



### Different moments of Mallarmé's readings in Brazil

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Asserting that a poetic text allows varied interpretations is not exactly novelty, but when it comes to the work of Stéphane Mallarmé, this concept takes on a singular proportion. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his poems were used as reading platforms that have identified him with the most diverse aesthetics. In Brazil, the course of this poet's reception, who was often stigmatized as *difficult*, transits between associations with Parnasianism, [Symbolism](#) and Concretism.

The reception divided between demonstrations of celebration and rejection, the poet's small circulation at first, and the material difficulty to access the work, even in France (as described by [Olga Donata Guerizoli Kempinska](#)), amount to establish that Mallarmé's incipient circulation in Brazilian territory was rather reduced. However, according to Julius Castagnon Guimarães (GUIMARÃES, 2010), his presence exists and is detectable, with volumes in the Biblioteca Nacional in editions dating back to 1878. The first attempts of critical approach were materialized as quick references, tangential mentions, and finally, at best, reproduction of sparse poems, in both original and translated versions, which appeared in publications such as *Rosa-Cruz*, [O álbum](#), and the *Rua do Ouvidor* magazine, from Rio de Janeiro. The openly Symbolist orientation of these publications reveals how the author was approached, which may also be noticed on the observations made by the privileged corpus by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which emphasized Mallarmé's early poetry, where the mystical and esoteric aspects are more evident.

Such appreciation, however, is not exactly pacific. Among opinions that describe him as a "real God" (ALBUQUERQUE *apud* PEIXOTO, 1999), there are others frankly marked by a lack of understanding. "*Em Mallarmé encontramos um soneto cuja primeira quadra depois de horas de meditação, ainda não sabemos se deciframos*" ([Club Curytibano, 1893](#)). Therefore, his incorporation into Brazilian Symbolism is marked by a mixture of identification, lack of understanding and admiration, which reinforce the poet's commonly attributed epithet of 'obscure'. This negative relation to an unintelligible aestheticizing has fed, in France, caricatures such as the one that depicts him as the [Greek god Pan](#). In Brazil,



the poet's graphical representation also pays tribute to the underlining aesthetic perspective: [Mallarmé's portrait](#) by R. Lobão, published in 1898 in the *Vera-Cruz* magazine, is significantly different from the one appearing in the book [Mallarmé](#), by Décio Pignatari and the Campos brothers (CAMPOS, CAMPOS e PIGNATARI, 1974). The latter is stylized, geometricized, formed by straight lines, blank spaces and small "pixels" filled in black, presenting us a new approach to the poet.

On the other hand, the reception that took place during the Modernist period of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is quite distinct from what has been presented so far. Once again, the hermeticism is back on the foreground, but this time as a guideline of what *should not be done*. In his *Prefácio Interessantíssimo* (extremely interesting preface), Mário de Andrade, a capital character in the early years of Brazilian Modernism, places Mallarmé alongside Saint John the Evangelist and Verhaeren so as to tag him as a representative of a period that Mario no longer identified with: "*Perto de dez anos metrifiquei, rimei*" (for nearly ten years I made metric verses, and rhymed), says the poet who adopted the free and dynamic verse of the *Paulicéia Desvairada* (Modernist writers from São Paulo). More emphatically, in *A Escrava que não é Isaura*, Mário de Andrade claims the following programmatic formulation in capital letters: "WE MUST AVOID MALLARMÉ!"

This apparent irreconcilable rejection must be counterbalanced with a gradual discovery of other aspects in Mallarmé's work, which had been neglected until then. Once they were distant from the "heroic" moment of the Week of 22, modernists found themselves at a new position that allowed them to deurate their impressions of the French poet's legacy. This new contact occurs through the assimilation of procedures that point to an appreciation of a constructive verse development, rather distinct from that somewhat pejorative binding to an acrobatic Parnassianism and a strictly obscure Symbolism. The poem "*Murilograma para Mallarmé*" (Murilogram for Mallarmé), by Murilo Mendes, besides the title's explicit mention, presents a dense vocabulary selection, opting for a typically Mallarmé-ish imagery – as in the words "dados" and "Livro", with a capital "L" – as well as for a syntax full of meanders that seem tortuous for a hasty reader (there are 5 stanzas of 2 verses each that weave a single sentence, with only one punctuation mark, a comma in the third stanza): these features evidence a considerable convergence with the aforementioned poet's particular diction. In the poem "*Isso é aquilo*" (This is that), by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, the word "ptyx" – present in one of



Mallarmé's most celebrated sonnets, the "[Sonnet in Yx](#)" – comes up in a context of juxtaposing nouns, without the mediation of verbs (as we may see in the verses "*O fácil o fósfil/o míssil o físsil/a arte o infarte*"), which is only possible due to the appropriation of Mallarmé made by Concrete poets.

Focusing on the poem [Un Coup de Dés](#), Augusto de Campos, in the text [pontos-periferia-poesia concreta](#), offers a quite specific reading of the poet, just as legitimate nonetheless. Augusto draws attention to the process of textual composition that had its parallel in the musical concept of "series", which may be especially found in the twelve-tone technique. In doing so, he minorates the importance given by the Symbolists to the traditional concept of melody, anchored in the sound of alliterations and other rhythmic devices, underscoring another – more complex – point, of orchestration, which excels at interweaving of themes and motifs, at the formal organization subordinated to the reading effects brought by the poem. This is how he established points of contact between his theoretical project and Mallarmé 's poetic practice that justify the peculiar spatial arrangement of words that easily catches our eye in concrete poems, electing Mallarmé in his *Paideuma* as one of his preceding poets. The selection of "Un Coup de Dés" contrasts with this poem's absence in the earlier assessments of Mallarmé. According to Antonio Candido, "*pouca gente enfrentava o 'Coup de dés', que, aliás, era de difícil acesso, porque não vinha incluído nas edições correntes*" (CANDIDO, 1993).

In a few decades, the Brazilian reception of Mallarmé's work is transformed. From the retrograde and conservative Parnassian image that his first reception entailed, Campos made a visionary out of him by establishing an association between the poet and an early Modernity.

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