

A dandy in the tropics: sport and body education in the chronicles of Paulo Barreto (João do Rio)¹

Um dândi nos trópicos: esporte e educação do corpo nas crônicas de Paulo Barreto (João do Rio)

André Mendes Capraro*
Marcelo Moraes e Silva*

ABSTRACT

This article aimed to analyze how the chronicles of Paulo Barreto, better known as João do Rio, manifested sport and processes related to body education. The sources selected were the writer's chronicles published until 1921, the year of his death, and the primary or secondary subject of which was sport. The word sport was broadly present in the author's work, sometimes reflecting positive points and sometimes emphasizing negative aspects, but always as a conventional feature of different ways of educating the body. In conclusion, the writer used sport to represent the facets that existed within Rio de Janeiro society, and these representations evidence ways of life that had educational elements related to the body.

Keywords: Sport. Body Education. Rio de Janeiro. João do Rio.

RESUMO

O presente artigo teve como objetivo analisar como o esporte e os processos de educação do corpo se manifestaram nas crônicas de Paulo Barreto, mais conhecido como João do Rio. As fontes selecionadas foram as crônicas publicadas pelo literato até 1921, ano de sua morte, cujo assunto primário

¹ Translated by David Harrad. E-mail: davidharrad@hotmail.com

* Universidade Federal do Paraná. Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação Física. Curitiba, Paraná, Brazil. E-mail: andrecapraro@gmail.com - <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3496-3131> E-mail: marcelomoraes@ufpr.br - <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6640-7952>

ou secundário tenha sido o esporte. A palavra se mostrou presente na obra do escritor, porém se manifestou de uma forma ampla, ora repercutindo pontos positivos ora enfatizando aspectos negativos, mas como característica comum as diversas maneiras de educação do corpo. A título de conclusão, aponta-se que o esporte foi acionado pelo autor para representar as facetas existentes no seio da sociedade carioca e que nessas representações estavam evidentes modos de vida que possuíam alguns elementos educacionais relativos ao corpo.

Palavras-chave: Esporte. Educação do Corpo. Rio de Janeiro. João do Rio.

Introduction

It is not surprising that in the middle of the Brazilian *belle époque* – a sudden and bungled attempt to get close to the so-called civilized European customs (SEVCENKO, 1998; MORENO, 1999; LUCENA, 2001) – a literary man tried to put himself over as the paladin of dandyism in Brazil¹ (LEVIN, 1996; CAPUANO, 1999). That writer was Paulo Barreto, known as João do Rio, an individual connected to the daily life of his native city, Rio de Janeiro. It was an effervescent ambience, at least for the wealthier members of the population: electric lighting and electric streetcars, French-style gardens and parks, 5 o'clock tea in confectioneries (such as the renowned Colombo confectionery), soirées and balls, the rush to watch turf, rowing and football events, among other sports, cars, beautiful young bodies... Nothing went unnoticed by João do Rio's eye. Sevcenko (1998, p. 568-569) presents this scenario with surgical precision:

This expression “sporting civilization” [a term coined in a chronicle by Machado de Assis, criticizing the youth of his time], should therefore not be understood as referring exclusively to the widespread practice of different sports, but rather to the generalization of an ethic of activism, the idea that it is in action and therefore in corporal engagement that the greatest fulfillment of human destiny is concentrated. Philosophies

1 Doctrine, movement, culture or lifestyle, originating in Europe, which consisted of overvaluing esthetics, especially in the artistic field. In the literature, introspection gives way to superficiality, that is, appearance only. The beautiful then serves as a moral, ideological, and ethical value. Esthetics is the reference for life. Appearance is transformed into essence. Thus, one can conclude that a dandy was perfectly in tune with the frivolity typical of the *belle époque*.

of action, men of action, militant doctrines, acts of rapture and bravery become the indices by which people begin to be inspired and by which they begin to be guided. It is the moral degradation that João do Rio talked about.

This ethics of activism raised by Sevcenko (1998) attributed an important role to sport in the processes of body education among the inhabitants of the then federal capital. The novelty coming from the European continent was a symbol of habits and customs considered civilized and, for this reason, it should be disseminated in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Thus, as Lucena (2001) suggests, it is not surprising that several chroniclers used the pages of Rio de Janeiro newspapers to value sport and all the body education embedded in it.

Chronicles, when dealing with mundane themes, such as sports practices, ended up becoming an important educational tool, since, as pointed out by Sevcenko (1983), there was a feeling of a “civilizational mission” on the part of Brazilian literati of the period. The press legitimized itself as a space of idealization of images, contributing to the formation of an imagined community, as Anderson suggests (2008). Consequently, this movement triggered several educational mechanisms that affected people’s bodies, prescribing, prohibiting and dictating ways of life. In this sense, it can be said that the chronicles written by literati, such as João do Rio, also became diffusers of a form of body education at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th century.

It should be noted that body education is understood to be what Soares (2014) indicates as a progressive repression of bodily manifestations that seemed to be uncontrollable. For her, educating the body is to make it suitable for social coexistence, as well as to include it in learning processes that seek to erase a rebellious nature, bringing to light a pacified nature. This notion allows us to write a history of education, or perhaps, in the words of Soares (2003), a history of multiple constraints, because it is in the body that a slow, intense, extensive, meticulous, and obstinate effort to constrain is inscribed. She highlights that in order for it to be displayed, the body needs to be educated and the respective teaching actions follow multiple paths, elaborating ambiguous and tense practices. In this context, the sports practices that appear in the chronicles of several writers, such as Coelho Neto, Gilberto Amado, Lima Barreto, Machado de Assis, Olavo Bilac and Paulo Barreto, were also marked, each in its own way, by this body education, because between the lines there were elements of a “civilizational mission”.

In this sense, the objective of this article is to analyze the textual production of João do Rio about sport and the perspective of body education, with emphasis on the chronicle genre. To do so, we used the basic precepts of literary analysis (MICELI, 1977; CANDIDO, 2000; ECO, 2003), with emphasis on the specific treatment of the chronicle genre, as recommended by Candido (1992). Candido's theory, therefore, serves as a counterpoint to the academic dualism between artistic autonomy and social reflection. Taking an approach close to the sociology of literature, Candido (2000, p. 4) proposes the use of literature as an instrument of critical knowledge:

Today we know that the integrity of a literary work does not allow us to adopt either of these dissociated views; we can only understand it by fusing text and context in a dialectically integral interpretation, in which both the old viewpoint that explained based on external factors, and the other point of view guided by the conviction that structure is virtually independent, combined with each other as necessary moments of the interpretative process. We also know that the external (in this case, the social) matters, not as a cause, nor as meaning, but as an element that plays a certain role in the constitution of structure, therefore becoming internal.

Diagnosis of this internal factor takes place through the understanding of what a writer produces in its entirety: the most addressed themes, the way of understanding the theme, the ease – or not – with which opinions are changed, in short, the literary personality of a writer. Thus, according to Candido's postulates, it is a profound interpretation of esthetics that ended up incorporating the 'social dimension' as content of a literary work. When one reaches this level of understanding "[...] the external becomes internal and criticism ceases to be sociological and becomes nothing more than criticism" (CANDIDO, 2000, p. 7).

When selecting João do Rio's literary production, with emphasis on the chronicle genre, we took into account the broad social reach of his texts. Undoubtedly, in the first decades of the 20th century he became one of the most renowned Brazilian chroniclers (LEVIN, 1996; O'DONNELL, 2008). Thus, we believe in the relevance of his contributions to the production of ideas about the relation between body/sport/education. Consequently, we started from the premise that if João do Rio was indeed a reference in Brazilian literature, a recognized opinion leader, the repercussion of his writings in society would also be significant. As a national classic, João do Rio's texts were published by several publishers, in successive editions. His chronicles,

originally published in periodicals, were collected together and edited in book format. Some of them have even entered the public domain, being published in several collections. The writings analyzed here were retrieved from this type of work, i.e. from collections.

Paulo Barreto, or João do Rio: a short biography

João Paulo Emílio Cristóvão dos Santos Coelho Barreto was better known simply as Paulo Barreto and had become famous under several literary pseudonyms, such as Caran d’Ache, Joe, José Antônio, José or even João do Rio – the epithet by which he would become renowned even more than by his true name (CAMILOTTI, 2004). Born in 1881 and son of a teacher, as a boy he was educated according to positivist ideals, since his father was a convinced follower of Auguste Comte’s work. Despite his father’s encouragement, Paulo Barreto did not manifest interest in that doctrine. Precociously, even for the standards of that time, he became a journalist (at the age of sixteen), working in several Rio de Janeiro newspapers. Later on, he was considered to be the precursor of modern journalism in Brazil (LEVIN, 1996; GOMES, 1996; RODRIGUES, 1996; O’DONNELL, 2008).

Paulo Barreto was one of the first to highlight the importance of urgency in reporting, that is, responsible for the creation of the technical term “scoop”. He also looked to other areas, such as Sociology, Anthropology and History (mainly Hellenic), for inputs to his journalistic production (RAMOS, 1990). When writing in newspapers he made strong use of interviews as an information resource. Ultimately, he was an innovator in the journalistic environment (LEVIN, 1996; GOMES, 1996; O’DONNELL, 2008).

Concerned with the city’s daily life, he used his strong perception of social phenomena to address issues that caught the readers’ attention, thus captivating them and creating a relationship of loyalty. He was considered by many to be the first modern chronicler, because he abandoned the novel style to launch the daily chronicle, the style of which was nonchalant with a reasonable dose of humor and mockery, besides including characters from everyday life in Rio (VENEU, 1990; LEVAN, 1996; GOMES, 1996).

It was notorious that Paulo Barreto strongly identified with his hometown (VENEU, 1990; O’DONNELL, 2008). Due to this link with the city, he was one of the first writers to strengthen the social aspect of the chronicle (LEVIN, 1996). In this context, it was inevitable that sports – especially football – which

was still gaining space in Brazilian society, soon caught his attention. At this moment, in 1916, his opinion would come before that of Gilberto Amado: sport (represented by football) was a noteworthy subject: “No! There is in fact one thing that *Cariocas*² take seriously: football! I have attended colossal meetings in several countries, [...] at those great festivals of health, strength and air. But absolutely never have I seen the fire, the enthusiasm, the ebriety of the crowd like this” (JOÃO DO RIO, 1916 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 20).

However, Paulo Barreto was a chronicler and a characteristic of the chronicle, as some specialists in the genre point out, is precisely that of provoking diverse opinions (CANDIDO, 1992). This makes sense, because the chronicle is tied to mundane facts (trivial or not) of everyday life and these change regularly (ARNT, 2001). Therefore, João do Rio was not particularly concerned about maintaining a point of view. For example, in the novel “*The Profession of Jacques Pedreira*” (Jacques Pedreira’s Profession), originally published in 1911, football appeared in a stereotyped way, through that typical dualism established by the intellectuals of the early twentieth century: sport on one side, sport and education on the other, whereby they were considered incompatible. This conflict is demonstrated in the following excerpt that focuses on the relationship between a football player and a philosophy teacher:

Preparatory courses left him with a feeling of inexplicable equality, which deep down always seemed to him an unpleasant degradation. There were a lot of shabbily dressed boys, shamelessly poor, who allowed themselves, however, to devise verses, wear pince-nez and not give him the slightest importance. When the teacher spoke – (generally unceasingly) – of the demoralization of teaching, of the inferiority of the new generation, these boys stared at him impertinently, and he could not help but get annoyed, because it was these nondescript youths who he considered to be inferior. More recently, at times he had even got them to play football, a fashionable game that young ladies cheered on Sundays in Paissandu. It was under this brilliant sporting vocation that he enrolled for his first year. The first year consisted of two subjects: Philosophy of Law and Roman Law. Eight days before the exams, he started to read some textbooks about the second subject, venerable textbooks that represented the knowledge of this social monument in ten generations of bachelors of law. In Philosophy he copied the written test and in the oral test, in front of a bulky and wise teacher, he asserted:

² *Carioca* – Portuguese adjective for Rio de Janeiro and name given to people from Rio de Janeiro.

- Philosophy, that true bread of the spirit...
- The teacher burst into a Homeric laugh. And still shaking with laughter:
- Go on, well done... go on, boy... (BARRETO, 2002a, p. 14).

The writer did not dedicate himself only to chronicles, he also wrote several essays on literary criticism, plays, novellas, short stories, and even a novel, besides translating several outstanding works of literature of worldwide dimensions, such as Oscar Wilde's novels. Due to his acknowledged production (and an intense campaign) he was appointed as a fellow of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, taking the place of Guimarães Passos. He did this before turning thirty – a notorious fact for a man of letters (VENEU, 1990; GOMES, 1996; RODRIGUES, 1996; O'DONNELL, 2008).

Even publishing works of different genres, Paulo Barreto never abandoned periodicals. He started at the *Cidade do Rio* newspaper, and founded *Rio Jornal*, *A Pátria* and *Revista Atlântica*, all in the 1910s. He also created the Brazilian Society of Theatrical Authors, a space where he had direct contact with many national intellectual personalities, including those from other kinds of art than literature (GOMES, 1996; LEVAN, 1996).

The writer died young, before reaching his fourth decade of life, in 1921. Even so, he left a vast collection of works, mainly chronicles. His popularity was so great that his body lay in state in *A Pátria*'s newsroom, being a space big enough for countless people to pay their last respects. On the following day, more than one hundred thousand people gathered at his funeral cortege (GOMES, 1996; RODRIGUES, 1996; O'DONNELL, 2008). At a time when writers had to make a superhuman effort to survive – since the great majority of the population could not even sign their own names, let alone read a literary work – Paulo Barreto already had celebrity status. As a Rio de Janeiro daily newspaper reported the day after his death:

The passing of Paulo Barreto, yesterday evening, was a surprise that deeply impressed the spiritual, literary and journalistic milieu, extending this impression to all social circles, where this singularity, which he was, was highly admired and esteemed. And this very striking prominence is evidenced precisely by the unanimity of revelations of sorrow at the demise of this writer, journalist and man, especially he who could not escape the fragility of human perfection, if he had shortcomings, he made up for them very well with his core of virtues. [...] But his salient literary feature was journalism, his spirituality shone much more, and

with highlighted value, in newspaper columns, than in the pages of books; there he was the complete journalist, doing everything with the most complete proficiency, not letting slightest ‘ficelle’ of the simplest fact escape and doing all that was needed to highlight it, vibrating a small note or spiritualizing a “suelto”, filling a chronicle column with current commentary and narrative ‘verve’. He gave his first proof, full proof, as a journalist in his famous coverage of the different religions in Rio, which resulted in the popularity of the “Gazeta de Notícias” being well and truly reborn (WEGUELIN, [20--])³.

The premature death of João do Rio served only to accentuate even more his condition as the most popular *Carioca* chronicler thus far. He became a kind of *hors concours* of early 20th century Brazilian literature, because, as his production ended as a result of his death, the publishing market became interested in publishing his chronicles in the form of a collection, this being an unusual fact at that time.

As explained by Candido (1992), the chronicle was born linked to the newspaper, and was thus fated to becoming wrapping paper. Paulo Barreto was one of the first writers to break this maxim. Paradoxically, the tragic destiny that would lead him to death when he was still young, on the other hand was also responsible for immortalizing him, since he was one of the first writers dedicated primarily to the chronicle genre to be published in book format, and this format did indeed emerge with a characteristic of preservation significantly greater than that of newspapers and magazines, as pointed out by Capraro (2013).

The multiple meanings of the word *sport* in João do Rio’s chronicles

If we consider the volume of chronicles published by Paulo Barreto, sport could be considered to be an element not as relevant for the author as it is thought to be. Sports practices did not appear with regularity sufficient in his chronicles to allow us to believe that the writer was really involved in that universe. Other literati of the time (or close to it), such as Lima Barreto, Coelho Netto, and Machado de Assis, dealt with the theme more frequently. If João do

3 Originally: Paulo Barreto – The Disappearance of the Most Original Figure of Brazilian Journalism. *Good Night* (1921).

Rio's few writings about sports were overrated, this is because his reach was high in terms of newspaper readers⁴; and, secondarily, because after his death his chronicles started to be considered as texts with a certain prophetic tone.

Paulo Barreto's strong cohesion with his readers is perceptible. His power of persuasion and argument is also noticeable, and consequently, so is the wide acceptance of his texts, evidencing an educational perspective. Thus, even though the number of chronicles he published about sports was small, there is no denying the relevance of their content and their undeniable impact (at least in Rio de Janeiro). In short, sport was presented focusing on its esthetic essence (with emphasis on the elegance of young athletes and plasticity of their movements), with little interpretative innovation. It was the reproduction of a typical discourse of sports admirers, but esthetically presented in a soft manner, notably avoiding confrontation with radicals opposed to the practicing of sports activities.

In relation to sports, Paulo Barreto seemed to have greater identification with and knowledge about the sport of rowing. In the first decades of the 20th century, rowing was by far one of the best known sports among those practiced in Brazil (LUCENA, 2001; MELO, 2001).

And the Flamengo Regatta Club was the core from where the overwhelming passion for sports radiated. Flamengo was the parapet over the sea. Then, suddenly, another club emerged, then another, then another, until there was a heap of them. Boqueirão, Misericórdia, Botafogo, Icaraí, were full of regatta centers (JOÃO DO RIO, 1916 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 18).

As for football, Paulo Barreto basically showed surprise at the dimension that the activity was gaining in the first decades of the 20th century: "Flamengo's football field is huge. From the stands I could see the other side, the general area, crowded with people, shouting, moving, waving their hats" (JOÃO DO RIO, 1916 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 20). The chronicler did not go much further than that, at most he tried to seek a link with his society column role, highlighting important names of *Carioca* society present at the football events he attended.

⁴ Paulo Barreto was the most popular columnist of his time. However, he could not be considered the best known man of letters, because, when it comes to literature in general, as Gonçalves (2016) points out, Coelho Netto's novels were the most read during the period.

I looked for well-known people, all of Rio was there, but I only I recognized Mrs. Nair Teixeira, with a gorgeous dress and Gastão Teixeira, who made enthusiastic gestures; Mrs. Manoel Bernardes and her daughters, Mrs. Carlo Vieira Souto, Mrs. Hime and her daughter, Miss Beatriz Tasso Fragosso, Miss Maria Lima Campos and Miss Regina Trindade, Mrs. João Felipe and Miss Lanssance Cunha, Miss Mariz and Miss Barros, Ivany Gonçalves, Maria Pinheiro Guimarães, Souza Leão, Pereira da Silva, Aracy Moniz Freire, Souza Alves, Rízinha Candiota, Otto Shilling, Maria Augusta Airosa, Hilda Kopeck, Dora Soares, Sofia Tavares de Lyra, Rocha Fragoso, Mibielli, Bento Borges (JOÃO DO RIO, 1916 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 20).

The relationship with daily life, in certain situations, gives a touch of futility to the chronicle, since its proximity to column writing – both of which belong to the circle of journalistic production – is undeniable. The esthetics adopted by the author makes the analysis of his production quite subjective. If for some (CHALHOUB; PEREIRA, 1998; MELO, 2001) his texts reflected a positive acceptance of sports, others like Sevcenko (1998) believe that, for as much as João do Rio sympathized with sports, his writings contained a refined form of mockery, a subtle irony of the excessive value that Rio de Janeiro society gave to athletic activities.

Both possibilities are contemplated in Paulo Barreto's subjective literary texts, because, even if he was not a legitimate dandy, he was very sympathetic toward this movement. As Capuano (1999) describes, the character named Baron André de Belfort, an old dandy, in the novel entitled "*Dentro da Noite*" (In the midst of the night), published in 1910, was a "self-portrait" purposely created by the author to demonstrate his personality to the reader. As said before, Paulo Barreto was not a sports fan like other literati of his time. As a matter of fact, he generally had an oscillating opinion. He often belittled the way of life of the republican elites, but he liked to go to public places (such as football fields), where he was more interested in the flow of people than in the game itself. Consequently, his *alter ego* Baron Belfort had the same interest:

Five or six of us were having lunch, invited by Baron Belfort, that old dandy, always impeccable, who said the most horrid things with perfect distinction. And it was certainly an extravagance to have that long lunch, as a way of waiting for a football match, which it would be impossible not to

attend. The Baron, with his razor-sharp voice, made perverse and incisive caricatures of those present. After laughing a great deal we scoffed down a very plebeian dish of rabbit *à la salmis* [...] (BARRETO, 2000, p. 27).

Paulo Barreto's adherence to the dandy culture⁵ was largely due to his translation of the works of Oscar Wilde, one of the greatest representatives of this aesthetic/philosophical/literary movement. The work that made Wilde famous, "The Picture of Dorian Gray", published in 1890, had as its protagonist an aristocratic man with an obsession for beauty and youth, at the same time as he manifested himself as a questioner of the social dictates of the Victorian Era (WILDE, 2001). Dorian Gray (the character), as well as Wilde himself and writers such as Baudelaire, Lord Byron, and Brummel (the supposed precursor), were devotees of life devoted to esthetic appearance, the exceptional, and especially leisure – hence, they were dandies (ECO, 2004). Life is literally transformed into transgressive art. Most of these writers were explorers of sexuality; homoerotic experiences were part of the transgression, even if the price was very high, as in the case of Oscar Wilde.

This concern with esthetics and especially with the textual form, the return to a lifestyle openly guided by esthetic appearance (even if critical of the aristocratic way of life) and the tendency to seek singularity (in an effort to accentuate the differences between human beings) are the most typical characteristics of the dandy culture present in Paulo Barreto's literary production (CAMILOTTI, 2004). Vigarello and Holt (2008), indicate that the dandy – whatever he was – valued an esthetic education that evidenced an unprecedented form of posture. The dandy replaced the values of the aristocracy with a new bodily value. According to those authors, this movement enabled the emergence of a cult of self that produced investments in physical postures. The essence of the dandy consisted in this very contemporary gesture of surrendering the individual only to the demands of his personal affirmation, that is, to the qualities of bodily appearance and, consequently, to the process of body education.

Thus, his oscillating position on sport and its educational value becomes more understandable. After all, differentiation was one of the principles of the Dandy culture – as a *unique* human being, the dandy should not follow predetermined standards, nor social conventions. It was also very common

⁵ There is controversy as to whether dandyism could be considered a culture. Some critics and academics argue that it is a literary movement, while others argue that it is a way of life. It is an unresolved issue, so in this article we have adopted the idea of not distinguishing between them.

that, sympathetic to Dandyism, João do Rio tended to be “against” standards and conventions, justifying, in this way, his differentiated character. “I was already rather tired of football matches, familiar lawn tennis, fiery Basque pelota, all this diversity of games that the civilized citizen indulges in to show he lives and enjoys himself. Cockfighting would be a new aspect [...]” (BARRETO, 1909, p. 103).

Perhaps that is why, when sports had barely arrived in Brazil and the population regarded them with suspicion, he demonstrated in his chronicles that he was a staunch supporter of the practice. On the other hand, in texts published later, sports were already showing signs of being boring. Paulo Barreto then started to purposely satirize activism in favor of athletic culture and body education advocated by this discourse. In this phase, the term sport was used more freely. The strategy was to use it in a varied and undue manner, always highlighting a given lifestyle: “- What starts strong ends soon. Before the race track closes, the club closes, and then all that’s left is to resort to navigating in the air. There is only one sport that we’re still not tired of: speaking ill of other people’s lives...” (BARRETO, 2002a, p. 91).

Other examples, structured according to the symbolic meaning given to sports by the author, should be mentioned because they are instigating ways to understand the process of body education unleashed by the chronicler. A first point to be indicated is that sports, in his chronicles, served to define the idle life of the Rio de Janeiro elites, as pointed out by Imada and Levin (2020). Taking the association with a verb constantly present and with a meaning of its own in his works, namely the verb to loaf⁶:

We know these qualities only vaguely. To understand the psychology of the street, it is not enough to enjoy its delights in the same way as one enjoys the warmth of the sun and the lyricism of the moonlight. One

6 “[...] Being a loafer, for João do Rio, is simply ‘to have the virus of watching linked to that of idleness’. Strolling idly is, above all, to stroll uselessly, with a liberated spirit, because only in this way is it possible to be surprised by possible objects of admiration: ‘nothing better than something being useless for it to be artistic’. Nothing in the ‘journey’ but poetics of observation” (CAMILOTTI, 2004, p. 152). Or even: “It can be understood, then, that João do Rio identifies more easily with his second solution to the individual’s dilemma: the *flâneur*. Cosmopolitan just like the name used to designate him (loafing is defined by him as a ‘universal verb’, ‘which does not belong to any language’), the *flâneur*, like the word, ‘has no entry in dictionaries’, that is, in the fixed structures of social life. The *flâneur* is a being of transitions and mobility, whose activity hovers between defining itself as ‘sport’ or as ‘art’, for which it requires ‘a vagabond spirit, full of unhealthy curiosities and nerves that have a perpetual incomprehensible desire” (VENEU, 1990, p. 9).

must have a vagabond spirit, full of unhealthy curiosity and nerves that have a perpetual incomprehensible desire, one has to be what we call a *flâneur* and practice the most interesting of sports – the art of loafing. Is exercising it tiresome? For the initiated it has always been a great pleasure (BARRETO, 2002b, p. 5).

Another meaning for sport found in his chronicles is that related to the actions of violent individuals, especially youngsters of the Rio de Janeiro elite who were always fighting. At this point, the term moves away from the practice of sports and is used to refer to a way of life that should be eliminated from the urban environment, showing that his texts had civilizational elements:

Why are they in jail? José, for example, struck the hand of the son of a chief of police's corporal with a belt; Pedro and Joaquim, on leaving the café where they are employed, argued a little more forcefully; Antônio slapped Jorge in the face. There are daring young men in our society whose favorite sport is to provoke disorder: every day, respectable gentlemen attack each other with a blow; old-style journalists threaten each other from time to time through the broadsheets, talking about whips and sticks regarding social or esthetic problems, entirely opposed to these demeaning instruments of barbaric reason. Neither the daring young men, nor the respectable gentlemen, nor the journalists even get taken to the police station (BARRETO, 1951, p. 113).

In addition to questioning idleness and violence, João do Rio subtly used sports to criticize the new “wealthy” elite, also serving to contextualize the social dynamics of Rio de Janeiro in the first decades of the 20th century, as evidenced in the two passages below, published in 1911 and 1910, respectively:

For the rest, the business in hand could be nothing other than a small, methodless exercise in his life lived at full speed. Fate at that moment burdened him with two sports: his automobile and his wife. Everything in life is sport. The greatest sportsman of all times was undoubtedly God, Our Lord. This gentleman, predestined indeed, won all performances and all handicaps and, according to intelligent comments, was the inventor of the puzzle with regard to the organization of chaos. It is no wonder that humanity, as it gets to know God more intimately, becomes more sporting. The contemporary current is particularly sporty. The newspapers talk of

speed matches. English terms emerge with every race or every kick; people walk in the street as if they were coming from or going to a challenge or at least place a bet. Besides belonging to this current, Jacques also belonged to a group whose boss was Jorge de Araújo. He bought a little watch to put on his wrist and went from speed to speed (BARRETO, 2002a, p. 90).

And the breeze was so soft, a smell of saltpeter lightly sprinkled the atmosphere, so that I wanted to stay there for a long time and do nothing. But the night was already spreading its black, star-speckled brocade, and in the *plein-air* of the terrace the smart-diners were beginning to arrive. What a curious sight! There were decorated Frenchmen with vulgar gestures, Englishmen in tuxedos and parasites on their lapels, Americans wearing jackets, white denim trousers and shoes for playing football and lawn tennis, elegant *Cariocas* with artificial laughter, fake laughter, begrudging body gestures, all puppets victims of *chantecler* amusement, and the usual *noceurs*, and the rich *michés* or gamblers, whose first meal of the day would be dinner, and who appear with dark circles under their eyes, their voices pasty, thinking of *baccarat chemin de fer*, 9 cards face up and the last *béguin*'s requests (BARRETO, 1978, p. 1).

These excerpts show that typical sports language extrapolated the scenario of sporting practices. This rhetoric left the sports sphere and invaded the hidden corners of everyday life. In the excerpts the chronicler shows the artificial character of part of the *Carioca* elite, and once again a discourse related to body education was triggered by João do Rio.

Another facet explored by the writer in relation to the word 'sport' is the aspect in which he relates the term to a form of psychological torture. In this case it is a matter of a young soldier forbidden to communicate with his comrades by order of his commander:

The commander's attitude was so serious that none of us dared to question him. The explanation also came minutes later, final and terrible. Lieutenant John called us aside and in a dry voice gave the order received from above. The commander forbids anyone to talk to or to answer the prisoner. The commander considers it disloyal to the cause and to his own person to say a single word to Mr. Godard until further notice. It was the torture of silence! That was his punishment! Some thought it was weak – they were the naïve ones. Others smiled, imagining the results of that sport, the pursuit of the poor fellow's silence. How would he take his revenge? [...] And then there followed the most curious and most atrocious fight, the

most painful and most disturbing sport we have ever seen, between words and silence. With our animal instinct to win, none of us answered just in order to obey the commander, none of us answered because answering would be the poor devil's victory. [...] So that in the warship in full revolt, there was only the diabolical sport of one man against three hundred, wanting to speak, wanting to live, wanting to burst the shroud of silence with which they morally buried him, without succeeding (BARRETO, 2000, p. 21-22).

Once again, the use of the term extrapolated the universe of sport and reached other spheres of daily life. Between its lines the excerpt signals the relationship that the word sport had with the body, showing that both in its broad sense and in its narrow sense, the term required an individual to have huge self-control over their body, as well as requiring an element of challenge.

The writer also used sport to characterize the art of flirting. This artifact, stamped in an artificial and cunning way, by means of an explicit power relationship between a young man from Rio de Janeiro's finest elite and his suitor, a young woman from a naïve family void of possessions:

I go, I pass, I greet. The next day I go again. Three days later, I send her a souvenir. Everything is so simple with the poor! Soon the little creature feels enveloped in an atmosphere of care and delicacy. At first it is just vanity. A man so well dressed, so distinguished, so fine, who could be loved by beautiful women of his own class...

Then pride comes, the feeling that she is better than the others because she was preferred, – pride that is perfumed with gratitude, a vague, very vague sensitivity. Then the joy of intimacy with a loved one who doesn't scold her, who like a sympathetic mirror reflects back to her his admiration in the form of all the little beauties that make up her overall beauty. But still, it is not love, it is play, pleasant play, courting – courting that is to flirtation what the purity of pure water is to the counterfeit of bad wine. I persist, so I go on, I prolong the great scene. And suddenly the child feels jealous, a sweet and naive jealousy that is zealous even of the inanimate, yearning, trembling, and laughing and crying without knowing why, completely possessed by the perpetual evil of life. Then, I intuitively feel a hellish joy. It is my sport, my exercise, my pleasure as a man of the city. The rules are foolproof as for all games, and victory smiles upon me. Have I satisfied my desire? (BARRETO, 2000, p. 59).

Again the chronicler associates sport as a way of life, but in this excerpt the writer goes further, as he reveals socially dissymmetrical behaviors. Here the term sport and a range of sports language are associated with the seduction technique used by the young man of the *Carioca* elite in relation to the poor girls of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

As seen, sport was often associated with the lifestyle of a more affluent portion of the population, always in a subtly ironic tone. In the case below, it seems that the bandit, who frequented the elitist segment of the city, took pleasure in the fact that he committed thefts of objects of significant value:

And that sadly spoken sentence worried me. Deep down, however, the sordid but illustrious man was right. The thief, or the sportsman of thievery was not Antonio, he was someone else, he existed, he announced his presence, he was there, beside us. Audacity? Madness? Stupidity? The next day we noticed that actress Simões' gold necklace with fine stones was missing, the tubercular man's wife's earrings had disappeared. Terror reigned. The guests locked their rooms and took their valuables with them in their pockets, even just to have lunch. Cleaning was done in the presence of the respective guests. Nobody spoke properly anymore, nobody talked. There was a thief among us. A thief! (BARRETO, 2000, p. 54-55).

The list of synonyms for the word sport in João do Rio's writings demonstrated, above all, one of the basic precepts of dandyism: to cause controversies and contradictions, because in other passages, some of them contained in the same works, sport had other meanings, but now of a positive nature, showing another educational dimension. The fact is that, as sport started to gain the affinity of more popular layers of society, João do Rio started to present it in his texts with fine and subtle irony – a literary trait typical of the author (CANDIDO, 1992). In any case, the notion of sportsman is transmitted as an important reference of civility. For example, when he used the figure of Santos Dumont, a famous character from the beginning of the 20th century in Brazil:

There are at least two foolish things in such a medley. The music hall was, however, crowded with young soldiers, sailors, patriotic young men; and I will always remember a time when, passing by the *café-cantante*, I heard the sound of the apotheosis and went in. There was Dudu das Neves, sweaty, with his tarred face showing thirty-two teeth of an admirable whiteness, in the middle of the stage and in all the other rooms of the

theater the mob was cheering. The Black man was already voiceless.
He marked the twentieth century forever
The hero who haunted the whole world
Higher than the clouds, almost God
Santos Dumont is Brazilian

And after this burst of hyperboles about Dumont that we all know, a sportsman, elegant, a Mogiana Railway Company shareholder, a man of his time, amid the roar of the acclamations I saw Fausto Cardoso, poet, politician, patriot, frantically waving a handkerchief, vigorous with emotion... It was the victory of the sidewalk, it was the poetry that is the soul of us all, it was the feeling that sprouts between the cobblestones with the sap and life of the fatherland (BARRETO, 1951, p. 90).

The aggrandizement of elements linked to the sports universe was clearer when the chronicler referred to the physical and esthetic values of the Greco-Roman culture which was, by the way, something quite valued in João do Rio's production:

- Boys, this is how the Greeks won at Salamina! After that, sixteen years ago, Rio definitely understood the need for exercise, and the enthusiasm for football, for tennis, for all the other games – without diminishing enthusiasm for swimming and regattas – this is the only latent enthusiasm that *Cariocas* have. Let us pay homage to the Flamengo Regattas. [...] Flamengo's field is huge. From the stands I could see the other side, the general area, crowded with people, shouting, moving, waving their hats. They climbed up on the left side, up the quarry, blackening the living rock. Below, the same compact mass. And the stand, the place of the patricians in the Roman circus, was a colossal, formidable basket of living beauties, girls who seemed to want to throw themselves and shouted the name of the players, ladies pale with enthusiasm, among gentlemen dizzy with perfume and also with enthusiasm (JOÃO DO RIO, 1917 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 19-20).

The classical influence was notorious in the period. If the hygienic ideals imported from Europe were evident in the Brazilian intellectual environment (GÓIS JÚNIOR; LOVISOLO, 2003), the invented tradition that linked the modern physical practices (gymnastic movements, physical education and, especially, sports) to the various forms of movement performed in Greco-Roman culture was constant. It was the dissemination of a new esthetic-corporal model

that was materialized in the works of important intellectuals in the sphere of Education and Physical Education, such as Fernando de Azevedo (1920a, 1920b).

Moreover, as a precursor of the society column and an individual at one with the things of his city, Paulo Barreto kept an interest in the process of restructuring the urban space and the occupation and circulation of people in public places. In the words of the chronicler, it was demonstrated that the match, on its own, was of lesser importance than the social aspect that was involved in the practice of sports:

[...] The shouts, the exclamations stood out more in the sunset light, and from all sides rose the clamor of the mob, a clamor of the Roman circus, a clamor of the Hippodrome at the time of the wonderful Basilissa Theodora [...] My old friend said, almost fainting: - They beat Flamengo by four to one.... At the door five hundred cars honking, hooting, sirens screaming. And the two gates of the field gushing with people from Guanabara, more than six thousand people overwhelmed by the paroxysmal emotion of football (JOÃO DO RIO, 1917 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 20-21).

Ultimately, for the author, “Everything in life is sport. In the vertigo of the race, performances are not always fitting...” (BARRETO, 2002a, p. 94), that is, following the maxim of the dandy culture of exceptionality, Paulo Barreto, probably in an unprecedented way, shifted the primary focus from the practice of sport itself to the audience (the public). Thus, sport had no greater significance for Paulo Barreto. For him it was just an interesting agglomeration of people and a good daily theme for his chronicles – a space in which he also manifested his belonging to the dandy culture. To sublimate the oscillation between adoration and satire of sport would be a mistake, for one would be “falling” into the very literary “trap” created by the author. As a dandy, it was important to position himself in a polemical and (often) contradictory way.

His opinion was, as a rule, averse to the conventional (a term used by the author himself). Thus, the social aspect manifested in his texts was a secondary issue, since his chronicle – as well as his writings in other genres, only in a more tenuous way – expressed his controversial individuality, which, in turn, incorporated a predominant trend in Europe – dandyism (CAMILOTTI, 2004). Note, for example, this direct manifestation in a source dating from 1911, in which the banality present in sports clubs is emphasized:

It is undeniable that automobiles are a way of earning a lot of money. Mainly by those who work little or not at all with them. Sales intermediaries are those who most make money out of automobiles. In order to make the most of government orders for automobiles, these young people shared commissions widely, and the atmosphere was at one point such that everyone agreed it was a shame there was not yet an automobile club. If everyone was auto-mobilizing, if everyone was crazy about sport, why not have a club? And from one moment to next, an automobile club appeared right on the beach, in front of the *Beira-Mar*, occupying an old family building. Jacques used to go there, but without finding any charm in it. The club, hastily set up, was furnished with tables full of sports magazines that nobody read, a few English and French caricatures on the walls portraying horses, polo, automobiles, cricket and lawn tennis, and a few empty armchairs of a modernism that did not even ask Mapple for help. At the door every night there was a carbuncle of automobile headlights and the racket of the penultimate profession invented by civilization: the chauffeurs, whom the sportsmen treated as it was only possible to treat their horses or their cocottes before chauffeurs existed. The board of directors, before the club was wound up, talked seriously about the possibilities of a race track (BARRETO, 2002a, p. 90).

João do Rio's satires and ironies, so subtle as they were, could often be confused with the unveiled compliments of literary admirers of sport, such as Bilac, Coelho Netto and Gilberto Amado. This fact relied his readers previous knowledge of him. As chronicles are published regularly, this favors their readers being more acquainted with the personality – at least the literary personality – of the author. An example of subtle irony follows below:

[...] The clubhouse was a stone's throw away from Julio Furtado's house, who protectively supported the muscular delirium of young men. Initially, serious people were shocked by the sight of "that". But the populace became full of affinity. And the young men passed by in shorts and tank tops in the sea all morning and all night [...] throughout the city, young men, once rickety and flabby, sported broad chest muscles and slim waists and nery legs and Herculean arm musculature. It was the delirium of rowing, the passion of sports. Regatta days became urban happenings (JOÃO DO RIO, 1917 *apud* RAMOS, 1990, p. 18-19).

One can notice that, probably, this was not a compliment to the healthy physical condition that sports provided to Brazilian youth, but rather implicitly ironic praise of the athletes' bodies. Knowing, as Green (2000) indicates, that Barreto's sexuality was ambiguous and that, within the social limits of his time⁷, he did not make much of a point of hiding his preferences, one can see, especially those readers who knew this, that the description of the athletes had another meaning. Who knows, maybe even, without leaving the hypothetical plane, Paulo Barreto also satirizes those literati that incessantly praised the athletic culture, questioning their sexuality.

However, even being a sympathizer of the dandy culture, Paulo Barreto would not go beyond the limits of subtlety. He did not have strong quarrels with other literati, with the exception of Humberto de Campos. On the contrary, he had a friendly relationship with the intellectual milieu, including his recognition as a literary man after the publication in 1905 of "*O Momento Literário*" (The Literary Moment), in which he made a mix of biography and literary critique (quite complimentary) of several outstanding Brazilian writers, based on interviews conducted personally or through correspondence (BARRETO, 2002b). Standing out among the authors covered by his work are: Olavo Bilac, João Ribeiro, Sílvio Romero, Coelho Netto, Lima Campos, Mario Pederneiras, Luís Edmundo, Clóvis Beviláqua, Artur Orlando, Silva Ramos, Rodrigo Otávio, Inglês de Souza, Rocha Pombo, Elísio de Carvalho, Raimundo Correia. Besides others that were invited by Paulo Barreto, but declined or did not reply to his invitation: Machado de Assis, Graça Aranha, Aluísio Azevedo, Artur Azevedo, Alberto de Oliveira, Emílio de Menezes and José Veríssimo.

⁷ Once again, a common point between Paulo Barreto and Oscar Wilde, one of the writers who most influenced the Brazilian chronicler, is sexuality. Paulo Barreto was satirized by Lima Barreto through a homosexual character in the publication "*Recordações do Escrivão Isaias Caminha*" (Memoires of Scribe Isaias Caminha).

Conclusions

João do Rio's controversial dandy culture had a limit: offense. As he was not one to be at odds with others, and consequently had no major opponents in the literary milieu, he gained the sympathy of most of the authors whose biographies he included in his book. Therefore, his candidacy to become a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters was accepted with little controversy (VENEU, 1990). Even having followed a style of strong esthetic value, centered on a contrary position, the writer made it clear when producing his texts that there was a fine line between what could be opposed without causing offense and what would generate exaggerated controversies.

Even as a critic of the way of life of the elite, João do Rio was one of the writers most at one with his world. He can be considered an excellent connoisseur of the mentality of his time, since most of the time he managed to manifest himself contrary to general opinion, without exceeding the limit that would lead him to create antipathy, both among his peers and his readers. So, in the case of sports, his position, even if he was sympathetic to the practice (at the beginning), was greatly different to that of other writers, such as Coelho Netto, for example. When sport became popular, João do Rio began to show a certain tiredness of its presence, but always within a limit that avoided exacerbated quarrels.

However, his chronicles relating to the term *sport* were in keeping with the feeling of "civilizational mission", raised by Sevcenko (1983), since, when exploring the mundane life of Rio de Janeiro society, João do Rio used several educational elements. After all, by being questioned at times and valued at others, the behaviors and habits of that society idealized images that readers sought to apply in the urban ambience of the period, being within the elements of the "imagined community" advocated by Anderson (2008). In this sense, one can affirm that a form of body education was something significantly present in João do Rio's work.

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