consistent in the works of some of the main authors in Brazilian literature.

Second, this study showed the concern of Graciliano Ramos with the lexical preciseness and, more specifically, with the proper name, as revealed by Machado (2003, p. 72) when she affirms that "in the case of the Alagoan novelista, his constant lucidity and his conscientious effort led him to shed light on the very process" of choosing the names of his characters and the implications of this choice. This idea is confirmed in the novel, *Angústia*, in which the author, in the preface of his work, reflects on this process: "In two hours, I have written one word: Marina. After, taking advantage of the letters of this name, I arrange absurd things: ar (air), mar (sea), rima (rhyme), arma (gun), ira (wrath), amar (love). About 20 names" (RAMOS, 1952, p. 06).

In conclusion, the reflections developed in this article reveal the possibility of doing research in the area that is still relatively unexplored in Brazilian onomastic studies, which is the analysis of the proper names of the characters of literary works. The present study opens doors for future studies, since the analysis of the characters' names can be extended

to works from other classic authors in Brazilian literature. There is, therefore, the possibility of studying if this finding, that is, the relationship that exists between the symbolic and etymological meaning of the proper name and the named character, is maintained, including the authors of contemporary Brazilian literature. In addition, the range of possibilities can be expanded, including, among the objects of study, theatrical plays, cinematographic works, other fictional works, TV series, and soap operas.

References

ANDRADE, Janete de. *O étimo dos nomes próprios.* São Paulo: Thirê, 1994.

BARTHES, Roland. *Novos ensaios críticos.* São Paulo: Cultrix, 1972.

BOSI, Alfredo. *História concisa da literatura brasileira.* 48. ed. São Paulo: Cultrix, 2006.

CORREIA, Margarita; ALMEIDA, Gladis Maria de Barcellos. *Neologia em português.* São Paulo: Parábola Editorial, 2012.

COUTINHO, Afrânio (dir.). *A literatura no Brasil:* relações e perspectivas. Conclusão. 5 ed. São Paulo: Global, 1999. V. VI.

DACANAL, José Hildebrando. *O romance de 30.* Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1982.

DAUZAT, Albert. *Les noms de personnes*: origen et évolution Prénoms – Noms de famille – Surnoms. 4. ed. Paris: Delagrave, 1950.

ECKERT, Kleber; RÖHRIG, Maiquel. Antroponímia ficcional: o caso de Ubirajara, de José de Alencar. *Revista GTLex,* [*s.l.*], v. 2 n. 1, jul./dez. 2016. Disponível em: <http://www.seer.ufu.br/index.php/GTLex/article/view/37831>. Acesso em: 23 out. 2017.

FROSI, Vitalina Maria. *Provérbios italianos*: pérolas na educação informal dos ítalo-brasileiros. Caxias do Sul: Educs, 2015.

GUÉRIOS, Rosário Farani Mansur. *Dicionário etimológico de nomes e sobrenomes.* 2. ed. São Paulo: Ave Maria, 1973.

MACHADO, Ana Maria. *Recado do nome:* leitura de Guimarães Rosa à luz do nome de seus personagens. 3. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2003.

MARCATO, Carla. *Nomi di persona, nomi di luogo:* introduzione all'onomastica italiana. Bologna: il Mulino, 2009.

MEXIAS-SIMON, Maria Lucia; OLIVEIRA, Aileda de Mattos. *O nome do homem:* reflexões em torno dos nomes próprios. Rio de Janeiro: HP, 2004.

OBATA, Regina. *O livro dos nomes.* São Paulo: Círculo do Livro, 1986.

OLIVER, Nelson. *Todos os nomes do mundo*. Rio de Janeiro: Ediouro, 2005.

RAMOS, Graciliano. *Vidas Secas.* 102. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2007.

RAMOS, Graciliano. *São Bernardo.* 64. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1995.

RAMOS, Graciliano. *Angústia*. 5. ed. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 1952.

SALGUEIRO, Wilberth Claython Ferreira. *Nomes não mentem (quase nunca): "Noite de Almirante", de Machado de Assis, à luz da onomástica*. 2006. p. 1-10. Disponível em: <http://www.idelberavelar.com/abralic/txt_10.pdf>. Acesso em: 21 nov. 2017.

SANTOS, Bárbara da Silva. *Dom Casmurro à luz da onomástica*: tramas e tramoias do romance machadiano. 2015. 104 f. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras) – Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo, 2015.

SEABRA, Maria Cândida Trindade Costa de. Referência e Onomástica. In: MAGALHÃES, José Sueli de; TRAVAGLIA, Luiz Carlos (Org.). *Múltiplas perspectivas em Linguística.* Uberlândia: Edufu, 2006. p. 1952-1960. Disponível em: <http://www.filologia.org.br/ileel/artigos/artigo_442.pdf>. Acesso em: 23 out. 2013.

SEIDE, Márcia Sipavicius. Métodos de Pesquisa em Antroponomástica. *Domínios de Lingu@gem*, [*s.l.*], v. 10, n. 3, jul./set. 2016. Disponível em: <http://www.seer.ufu.br/index.php/dominiosdelinguagem/article/view/32482>. Acesso em: 3 out. 2016.

VIARO, Mário Eduardo. *Etimologia*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2014.