

COUTINHO'S CONTROVERSY: THE DEBATE OVER THE *NOVA CRÍTICA*

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The arena of Brazilian literary criticism during the 1950s was one of heated polemics and angry debates between the "old" and the "new" critics. In many ways, this protracted encounter involved a clash of world views as much as of concepts of literature and criticism. For one thing, the opponents of the *nova crítica* had a wholly different cast of mind from the new critics.¹ Whether they utilized the reigning impressionistic or sociological approaches to literature and criticism, or whether they were merely dilettantes who dabbled in letters at their leisure, they all tended to view literature in other than a literary framework. To the new critics, this orientation was the same thing as saying that literature was only a satellite responding to the gravitational pull of other forms of knowledge—history, sociology, or psychology, for example. Its main function, therefore, was to illuminate the style of an epoch or the personality of the author, even that of the critic himself. Such a concept of literature was totally unacceptable to the new critics, who insisted on regarding literature in its own right, as a separate but equal planet in the universe of the intellect. Further, the new and the old critics locked horns over the measure of importance that subjective considerations should be allotted in literary criticism. The former wished to minimize them dramatically, maintaining that criticism was a rational, objective discipline; while the latter objected strenuously to such minimization, holding that criticism was primarily an exercise of the critic's creative imagination. The debate over subjective and objective attitudes in literary study is part of the broader issue of the relative merits of the modern, scientific mode of thought and the traditional, personalist mode that had characterized Brazilian literary criticism.

Finally, the social and cultural goals of the new critics—which included the professionalization and democratization of literary criticism and the reform of the university—put them on a collision course with the more conservative and entrenched members of the opposition. Fierce exchanges over the intrinsic nature and social function of literature and criticism, punctuated by frequent personal attacks, characterized the decade and aroused literary criticism from its somnolent state.

Because the impact of the *nova crítica* extended far beyond the limits of literary criticism proper, it is a story best understood in the wider field of cultural history, of which it is an integral element. For the unique feature of the *nova crítica* is its combination of Anglo-American new critical principles with a re-

markedly wide variety of other intellectual influences and concerns, all directed toward achieving cultural autonomy for a developing nation. The result is a surprising, somewhat contradictory mixture, especially to students of the New Criticism, for the *nova crítica* violated some of its basic rules in urgent pursuit of the overriding goal of national cultural definition. Because of its nationalist intent, the *nova crítica* evolved into a Brazilian phenomenon, markedly different from the New Criticism, which provided its skeleton but not its flesh and blood. Moreover, the *nova crítica* helped to determine the state of the national critical mind that came to prevail during the sixties. The lengthy debate, then, was as much over the shaping of Brazilian thought as over finding viable models of literary criticism.

The key figure in the controversy was the arrogant and forceful Afrânio Coutinho, leading theorist and *divulgador*, or popularizer, of the *nova crítica*.² When he returned to Brazil in 1948 after five years of study in the United States, he came as the bringer of light to a benighted people.³ Thoroughly convinced of the validity of the basic principles of the New Criticism and the corrective they provided to certain "flaws" in the national character, as well as in literary criticism, he zealously set about applying them to the Brazilian context.⁴

An old-fashioned moralism informed all Coutinho's views on Brazilian literary life and society in general. Decency, decorum, seriousness, hard work, and self-denial he identified with professionalism and the scientific *nova crítica*. Aristocratic privilege, personalism, prodigal dilettantism, and lazy improvisation he equated with the spurious and immoral "literary life" that eroded Brazilian culture. It was the *immorality* of the national milieu that so outraged him. The world for Coutinho was two-toned, black and white; one had to battle continuously through good works and example to overcome widespread evil. He sought to lift literature from the degradation in which it wallowed: "A regra é a prostituição, a degradação, a desmoralização interior."⁵ He felt horror at the sordid "comédia literária," with its "capelas," "medalhões," "cajafestismo," "rodas," "intrigas," and its disgusting bureaucratic affiliations.⁶ Coutinho began his good works by denouncing the corrupt "moedeiros falsos" and casting them from the temple of literature.⁷

He readily accepted the isolation that his burden imposed upon him; indeed, to him, persecution ennobled his mission. In a hostile atmosphere, he preached the gospel of the purity of literature and of its illumination by professional high priests who, like himself, were totally consecrated to its cause. In his own eyes an exemplary ascetic figure, Coutinho set himself above the mundane temptations of material security to which lesser men succumbed, eschewing lucrative careers in medicine and politics for the financially insecure, but esthetically and morally transcendent, world of letters.⁸ His presumption of moral superiority was bound to nettle his compatriots and invite attack, implying as it did that they, like Belshazzar, had been weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Though Coutinho possessed a moralistic, Victorian world view, a combative temperament, and a persecution complex, he was not merely a conservative

force, but both a conservative and a reformist one. He vigorously denounced the status quo in order to effect a moral and intellectual change. Coutinho wanted to move ahead rapidly, but using old values to forge a modern culture. His combination of conservative values and reformist goals made him a complex individual, and one who disdainfully refused to conform to the conservative category—or any other—into which his critics tried to force him. His extraordinary self-confidence sustained him in the face of adversity; it sprang from his moral absolutism and gave him “a consciência tranquila de estar com a verdade.”⁹

Coutinho's pride, self-righteousness, and polemical spirit flowed unabated into his theories themselves. It is not surprising that the angry responses he provoked were often directed against him as well as his ideas. Criticism of Coutinho falls into three categories: (1) objections to Coutinho himself; (2) objections to his ideas—particularly on the autonomy of literature and criticism, the scientific method and professionalization; and (3) objections to the Brazilian implications of his ideas. Broadly considered, the opposition to Coutinho was milder after the publication of *A Literatura no Brasil* (1955–59) than before, though certain individuals never softened their denunciations.

Of all his critics, Wilson Martins and Álvaro Lins wrote perhaps the most personally insulting remarks against Coutinho. To Martins, Coutinho was a “terrorista, um apaixonado, um inquisidor, um enraivado, um fanático,” given to “incompreensões espantosas, por falta de liberalismo de espírito.”¹⁰ Lins symbolized the old criticism to Coutinho and his allies; when Lins and Coutinho competed for the opening in Brazilian literature at the Colégio Pedro II in 1951, the contest assumed great proportions. For example, Coutinho's success represented to Fausto Cunha and the *Revista Branca* the victory of the new mentality over the old guard “colonialist” one.¹¹ Lins' bitterness over his defeat only deepened a long-standing dislike for Coutinho, which he expressed much earlier by belittling Coutinho's assault on the *rodapé* and by calling him a “pobre rapaz, que, feito secretário de uma revista de divulgação popular, pretende ser juiz em assuntos de crítica, com autoridade exclusiva de uma estada de alguns meses em Nova York.”¹² Lins imputed Coutinho's motives to personal rancor in addition to a servile worship of the United States: “A sua atitude, porém, tem uma origem mais melancólica do que o seu conhecimento tão servil quanto grosseiro ou grotesco dos Estados Unidos da América. Ele publicou um livro, certa vez; e enviou-o, solicitado, aos redatores dos rodapés da crítica. Foi o fracasso do livro que o conduziu agora a essa atitude da raiva pueril e inofensiva contra a crítica.”¹³

Coutinho denied these and all other accusations, for his temperament was such that he could not remain coolly aloof. But he did not usually descend to name calling. Instead, he directed his invectives at the intellectual climate in general and its collective faults. Thus, it may have been Lins' attack that prompted Coutinho to respond in *Correntes Cruzadas* that what he admired about the United States was its universities, not its way of life, with its gross materialism, unhappiness, alcoholism, divorce, and dominance of men by women.¹⁴

Coutinho brought down the wrath of the entire intellectual “complex” in

an article he wrote in his "Correntes Cruzadas" column on 23 December 1951, in which he compared Brazilian intellectuals as a group most unfavorably to Brazilian politicians:

Não iremos longe da verdade e da justiça histórica se afirmarmos que ao político devemos o que temos de melhor e de mais importante em nossa civilização.

O grupo chamado intelectual difere do político pela ausência completa de preparo intelectual e moral. É constituído mediante a improvisação, que da noite para o dia lhe supre os quadros com os gênios produzidos do nada. Nenhuma tradição de cultura norteia a sua atividade.

Sem qualquer formação intelectual, não podem constituir-se em classe, economicamente independente, ou que saiba defender seus interesses. Vivem de propinas ou pendurados à beira do prato burocrático. Não podem ter saúde espiritual e moral, pois o sentimento de inferioridade só lhes traz azinhave à alma, amargada pelos mais turvos e torpes complexos e defeitos, a inveja, o despeito, o orgulho recalcado, as rivalidades mesquinhas, tudo isso que forma a atmosfera da famosa 'vida literária' brasileira, a molcagem mais engratada que se pode conceber.¹⁵

This article stirred up such a hornet's nest of protest that shortly after it appeared, Coutinho was invited by the *Jornal de Letras* to clarify the points that elicited such vehement replies. He retracted not a word, but restated the need for a moral "consciousness-raising," for the "criação de uma consciência moral completando uma consciência técnica."¹⁶ He did point out, however, that the evils he denounced were in the "social fabric, in the mores, in the system," and not in any specific individuals.¹⁷

The objections to Coutinho's new critical theory were, of course, much more intellectually substantial than the attacks on his person. The most frequent disagreement with Coutinho was over the narrowness of his concept of autonomy for literature and criticism. Respected figures such as Fábio Lucas, Nelson Werneck Sodré, Wilson Martins, Levi Carneiro, and Lêdo Ivo, for one reason or another, found Coutinho's views too limiting. Basically, they rejected the notion that literature is autonomous. To them, literature is a cultural expression, reflecting historical and economic circumstances as much as the individual genius. They rejected in particular what they considered Coutinho's setting of literature above other cultural phenomena. Sodré summarized their attitudes: "O que Afrânio Coutinho considera essencial, consideramos secundário e variável; o que ele considera secundário e abandona, consideramos essencial."¹⁸

In his speech welcoming Coutinho into the Academia, Levi Carneiro took issue with the view of literature as autonomous and with Coutinho's belief that its sole function is to provide esthetic pleasure. Pointing to the Northeastern regionalists, particularly José Lins do Rêgo, Carneiro wondered if *he*, a man of letters, could not enjoy Lins do Rêgo's works solely on esthetic grounds, then what percentage of the Brazilian public could. His point was that Coutinho's narrow concept made literature the province of a small elite.¹⁹

Coutinho denied all such accusations of narrowness by stressing the inclusiveness of the term esthetic, the necessity of an armed critical vision, the compatibility of the nova crítica with history, its antielite nature, and the interrelatedness of society and art. He wrote in 1968: "Conceber a literatura não é fazer crer que o fenômeno literário é como um bôlide no espaço, sem contato com o ambiente social e histórico, retirando-lhe assim qualquer significado humano."²⁰ To the charge that he denied links between art and society he replied: "Nada mais falso. Nunca se negou tais ligações, mas simplesmente o seu predomínio. . . ."²¹ Similarly, Adonias Filho, in an article in the *Jornal de Letras*, defended Coutinho's view of the nova crítica as broad and integrative:

. . . essa crítica de percepção estética, ao invés de encerrar a literatura em uma estreita representação, distende poderosamente as suas margens. A criação literária (poesia, romance, teatro), sempre enquadrada na configuração artística, expande-se para submergir em todos os outros valores, tornando-se o instrumento indispensável de uma experiência, refletindo muitas vezes o conflito das idéias e dos conhecimentos.

Os novos críticos brasileiros repelem, neste particular, a gratuidade que se atribuiu à literatura. Os esforços, anteriormente empreendidos, que concorreram para retirá-la de condição de atividade inútil, completam-se na revelação de uma finalidade profundamente sensível aos problemas humanos.²²

Most of those who rejected Coutinho's theories as too closely circumscribed accepted at least the need for critical theory, as called for in Coutinho's campaign. Fausto Cunha, for example, who disagreed with Coutinho on a number of points, acknowledged in *A Luta Literária* (1964) that Coutinho made people realize "a ausência quase absoluta de teoria em nossos melhores críticos, que levavam para essa atividade antes suas qualidades pessoais de sensibilidade e cultura do que a disciplina de um método de análise."²³ In addition, Cunha, like many others, recognized that he held in common with Coutinho the following belief: "O exame da obra de arte não envolve compromissos pessoais e materiais: são relações exclusivamente estéticas. Em nosso país, no entanto, com as devidas exceções, as críticas eram e continuam sendo feitas de indivíduo para indivíduo, estabelecendo-se um incontrolável tráfico de prestígio."²⁴

A second category in which Coutinho was attacked for narrowness was his fervent espousal of the scientific method. Some critics, like Oliveiros Litrento, saw the scientific method as "dehumanizing" for its "inflexibility" and its minimization of the role of intuition. As he says: "Vale mais a intuição crítica do que todos os métodos de crítica."²⁵ In his unfavorable review of Coutinho's *Da Crítica e da Nova Crítica* (1957), Martins convincingly expressed his disagreement with Coutinho's stress on method: "não são os métodos que fazem a excelência dos críticos, e sim os críticos que fazem a excelência dos métodos."²⁶ Oliveira Bastos strongly criticized Coutinho for advocating the scientific method and then not explaining what it, or any other method, consists of: "Repito: não sei de nenhum método de crítica literária que tenha sido por êle analisado."²⁷ The noted philologist Antônio Houaiss disapproved of the prominence given the scientific method in the debate over the nova crítica because it separated method

from the function of criticism and from the social context, and because in Brazil all methods were needed.²⁸

Perhaps the most damaging of this kind of criticism came from the Portuguese-born Casais Monteiro. He condemned Coutinho's methodology as a priori and dogmatic, and an "abuse of science that would make any scientist laugh."²⁹ It was bad enough that Coutinho and the new critics wanted method to be a "receita infalível que explica tudo," but even worse to Monteiro was their "falta total de espírito científico."³⁰ Like Oliveira Bastos, Monteiro shrewdly centered his attack on Coutinho's and the new critics' inability to define the scientific method. He asked how does the scientific critic know what are the component parts of a work; how does he dismantle it; what are the empirical processes he uses?³¹ Monteiro felt that Coutinho and others, notably the scientific advocate Euryalo Cannabrava, with whom Monteiro disagreed sharply, simply decreed that the scientific method and criticism could be united, without ever working out the particulars. He concluded that scientific criticism was not literary criticism; it was just a theory without practice: "Assim, a crítica científica é uma coisa sobre a qual se escrevem livros, mas com a qual não se faz nenhum; é uma teoria que não pode ter prática."³²

Such observations had merit. Though Coutinho repeatedly insisted that he meant by scientific method an objective and ordered state of mind before the work of art, and though he emphasized the need for an integrated methodology, his passion on the one hand, and his imprecise use of terms on the other, goaded his opponents into a defensive posture. His stress on methodological pluralism was overshadowed by his proselytizing for the scientific method. Coutinho's conviction that it was a corrective for failings in the national character as well as in literary criticism caused him to overstate his case; the ardor for science outstripped his arguments for pluralism. Further, his habit of labelling those who disagreed with him impressionists or mystifiers prevented serious discussion of points of difference, and reinforced his critics' angry reactions. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that even his most devastating opponents, including Monteiro, agreed that literary criticism in Brazil suffered from personalism and improvisation.³³ They agreed with Coutinho in what he denounced, but they did not agree that scientific method was the cure; Monteiro in fact considered the cure worse than the disease.³⁴

In the debate over the scientific criticism that raged during the fifties, Coutinho's most articulate supporter was the analytic philosopher Euryalo Cannabrava. Indeed, Cannabrava put the arguments with greater coherence and incisiveness than Coutinho. He wrote a series of articles in the *Diário de Notícias* in 1956 and 1957 and an article in *Anhembi* in 1957 defending the appropriateness of the scientific method to literary study. Cannabrava laid the refusal of critics to accept the scientific method to their unwillingness to renounce improvisation, "brilho e virtuosismo literário," for "a segurança, a objetividade e a precisão."³⁵ He felt, even more than Coutinho, that the scientific method was inherently compatible with the esthetic nature of literature. He dwelt on its objectivity rather than any scientific rules as valuable to the critic, and he concluded that the scientific method was the *only* valid way to what he regarded as the esthetic end:

. . . o que o julgamento artístico ou literário retira da ciência é mais uma virtude do que regras mecânicas de procedimento. É mais essa disposição permanente de voltar atrás e corrigir o erro inicial do que a técnica quantitativa de mensuração, ou o modelo das operações de cálculo algébrico e geométrico.

Mas a insinuação mais pérfida consiste em propalar que ela jamais reflete as condições peculiares à vida e à experiência direta das coisas e dos fenômenos. Se a tarefa da estética é a de harmonizar a experiência com a teoria, então nada mais evidente que o método científico representa o único instrumento válido para promover essa conciliação.³⁶

Cannabrava, like Coutinho, did not restrict the benefits of the scientific method to criticism but extended them to all areas of the national life. He cited the prominence of the scientific approach as a universal phenomenon of contemporary thought: "Desde Frege até Bertrand Russell e Wittgenstein existe à disposição dos diversos ramos de conhecimento uma técnica de racionalização integral e sistemática."³⁷ Relating criticism and science to modern life, Cannabrava gave the same reasons as Coutinho for a strident insistence on the scientific method. Partly because he was not as involved in the imbroglio as Coutinho, and partly because of his superior assimilation of scientific philosophy, Cannabrava expressed himself with more precision: "O crítico é positivamente dominado pelas questões da nossa época que crescem em número, aumentam de intensidade e complicam, cada vez mais, as diretrizes e os valores da vida. É por isso que a primeira tarefa do crítico será hierarquizar, ordenar e classificar os problemas."³⁸ Because the problems in today's world are multiple and the solutions vague, to Cannabrava as to Coutinho, it was indispensable to "forjar um método."³⁹ As Cannabrava says: "O que se torna necessário acentuar são as relações entre a crítica e a cultura, pois é a própria vida que impõe a elaboração de um método crítico para análise da estrutura atual da filosofia, da ciência, da religião e da arte."⁴⁰

But Coutinho's critics were never convinced of the need for method as a way of ordering modern life in general or literary criticism in particular. Basically, most of Coutinho's opponents rejected the notion that method, especially the scientific, should play such a major role in criticism as Coutinho desired. It seemed unnatural and limiting to them. Some critics, however, denied Coutinho's claims for method because they preferred to stress the personal qualities of the critic and the primacy of intuition. Their disagreement with Coutinho was fundamental—he held literary criticism to be a scientific rational discipline, while they conceived of it as an exercise of the creative imagination. In both cases, scientific method was perceived as restraining the free flight of the critic.

Coutinho's efforts at professionalization through specialization were just as controversial as his efforts on behalf of the scientific method. Those who disagreed with him thought specialization would make for narrow critics and narrow criticism; they especially feared the compartmentalization and isolation it would create. The debate here centered around Coutinho's hostility to *rodapé* reviewing and his consuming desire to see university criticism established, both of which signified isolationism to his opponents. These aspects of the profes-

sionalization process made Coutinho vulnerable to charges of elitism from all quarters.

There were, however, some criticisms of the idea of specialization itself. Among the best reasoned were those of Carneiro and Sodré. They felt that specialization inhibited the critic from drawing relationships necessary to understanding broad issues that spilled over into many disciplines. Further, they thought that by its nature, specialization prohibited any search for causes. Carneiro cited Modernism to illustrate his point, regarding it as an attitude brought about by the revolt of 1922, World War I, the Revolution of 1930, the economic crisis that preceded it, and the worldwide technological revolution. He criticized Coutinho for not seeking origins and for not making connections.⁴¹ Sodré emphasized the distortions rather than the omissions of specialization, using as an example Coutinho's revival of Araripe's theory of *obnubilação*, the notion that the Portuguese began to become Brazilian as soon as they stepped off the boat. To Sodré, this misrepresentation of Brazil's past was caused by Coutinho's incomprehension of "do que seja o nacional em um povo, . . . —e nisso está a deficiência do especialista, que estuda fenômenos que têm um 'universo autossuficiente'."⁴²

Casais Monteiro, like Sodré and Carneiro, felt that specialization led to the critic's not seeing the forest for the trees; he condemned the anxiety for specialization in developing countries, which cannot stand to "ficar atrás dos outros," but whose intellectuals need to remain in close contact with the populace.⁴³ Antônio Houaiss directly linked specialization to the atomization of modern life and urged "uma nova opinião coletiva, capaz de superar as contradições atuais" that artificially fragment the modern consciousness. He believed in the "unidade fundamental do mundo real, objetivo e subjetivo" and saw Coutinho's efforts leading alarmingly to further fractionalization.⁴⁴

It is ironic that Coutinho should be charged with furthering intellectual disintegration, because he viewed all his endeavors as tending toward unity. To him, acceptance of the autonomy of literature and criticism, the scientific method, and professionalization would bring order and coherence to a splintered intellectual life. It is also important to note that Coutinho advocated the professional specialization of criticism as a discipline, but he never advocated narrowness on the part of the critic. On the contrary, he wanted the specialist to have the breadth of knowledge of a Renaissance man. Whether mastery of a number of fields is realistic to expect in today's world is another question, and one that he never came to grips with.

It is interesting that specialization should connote only elitism to Coutinho's critics, for part of his hopes for professionalization involved the democratization as well as the moralization of literary criticism. Transferring it from the personal domination of the "in" groups of journalism would, to him, accomplish this goal. Even Casais Monteiro agreed that journalism was the biggest drag on authentic literary criticism in Brazil, because personal friendship with the editors was the criterion for entry to the magic circle.⁴⁵

Coutinho's idea of the university as the home for criticism, like his attack on journalistic criticism, did not go down easily. Ivo, for example, declared that

criticism "se encontra nos críticos, estejam estes sentados numa cátedra universitária ou num banco de jardim."⁴⁶ Martins objected to the elitism of university criticism which not only ignored but "deprecated" the public "para se transformar em diálogo ou em discussões de 'entendidos', de 'especialistas', de iniciados de 'parvenus'."⁴⁷ Remaining always above the personal antipathies that colored Martins' and Ivo's views, Adonias Filho saw clearly the relationship between professionalization via the university and the nonelitist "aplicação dos resultados pedagógicos na vida social brasileira." Writing in 1954, he saw Coutinho's work as a necessary guide for those "muddled" educators who, "legislando em uma ditadura, não se fartaram de citar o Dewey, que recomendava a 'educação para a democracia'."⁴⁸

Many critics accepted with Coutinho the need for literary criticism to become professional, full-time, and independent of journalism. They also recognized the value of university education for critics and the need for educational reform. But what they meant by professionalization was, above all, economic self-sufficiency for the critic. They did not see Coutinho's route as leading them there, but to a counterproductive narrowness. According to Carlos David, Coutinho wanted "estoicismo e aceitação pacífica da pobreza" on the part of the critics.⁴⁹ They, on the other hand, wanted economic independence and they wanted it right away. This urgency they held in common with artists in general. Both the highly "respectable" *Jornal de Letras* and the liberal *Anhembi* consistently supported in the 1950s the campaign for professionalization of the arts in general, especially literature, but their main objective was different from Coutinho's. What they wanted was concrete legal protection of author's rights, not some intangible status as professionals.

Coutinho's vociferous advocacy of professionalization helped many varying motivations to coalesce. His allies were often accidental, their priorities different, and their concept of professionalization more limited, but their campaign was ultimately successful for literary criticism. Through good luck, the concomitant spread of universities and curricular reform, and through Coutinho's own efforts, his concept emerged as the dominant one. By 1968, Mário Chámie observed correctly: "A tendência à especialização da crítica literária já é, nesta segunda metade do século vinte, um fato pacífico."⁵⁰ This is not to say that by that time critics enjoyed economic self-sufficiency, or that they do even now. Rather, it means that however widely they may differ as practicing critics, they possess a common notion about the office of the critic and a sense of the separateness of criticism from other intellectual endeavors—that is, a professional identity. It is also worth noting that, despite predictions by the essayist Sérgio Milliet and others, who said that professionalization could occur only as a consequence of economic independence, the success of Coutinho's campaign to have critics think of themselves as professionals proved that the reverse could also be true.⁵¹

It is interesting to observe that professionalization and specialization were firmly linked to elitism and isolationism by Coutinho's opponents. They might have accepted the idea of professionalization had they not felt its consequences would be disastrous to Brazilian culture. The task of nation-building required all

intellectuals to put their shoulders to the wheel for the common good. In their view, nationhood could only be set back dangerously by Coutinho's brand of professionalization. His critics had seen it lead to atomization in Europe and the United States, and they were determined to prevent it from occurring in Brazil. It is also important to point out that Coutinho made people associate the *nova crítica* and professionalization, with the *nova crítica* as *the* road to it. It need not have been a consequence of the *nova crítica*, for professionalization did not inevitably follow from new critical doctrines elsewhere.⁵² In fact, professionalization was not a major objective of the New Criticism *anywhere* but in Brazil. It was Coutinho's continuous repetition that locked the two together in the Brazilian mind, a testimony to his stamina and to the force of his will.

The social and nationalist implications of Coutinho's ideas caused no less consternation than his views on literature, criticism, and professionalization themselves. Though *he* saw his program as democratic, nationalistic, leading ultimately to extensive educational reform and to a new literary consciousness, others saw it as elitist and colonialist. Temístocles Linhares, for example, labelled Coutinho's *nova crítica* a reactionary, imperialistic attempt to impose classical hegemony on Brazilian thought:

Nessas condições, tendendo para a destruição de nossa personalidade, a crítica estética não abriga entre nós nenhuma intenção construtiva, . . . O esteticismo é, afinal, uma limitação, e o que temos feito é recusar tudo quanto cheira a imperialismo, inclusive esse imperialismo da literatura de tradição greco-latina, a cujo carro ancestral parece desejar o sr. Afrânio Coutinho ver atrelada a nossa, como para se opôr a tôda literatura moderna, que significa transformação, evolução contínua.⁵³

Antônio Houaiss, calmer than Linhares but still very concerned, believed that Coutinho's views served the status quo, fortifying the whole reactionary political and literary structure, and making impossible the "libertação do homem do Brasil." Coutinho's socially destructive ideas, he predicted, would lead to "a castração da literatura e do . . . Brasil."⁵⁴ To Osmar Pimentel, the *nova crítica* was a European or "occidental" product totally inappropriate to Brazilian literature and, worse still, hostile to the "'impressionismo' dialético de um Lukacs, de um Caudwell, mestres da crítica literária marxista."⁵⁵ In an article in 1961, Oliveira Bastos drew an analogy between the economic laws that govern the international market and the cultural laws that govern the market of ideas. He accused Coutinho of creating an artificial need for the *nova crítica* to fulfill; and he believed, like Pimentel, that it was therefore inauthentic to Brazilian culture. Moreover, it was harmful because it exacerbated "uma tendência para a descon-tinuidade, que é, por exemplo, um dos traços mais característicos de nossa produção literária."⁵⁶

Curiously enough, Coutinho was attacked for being excessively nationalistic as well as for being a reactionary imperialist.⁵⁷ Most of his critics, like Casais Monteiro for example, faulted Coutinho for his anti-Portuguese sentiment. Monteiro reminded him that today "NINGUÉM" considers Brazilian literature in any way dependent on the Portuguese, and that if anything, the opposite is

more nearly true. He went on to relate Coutinho's nationalistic excesses to flaws in his scholarship, as in his exclusion from *A Literatura no Brasil* of the Portuguese Eça de Queirós as one of the principal "figuras influentes" of Realism and Naturalism in Brazil.⁵⁸ Sodré objected to Coutinho's nationalism in his early dating of Brazilian literary autonomy (1870), calling his position "singularmente simpática" but "falsa."⁵⁹ On Coutinho's view of the autonomous evolution of the Brazilian language, Levi Carneiro coolly advised Coutinho of his need for "contato com a realidade." He charitably attributed Coutinho's exaggerated literary nationalism to the "inevitável reação do homem de bem ante o descalabro da pátria comum."⁶⁰

For one reason or another, Coutinho's opponents believed that his views were inauthentic to Brazil. Criticized as both a colonialist and a nationalist, anyone other than Coutinho might have given up the struggle to "improve" literature and rehabilitate the national character.⁶¹ Though some rejected him on nationalistic grounds of their own as detrimental to Brazilian culture and society, and some would have fought him no matter what his views, most criticisms were directed at Coutinho's narrowness and extremism, and at the contradictions they forced him to commit. These contradictions grew as he tried to absorb charges of narrowness by expanding his concept of the esthetic to include "o social, o geográfico, o histórico, o psicológico, o político."⁶² But he also continued repeating his original doctrine with all the fiery dogmatism of 1948. Coutinho's efforts to overcome criticisms both through flexible absorption of them and through repetition of rigid ideas inevitably resulted in more contradictions.

This inconsistency was most apparent in the gap between his theory and practice. The objections of many critics to this disparity were given a point by point exposition in Massaud Moisés' detailed refutation of *A Literatura*. Moisés pointed out volume by volume, chapter by chapter, the times that Coutinho based his ideas on extraliterary factors. The purpose of Moisés' exercise was to show that Coutinho's inconsistencies were the inevitable result of "uma rígida orientação crítica, com seu tudo-nada apriorístico," and to make the point that "a noção de estilo ligado ao gozo estético não é suficiente para explicar certos fenômenos." To Moisés, the defects of *A Literatura* stem from its sole virtue as "uma tentativa pioneira de renovação dos estudos literários entre nós."⁶³

Mário Chámie referred to Coutinho's inconsistencies as "nominalist" criticism. He contrasted, for example, Coutinho's extreme disapproval of the sociological orientation of Antônio Cândido's *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1959) with Coutinho's own use of sociological criteria in his *Conceito da Literatura Brasileira* (1960), made up of his introductions to *A Literatura*. Though Chámie did not defend Cândido's work by any means, he charged Coutinho with combatting "a divisão . . . colonial-nacional através de idênticos meios sociológicos" in the same way as critics from Sílvio Romero to Antônio Cândido himself had done. This fact made Coutinho, "contraditòriamente, se louvar no processo que repudia."⁶⁴ Some critics, such as Wilson Martins, regarded Cândido's work highly. In an entry he wrote for Moisés' *Pequeno Dicionário da Literatura Brasileira* (1968), he implied that the best thing about *A Literatura* was that it "produced"

Cândido's *Formação*.⁶⁵ Châmie summed up the objections of many, including Martins and Moisés, to *A Literatura*: "Entre o conteúdo material de uma ciência e o seu esquema teórico há de haver sempre uma correspondência inequívoca de co-realidade, sob pena de o esteta, crítico ou estudioso incorrer numa terminologia precária, num nominalismo arbitrário, em cujo louvar pensa-se o que não se faz e faz-se o que não se pensa."⁶⁶

Nevertheless, criticisms of *A Literatura* were generally milder than those of Coutinho's earlier works. This fact is due to the near absence of polemics from *A Literatura* and to its original conception of Brazilian literary history. Indeed, fulsome praise showered *A Literatura* and Coutinho from such disparate individuals as José Lins do Rêgo, Cassiano Ricardo, the esteemed poet and critic Péricles Eugênio da Silva Ramos, and Levi Carneiro. Cassiano Ricardo, for instance, commented on the implication of Coutinho's work, which by placing "a nossa histórica literária em seu verdadeiro papel," broke with the errors of the past to proclaim "o grau de maturidade cultural a que atingimos, só cabível em países de grande consciência literária."⁶⁷

Coutinho's intellectual insubordination, his colossal ego and "battle mentality" asserted themselves at every stage in his sweeping crusade, attracting enemies like flypaper, and making any assessment of his achievements a hazardous venture. But now that the smoke has lifted from the battlefield, it is clear that Coutinho emerged scarred but victorious from the protracted encounter.⁶⁸ To say that Coutinho was victorious does not mean that everyone came around to his views. Rather, it means that there came to be more attention given to the esthetic concept of literature; more concern with objectivity, without making an exact analogy with science; and more professionalism in criticism, in the sense of a recognition of its dignity as a trade. The success of Coutinho's destructive work is obvious. He thoroughly discredited personalism, improvisation, and dilettantism to clear the way for a positive, new direction. And though people like Nelly Novaes Coelho of the *Jornal de Letras* expressed alarm at its passing, the road continued to exist, but reduced in quantity and taken out of competition with literary criticism, now that the differences in their nature and function have become established and accepted.⁶⁹

Dating his victory, in this qualified sense, is more precarious than recognizing that it happened. Enthusiasts, like Cassiano Ricardo, date it as early as 1956, while diehards like Fausto Cunha, hold out until 1964. In between, there are those who, like Adonias Filho, chose Coutinho's fiftieth birthday in 1961 as the most appropriate occasion to honor him for bringing modern criticism and a new state of mind to Brazil.⁷⁰ The year 1962 provides a convenient and conservative date to mark Coutinho's success. His election to the august Academia Brasileira in that year—after two previous rejections—can only be interpreted to mean that his star and that of the nova crítica had finally risen. In a lead article in May 1962, the respected *Jornal de Letras* paid tribute to Coutinho on his election: "A eleição de Afrânio Coutinho para a Academia Brasileira foi acolhida com a maior satisfação nos meios literários. Trata-se de um legítimo trabalhador das letras, que tem labutado a vida inteira na esfera intelectual, tomando parte ativa em tôdas as manifestações da vida cultural brasileira, atento à formulação dos

problemas suscitados nesse campo."⁷¹ The following year, Luiz Fernando Nazareth, also in the *Jornal de Letras*, referred to the "common consciousness" created by the nova crítica and to the general acceptance of its basic tenets: "Já não se trata, é certo, de definir-se entre crítica impressionista e crítica formalista, uma vez que a questão se acha superada. . . ." ⁷²

Coutinho also must have been gratified to witness the growing trends toward professionalization and university reform that appeared during the fifties and gained momentum during the sixties. Though the measure of his responsibility for these emerging patterns is impossible to ascertain, he undeniably played *the* major role in the modernization and professionalization of criticism in Brazil. Nonetheless, it is doubtful that, as Franklin de Oliveira claimed, Brazil would still be ignorant of the worldwide creative revision had it not been for Coutinho's "insubmissão mental" to the "atitude anti-cultural da crítica."⁷³ Coutinho could not have accomplished anything had the climate from 1948 onward not been increasingly favorable to his crusade. His timing was propitious because Brazilian criticism, and intellectual life as a whole, had drifted leaderless into a sterile and listless slump by the late 1940s. This widely perceived intellectual depression required a dynamic figure to dispel the gloom. Coutinho's package of fresh new ideas was important, but his passion and vibrance were even more so in helping to stir up the Brazilian intelligentsia and to prove that the Brazilian is, after all, capable of disciplined thought.

Fábio Lucas and Oswaldino Marques—neither of whom could be considered in any sense disciples of Coutinho—tried to pinpoint his influence in the whole process of intellectual change that occurred during the fifties. Lucas asked if the change was due to the "infatigável esforço do escritor baiano ou a causas diversas, que hoje tendem a generalizar-se." His answer was ambiguous; he said that Coutinho, "se não foi o prógono, teve o cuidado de alistar-se na corrente mais nova, combatida ferozmente no início, mas vitoriosa em muitos campos, nos dias que correm." And he admitted that he himself had been won over, in that his objections to Coutinho's "método restritivo" were "agora dissipadas" by Coutinho's statements from *Da Crítica e da Nova Crítica* condemning "o extremismo metodológico."⁷⁴ Oswaldino Marques, who disagreed deeply with Coutinho and disapproved of his personality, nevertheless gave much credit to Coutinho for the changed mentality. He rightly pointed out the significance of the simultaneous efforts of many others and the influence of events beyond the control of any individual, even Coutinho, such as the founding of the Faculdades de Filosofia, that aimed in the direction that Coutinho was heading; these either facilitated his work or became allied with it:

Por mais que se discorde de suas posições ideológicas, impossível é, contudo, negar que, depois de sua candente pregação—em livros atualizadíssimos, na cátedra, na imprensa—se alterou a fisionomia da crítica nacional na esfera das belas letras. Muita gente ainda se agarra desesperadamente a posições ultrapassadas, mas quem quer que tenha uma réstia de discernimento sabe que o palpitação, o impressionismo humoral, o intuitismo olfativo estão em agonia. As sementes lançadas pelo prof. Afrânio Coutinho não

teriam vingado se a multiplicação das Faculdades de Filosofia não favorecesse a fertilização de extensas áreas da inteligência brasileira, como de fato ocorre, com o constante aumento do contingente dos que se iniciam no trato de literatura, munidos agora de uma aparelhagem mínima para não se deixarem trapacear.⁷⁵

Though Marques and others disliked Coutinho, it is worth questioning whether the new consciousness they observed would have prevailed when it did had Coutinho's temperament not been so extreme and bellicose. A less extraordinary individual would not have had the bottomless reservoir of tenacity and perseverance that sustained Coutinho for over twenty years, until he finally wore down his opposition. The sheer force of his personality, more than the cogency of his ideas, accounts for the eventual acceptance of his basic goals by a milieu that was ripe for change.

Coutinho once referred to himself as an "agente catalisador"; this is certainly an apt characterization.⁷⁶ All the intellectual ingredients for a cultural chain reaction were present waiting to be activated when he came on the scene. The reaction might have occurred without Coutinho; no one knows. But one thing is certain; it would not have happened so fast without his catalytic presence, and it surely would not have happened with the explosive fireworks his highly combustible personality set off.

Throughout the debate, one sees clearly several fundamental concerns that, to a modern European or North American critic, are not the business of literary criticism properly speaking, but which had to be incorporated into any Brazilian model: cultural nationalism as an esthetic norm; the rejection of a myth of national inferiority; and the role of the intellectual-critic as defender and architect of the national culture. Thus is explained the otherwise contradictory usage of an objective, "value-free," autonomous discipline as an instrument to serve the national cause.

NOTES

1. For the sake of convenience in usage, certain Brazilian critics are referred to as "new critics," but this is not meant to imply that any of them was a new critic in the English or North American style.
2. Coutinho's bibliography is extensive, but among his works the following are central to the nova crítica in both its polemical and mature stages: *Correntes Cruzadas* (Rio, 1953), a collection of articles, mostly polemical, from his column "Correntes Cruzadas," in the *Diário de Notícias* from 1948 to 1953. Here he outlines passionately what is wrong with Brazilian intellectual life and what needs to be done; *Da Crítica e da Nova Crítica* (Rio, 1957), more articles from "Correntes Cruzadas" column, contains a blistering attack on the rodapé, as well as essays on what Coutinho sees as encouraging signs of change; *A Literatura no Brasil* (Rio, 1955–59), 5 vols., the capstone of Coutinho's efforts at professionalization. It is a literary history based on esthetic periodization; *A Tradição Afortunada* (Rio, 1968), describes and traces the development of a nationalist spirit in literary criticism from the earliest times, but especially during the nineteenth century. Coutinho considers this trait the one constant in Brazilian literary history; *Crítica e Críticos* (Rio, 1969), still more from "Correntes Cruzadas" column. Contains an interesting assessment of the significance of the Congresses of Criticism and Literary History to the process of professionalization.

3. The contributions of the earliest systematic literary historians—Sílvio Romero, Araripe Júnior, and José Veríssimo—were recognized by most new critics. But as their works were influenced by the determinist theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these figures were respected above all for their intellectual rigor and fidelity to literature. Coutinho admired what he saw as Romero's and Araripe's attention to method and their nationalist concern. As for Veríssimo, though to many he marks the beginning of an esthetic criticism, to Coutinho he was a mere impressionist.
4. The nova crítica was fed by a number of sources besides the anglo-American New Criticism. These included, among others, Russian Formalism, the Spanish Stylistics school, the works of Benedetto Croce, Coleridge, and Aristotle. But it was the New Criticism and its leading practitioners that had by far the greatest influence on Coutinho personally. The basic principles of the New Criticism were: the primacy of the text in literary analysis, the unity of the text, and the belief that literature is an autonomous discipline. One of Coutinho's conscious objectives was to dispel the myth that the Brazilian is, by nature, incapable of rigorous, sustained, analytical thought. Such a view was widely held before the advent of the nova crítica and had even been expressed by such prominent critics as Osório Borba and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda.
5. Coutinho, *Correntes*, p. 148.
6. Coutinho, *No Hospital das Letras* (Rio, 1963), pp. 5–10.
7. Coutinho, *Recepção de Afrânio Coutinho na Academia Brasileira de Letras* (Rio, 1962), p. 28.
8. Coutinho, *Correntes*, p. 366.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Quoted in *Crítica e Críticos*, pp. 121–22.
11. Fausto Cunha, *A Luta Literária* (Rio, 1964), p. 53.
12. Álvaro Lins, *Literatura e Vida Literária* (Rio, 1963), p. 149. The rodapé is a type of journalistic book reviewing intended to inform the public of new works. To Coutinho, it was unscholarly. He wanted "serious" criticism to be housed in professional journals, not in the newspaper.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Coutinho, *Correntes*, pp. 284–87.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 308–10.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 362.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Nelson Werneck Sodré, "Conceito de Literatura Brasileira," *Semanário*, 7–13 May 1960, p. 8.
19. Coutinho, *Recepção*, pp. 49–50.
20. Coutinho, *A Literatura* 1:28.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
22. Adonias Filho, "Dois Críticos," *Jornal de Letras*, out. 1954, n. 64, p. 6.
23. Cunha, *A Luta*, p. 51.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
25. Oliveiros Litrento, "Vida dos Livros," *Jornal de Letras*, junho 1960, n. 130, p. 7.
26. Wilson Martins, "A Nova Crítica," *Boletim Bibliográfico* 23 (1958):58.
27. Oliveira Bastos, "Importação e Consumo de Teorias," *Diário de Notícias*, 12 Nov. 1961, p. 1, Sup.
28. Antônio Houaiss, *Crítica Avulsa* (Salvador, 1960), p. 283.
29. Adolfo Casais Monteiro, *Clareza e Mistério da Crítica* (Rio, 1961), p. 174.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 174, 193.
31. *Ibid.*, pp. 194–95.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 204.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 176–77.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
35. Euryalo Cannabrava, "Enciclopédia e Método Científico," *Anhembi* (julho 1957), n. 80, p. 285.

36. Euryalo Cannabrava, "Definição de Experiência Estética," *Diário de Notícias*, 21 Apr. 1957, p. 4, Sup.
37. Euryalo Cannabrava, *A Cultura Brasileira e Seus Equívocos* (Rio, 1955), p. 6.
38. Euryalo Cannabrava, *Seis Temas do Espírito Moderno* (São Paulo, 1941), p. 211.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 216.
41. Coutinho, *Recepção*, p. 55.
42. Sodré, "Conceito," p. 8.
43. Monteiro, *Clareza*, p. 200.
44. Houaiss, *Crítica Avulsa*, p. 183.
45. Monteiro, *Clareza*, p. 176. It would seem that Coutinho's hopes for freeing criticism of cliques had, to some extent at least, been realized by 1965, when Otto Maria Carpeaux attributed the dramatic change in criticism from newspapers to books and journals in part to the fact that "acabaram-se os cliques, as panelas" (*Jornal de Letras*, no. 184 [julho 1965], p. 5). However, this important shift was made possible in large measure because criticism had by then staked out its own territory; it was firmly wedded to the university and the university-related journals, so that the newspaper no longer provided the sole avenue of publication. In other words, critics were no longer dependent on the newspaper cliques; they had achieved the status of professionals.
46. Lêdo Ivo, "De Flor em Flor," *O Estado de São Paulo*, 15 Feb. 1958, p. 4, Sup.
47. Wilson Martins, "Dimensões de um Crítico," *O Estado de São Paulo*, 6 Sept. 1958, p. 2, Sup.
48. Adonias Filho, "A Crítica," *Correio da Manhã*, 13 Mar. 1954, p. 6.
49. Carlos David, "Crítica da Crítica," *Diário Carioca*, 25 Apr. 1954, p. 2, Sup.
50. Mário Châmie, *Alguns Problemas e Argumentos* (São Paulo, 1968), p. 11. For more on the new mentality see: Alceu Amoroso Lima, "A Crítica Recente," *Diário de Notícias*, 30 Apr. 1961, Sup., p. 2, and "O Neo-Modernismo," *Diário de Notícias*, 29 Apr. 1956, Sup., p. 1; Fábio Lucas, *O Compromisso Literário* (Rio, 1964), p. 113; César Leal, *Os Cavaleiros de Júpiter* (Recife, 1969), pp. 190, 214; and José Guilherme Merquior, *A Razão do Poema* (Rio, 1965), pp. 170–71. For a grudging acknowledgement of the triumph of esthetic criticism, see Assis Brasil, "Por um Crítica Reflexiva (1)," *Jornal de Letras*, no. 258 (fev.–março 1972), p. 3. For more on university-related criticism and on curricular reform, see Afrânio Coutinho's interview in the *Jornal de Letras*, no. 247 (fev.–março 1971), p. 7. See also the proceedings of the Congresses of Criticism and Literary History. For additional information on Coutinho's role, see any number of sympathetic accounts by Eduardo Portella, including his tribute in *A Literatura no Brasil* 5:239; see also Rui Mourão's tribute on p. 540 of the same volume. For a general and a favorable account of both Coutinho and the nova crítica, see Leodegário A. de Azevedo Filho, *Introdução ao Estudo da Nova Crítica no Brasil* (Rio, 1965).
51. Sérgio Milliet, *Diário Crítico* (São Paulo, 1959), 10, p. 126.
52. John L. Stewart, in *The Burden of Time* (Princeton, 1965), on p. 50 makes the point that the Nashville Agrarians in the United States were, for the most part, aggressively nonprofessional.
53. Temístocles Linhares, "Os 'Impasses' da Crítica Estética," *Diário de Notícias* 13 Jan. 1957, pp. 1, 4, Sup.
54. Houaiss, *Crítica Avulsa*, pp. 183–84, 182.
55. Osmar Pimentel, *A Lâmpada e o Passado* (São Paulo, 1968), pp. 101–2.
56. Oliveira Bastos, "Importação," *Diário de Notícias*, p. 1, Sup.
57. It is also true that Coutinho himself attacked those he felt were not nationalistic enough. His entire polemic against the distinguished academic critic Antônio Cândido is a case in point. He attacked Cândido's *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1959, vol. 1) in his essay *Conceito da Literatura Brasileira* (1960) as unpatriotic and mistaken for using the term "colonial" literature to describe pre-Independence literature in Brazil. To Coutinho, such terminology not only represented the detested historical

- periodization, but it also ignored what he saw as the incipient Brazilianness of the literature of the pre-Independence period.
58. Monteiro, *Clareza*, pp. 145–46, 150.
 59. Sodré, "Conceito," p. 8.
 60. Coutinho, *Recepção*, pp. 61, 64.
 61. Coutinho, *Correntes*, p. 366.
 62. Coutinho, *A Literatura* 1 (1968):54.
 63. Massaud Moisés, "Introdução à Literatura no Brasil," *Anhembi* (set. 1960), pp. 50–51, 63.
 64. Mário Châmie, *Alguns Problemas*, pp. 47–48.
 65. Massaud Moisés, *Pequeno Dicionário da Literatura Brasileira* (São Paulo, 1968), p. 118.
 66. Châmie, *Alguns Problemas*, p. 48.
 67. Cassiano Ricardo, "A Literatura no Brasil," *Jornal do Comércio*, 1 July 1956, p. 3.
 68. The many practitioners of the nova crítica during the period include Eduardo Portella, Euryalo Cannabrava, José Guilherme Merquior, Franklin de Oliveira, Leodegário A. de Azevedo Filho, Luiz Costa Lima, and Othon Moacir Garcia, to mention a few of the best known. Coutinho himself lists some sixty other new critics in volume 5 of *A Literatura*, but this is no doubt an inflated estimate. For various reasons—dislike of Coutinho, extreme individualism, the disinclination to be associated with the excesses of the campaign—few people called themselves new critics, even when they practiced the nova crítica. It is also true that a number of critics, such as Oswaldino Marques, may have come to esthetic criticism independently, through their own readings. Coutinho felt that there was no need for either disciples or labels because, by the mid-1960s, the basic principles of the nova crítica had become widely accepted.
 69. Nelly Novaes Coelho, "Teoria e Crítica," *Jornal de Letras*, no. 171 (nov. 1963), p. 7.
 70. Cassiano Ricardo, "A Literatura," *Jornal do Comércio*, p. 3.
 71. "Afrânio Coutinho na Academia de Letras," *Jornal de Letras*, no. 153 (maio 1962), p. 1.
 72. Luiz Fernando Nazareth, "Tempo Presente!," *Jornal de Letras*, no. 164 (abril 1963), p. 4.
 73. Franklin de Oliveira, *A Fantasia Exata* (Rio, 1959), pp. 120, 125.
 74. Fábio Lucas, *Compromisso Literário* (Rio, 1964), pp. 112–13, 116.
 75. Oswaldino Marques, "Tarefas da Pesquisa Literária," *Diário de Notícias*, 26 July 1964, p. 1, Sup.
 76. Coutinho, *Correntes*, p. 344.