BEAUTY IN GUIMARÃES ROSA: AVE, APHRODITE!

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ABSTRACT: The discovery, by chance, of a dedication made in a book by the widow of João Guimarães Rosa serves as a starting point for the author to devote herself to a letter that Rosa had sent to his then-friend Paulo Dantas. The text is based on the understanding of The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World by James Hillman and on the meanings that Karl Kerényi attributes to the myth of Aphrodite. Some excerpts from the work of João Guimarães Rosa are included here so that one can understand the purposes of the beauty that is the manifestation of life. I concluded that the author sought to live his life and do his work in an integrated and beautiful way and, in this sense, contribute to an education of aesthetic sensitivity.


RESUMO: A descoberta, ao acaso, de uma dedicatória feita num livro pela viúva de João Guimarães Rosa serve de ponto de partida para a autora se deter sobre uma carta que Rosa enviara ao então amigo Paulo Dantas. O texto apoia-se na compreensão sobre a alma do mundo, de James Hillman, e nos sentidos que Karl Kerényi atribui ao mito de Afrodite. Alguns excertos da obra de João Guimarães Rosa são incluídos aqui para que se possa perceber os sentidos da beleza que é a manifestação da vida. Conclui-se que o autor buscou realizar de maneira integrada e com beleza a sua vida e a sua obra e, nesse sentido, contribui com uma educação de sensibilidade estética.


RESUMEN: El descubrimiento, por casualidad, de una dedicación hecha en un libro por la viuda de João Guimarães Rosa sirve de punto de partida para que la autora se detenga en una carta que Rosa había enviado a su entonces amigo Paulo Dantas. El texto se basa en la comprensión sobre el alma del mundo, de James Hillman, y en los significados que Karl Kerényi atribuye al mito de Afrodita. Se incluyen aquí algunos extractos de la obra de João Guimarães Rosa para que se pueda percibir los sentidos de la belleza que es la manifestación de la vida. Se concluye que el autor buscó realizar de manera integrada y con belleza su vida y su obra y, en este sentido contribuye a una educación de sensibilidad estética.

Vide cor tuum

The Beauty of Discovering a Book

In mid-May 2022, I went to my bookshelf to look up something about Guimarães Rosa. However, a specific book fell to the floor as I pulled out the intended volume. I remember buying it during my doctoral studies, between 2011 and 2012: "Sagarana Emotiva" by Paulo Dantas (1975). At that time, I used to visit a secondhand book website and choose the cheapest option, which was delivered to me by mail. I read it back then, but nothing particularly caught my attention. It remained stored until the day it fell at my feet. So, I opened it, flipped through the first and second pages, and discovered something. I reread with surprise and joy something entirely unexpected and thought: How did I not see this before? How is this possible?

Figure 1 – Dedication by Aracy, the widow of João Guimarães Rosa

Source: Photo from the author's collection (2022)

Yes! The book that had fallen at my feet was dedicated by hand by Aracy, the widow of João Guimarães Rosa, to a certain Dr. Oswaldo Nazareth, to whom she offers it with gratitude. It indicates the location, Rio de Janeiro, and the date, 09-05-1979. Still in awe, I contacted the Roda de Leitura do Guimarães Rosa (Guimarães Rosa Reading Circle) coordinators at IEB-

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2 “See your heart” (ALIGHIERI, 1993, p.10, our translation).
USP and they confirmed the handwriting and dedication. Regina Pereira, one of the coordinators of the Reading Circle, got goosebumps and said the book was excellent! Linda Yazbek Rivitti, another group coordinator, exclaimed that it was a treasure! She said it was unfortunate for Oswaldo not to have kept the book and fortunate for me to have acquired it! Rosa Haruco Tane, also a group coordinator, said I was fortunate, and she had the same book with a dedication from Paulo Dantas himself, and she already thought that was fantastic, but now I had the book with a commitment from Aracy Moebius de Carvalho Guimarães, the widow of Guimarães Rosa! What a beauty!

After this joy, I reread the book, and a letter caught my attention. In it, Guimarães requests something from Paulo Dantas, his friend, with whom he exchanged very kind letters. I reproduced a part of the letter:

Rio, 14-X-57 – My dear Paulo Dantas, greetings. [...] There is, however, a request that I urgently need to make to you: to cancel, strike out, immediately and without fail, a sentence from Marques Rebelo that found its way into the midst of the citations. The sentence is as follows:

“Guimarães Rosa’s work has no significance.”

Now, I see that it has made its way with the rest, and I would earnestly request that it be removed from the texts. It only made it through because, with many matters occupying me at the time and in a hurry, I couldn't review the extracts more attentively. They were mainly compiled by an intelligent and friendly person to whom I had entrusted all my scrapbooks for this purpose.

Now, let me explain the reason. I had also asked the person to include some "contrary" opinions. However, it so happens that:

1) The mentioned sentence was attributed to Marques Rebelo in one of those end-of-year opinion pieces; even though he did not deny it, and even if he does think that way (as it appears he does and says), I believe it would not be ethically right to publish it in this case;

2) It would also be impolite, as it is a sentence that is too concise to be inserted among others that are longer and more thoughtful. This could cast Marques negatively, making it appear as an unfair act, a “cheap shot”;

3) Despite Marques Rebelo's sarcastic, caustic, sometimes biting, and sharp style, I like him; I only consider him a mischievous, intelligent, and rebellious fellow. All that is surface-level cunning, youthful mischief; deep down, I know he's a “big shot”;

4) Finally, and most importantly, I will always be sentimentally grateful to Marques Rebelo, not forgetting that he was the first to write about my first book and support it until the end within the Judging Committee of the Contest, etc (ROSA, 1957 apud DANTAS, 1975, p. 77-78, our translation).
Why did this letter stir something within me? When I finished reading it, I felt as if I had seen João Guimarães Rosa for the first time, even though I am a devoted reader of his works! I met, or rather, I felt, the soul of Rosa! Rationally, I can say that the letter expressed a man with all his elegance, education, erudition, and care for the Portuguese language, in addition to the intelligence and wit with which he received a less than complimentary opinion about his work. But I also admired the care with which he addressed the critic. What a gentleman! That's what I felt at that moment. I will delve into this further.

In the mentioned letter, Guimarães Rosa reflects that it would not be ethically right to publish Marques Rebelo's opinion, as it is pretty concise compared to others he had received, which were more elaborate, profound, and thoughtful. Rosa lists four adjectives to acknowledge the tone: "sarcastic, caustic, biting, sometimes acerbic." At the same time (and almost in the same tone), Marques recognizes that it is a youthful and mischievous behavior because he knows, deep down, that he is a good person or a "big shot." Rosa acknowledges the qualities of the critic because it was the same individual who approved him in the 1937 Contest. That year, Guimarães Rosa submitted the short stories from "Sagarana" and competed for the Humberto de Campos Prize awarded by Livraria José Olympio, in which Marques Rebelo was part of the Judging Committee. Rosa secured the second place (COUTINHO, 1983). Given the recognition of the favorable vote he received in the contest, Rosa kindly asks Dantas to disregard that small clipping that followed, by mistake, among the others.

The Beauty of Savoring Aphrodite

I want to emphasize that what struck me in the letter was the beauty of Rosa! However, the moment I read it, I was unaware it was about that. I felt his beauty. Only the next day, when a friend sent me the book "O Pensamento do Coração e a Alma do Mundo (The Thought of the Heart and the Soul of the World)" by James Hillman, a post-Jungian author (2010), and when I read the chapter titled "O Coração da Beleza (The Heart of Beauty)," I managed to establish the connection, to perceive, feel, and understand a bit more about beauty. I intend to explore these facets of the sentiment in conjunction with the author.

James Hillman (2010) begins by quoting Petrarch, who, at 22 years old in 1327, noticed a young woman named Laura, whose name means "victorious" and "glorious," and "his heartbeat faster, stopped, and went out of his mouth. His soul had been assaulted by beauty" (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 41, our translation). Then Hillman mentions the moment when Dante Alighieri saw, for the first time, one who seemed more like a daughter of a god than a mortal.
Although he did not yet know her name, Beatrice, which means "she who blesses." Behold, she shone for him:

Turning around, the luminous heaven had returned nine times to the same point when I first saw the glorious lady of my thoughts, whom many called Beatrice, in ignorance of her true name. [...] At this point, the vital spirit in the innermost chamber of the heart began to beat with such force that it was astonishingly evident in the slightest pulsations. Trembling, I spoke these words: *Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominatibur mihi* \(^4\) (ALIGHIERI, 1993, p. 07-08, our translation).

Dante perceived the visitation of beauty in Beatrice when he was just nine years old, even though he was still a child. This reminded me of Riobaldo's encounter with the young Reinaldo, as described in "The Devil to Pay in the Backlands" (ROSA, 1986). Dante experienced the palpitation of this force that spread throughout his entire body, starting from the heart. These examples allow us to explore this feeling that fortunately visits some people, regardless of age, as if it were truly a glorious visit, something that transcends the ordinary. It is a sense of happiness in which the heart awakens and beats with greater intensity, generating immense joy and a feeling of victory. We were receiving a blessing, an electric current that intensifies and revitalizes the bloodstream. Something changes within the person as if they were truly beginning a new life (ALIGHIERI, 1993). Then Hillman (2010) continues:

Wasn't Psyche, in the tale of Apuleius, chosen for her beauty? And isn't Aphrodite, the Beautiful, the soul of the universe (psychē or kosmou or anima mundi) that produces the perceptible world, according to Plotinus (III, 5.4), and the soul of each of us? Can we respond to what these figures and tales are saying? **Can we perceive that each of us, in the soul, is a child of Aphrodite**, that the soul is a *therapeutes*, as was Psyche, in the temple of Venus? It is there that she is in devotion (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 42, emphasis added, our translation).

We rarely view ourselves inwardly as children of Aphrodite, the goddess of Beauty. Few of us can say, "I am beautiful," primarily because, in our society, we are led to believe that beauty corresponds to certain stereotypes, and we often do not fit those molds. Karl Kerényi mentions some meanings for the name of this goddess:

In our language, the word *Aphrodite* has acquired the meaning of "the pleasure of love." In the ancient poets, this gift of the goddess is accompanied by the adjective *chruse,* meaning "golden." However, this should not be understood in too narrow a sense, as it also expresses the atmosphere of

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\(^4\) “Here is a god stronger than I, who comes to dominate me” (ALIGHIERI, 1993, p. 08, our translation).
Urania, the "Heavenly" eastern goddess who in Cyprus was also known as Eleemon, "the merciful" (KERÉNYI, 2015, p. 76, our translation).

One of the senses associated with Aphrodite is the radiance of her manifestation. The author also lists more senses for this deity: "the one with beautiful buttocks [...] the one with a well-formed body [...] the one with beautiful forms [...] the one who postpones old age [...] the one who shines from afar" (KERÉNYI, 2015, p. 70-76, our translation). Note that many of these characteristics do not allude to feminine beauty but to the epiphany of all living beings. Gradually, we come to understand what this presence refers to as it reveals itself in our lives as a gift:

As Corbin wrote (ML, p. 103), beauty is that grand category that refers explicitly to the God *revelatus*, "the supreme theophany, divine self-revelation." Just as the gods are given with creation, so is their beauty in creation, which is the essential condition of product as manifestation. Beauty is the manifest *anima mundi* – and indeed, note here that it is neither transcendent to the manifest nor secretly immanent but refers to appearances as such, created as they are, in the forms in which they are given, sensory data, naked facts, Venus Nudata (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 45, emphasis added, our translation).

As mentioned, this is the beautiful way the world manifests itself, naked as it is, *anima mundi*. For us to perceive the world's soul, it is presupposed that we awaken our senses. In other words, "The origin of life is a gushing forth of souls" (KERÉNYI, 2015, p. 172). Thus, we are confronted with this beauty all the time, which is life manifesting itself as if it were shining, gushing forth. We open our eyes and see plants, animals, humans, the infinite blue of the sky, clouds drifting, a breeze entering our room, the sun shining and warming, or rain watering the earth, we feel the flavors, scents, and temperature of food and drinks, we hear various sounds throughout the day and night. Do we perceive, with all our senses, the beauty of this outpouring of life?

Beauty is not an attribute like a film enveloping a virtue, merely an aesthetic aspect of appearance. It is the appearance itself. If there were no beauty, goodness, truth, and unity, we could never feel or know them. Beauty is an epistemological necessity; it is how the Gods touch our senses, reach our hearts, and draw us into life (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 47, our translation).

In reading the texts of Guimarães Rosa, everything that appears to us as a particular obsession with describing the environment in detail, the characteristics and habits of animals and plants, the nature of rivers, cattle, and other creatures, the people and their many ambivalences, all this care in delivering to us, through poetic narrative, this overflowing
richness of life, would it not, by chance, be an attitude that points us towards the beauty of life's manifestation as *anima mundi*? This epistemological nourishment of constructing some meaning, signifying, and incorporating what touches us in this world nourishes our souls as readers. I believe this is also what Guimarães Rosa's poetic narrative aims to awaken in us.

All of nature exhales its grand existence and can be perceived poetically through the senses. Let's follow how João Guimarães Rosa narrates a dawn in this small excerpt from the opening pages of *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*: "I huddled in the cold, mindful of the dripping dew, the woods full of pleasant smells, the crackling of the stars, the creaking of the crickets, and the massed horses. Day was about to break, the first flush of morning, when the sky grows light" (ROSA, 1986, p. 100). As humans, we feel temperature with our skin through touch, but when Rosa writes that we leaned against the cold, as mentioned above, he reverses the polarity to affirm the existence of the cold temperature against which we depend. Where is the cold or the heat for us to count against? How do we lean against cold air? Our skin, in contact with the environment, can read the temperature.

Only poetically can we enter the beauty of feeling to listen to the dew equally! Drop by drop, the condensation of atmospheric water vapor that settles on surfaces, what sound would it have? We typically see the dew, but few people have thought about the seemingly imperceptible sound of this phenomenon. When he does so, Rosa calls upon the transit of the readers' senses, almost as if to remove them from the commonplace, so that they may enter the world of poetry, which is also the language of the soul. In this same passage, the author invites the reader to evoke the many scents of the underbrush, as plants exude fragrances available to beings who are open to sensing them. Animals read the environment through different senses: some have sharper smell or vision, others have hearing, and others perceive temperature. Do we remember this? And what a pleasant surprise when the author then delivers "crackling of stars," and in an instant, these immense celestial bodies that have their light and seem to twinkle in the twilight of dawn reach our sensory experiences as if they were toys in the hands of children on St. John's Eve!

Mônica Meyer (2000) emphasizes the role of the senses in an environmental education that integrates nature and culture: "Environmental perception is the basic instrument that allows us to feel and grasp the natural world. The exercise of looking, listening, smelling, tasting, and touching trains the body to learn through interaction. Guimarães Rosa suggests that the senses give feeling to the world" (MEYER, 2000, p. 41, our translation). All this beauty that I only touch upon here is there, as poetic language immersed in prosaic narrative, like a gift that the
author gives us to awaken and, in some way, enhance our aesthetic experience of being a body that exists in the world about so many other bodies.

**Beauties of the Aphroditic cosmos: links between nature and culture**

It is this concept of intertwined nature and culture that Guimarães Rosa provides, as Mônica Meyer explains in her book "Ser-tão Natureza: a Natureza em Guimarães Rosa" (2018). Without Aphrodite, the world is chaos, senseless, a mere assembly of atomic particles. As human beings endowed with language, we can attribute meaning to our surroundings, just as Rosa did throughout his work, in an effort to show the exuberance of life in its infinite manifestations. And when the author does so, he also reveals his soul, his perception of the world, which is also beautiful:

The soul is born in beauty and nourishes itself with beauty, it needs it to live. [...] **Psyche is the life of our aesthetic responses**, that sense of taste in relation to things, that vibration or pain, displeasure or expansion of the chest - primal aesthetic reactions of the heart that are the soul itself speaking. The first characteristic of Psyche, and the way we first know her [...], is through her primary element, given in her nature: Psyche is beautiful (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 42, emphasis added, our translation).

This perception of the world, in the case of João Guimarães Rosa's literature, manifests itself in his narrative, adorned with poetic beauty, laboriously crafted through the written word as an imagistic narrative that creates another grammar and calls forth a different kind of. In turn, this reader, in contact with the inner language of this author, can also form and educate themselves. According to Heloísa Vilhena de Araújo (2020, p.17, our translation), "Language, for Guimarães Rosa, is life that begets ideas, meaning, and the world," in other words, the reader feeds on what the author offers as literature. The author's aesthetic responses are capable of revealing his soul:

Such an attitude of renewal, a return to the origin, a search for an ideal of health, beauty, order, and unity - a search for the perfect - is easily recognizable: it is the Platonic attitude of the one who is guided in all circumstances by the contemplation of the unique, unifying model of the Good. This paradigm is the logos, in its dual meaning of "word" and "reason." By guiding his life by this unique ideal, man also becomes one: an individual - a unified, integrated, and whole personality. Dispersed through the body's senses, man withdraws into a singular soul, into a specific life. He acquires an identity, a name, and speech (ARAÚJO, 2020, p. 17, our translation).

In this case, reading can reveal itself as a beautiful exchange: the reader receives in themselves the emanations of the soul of the writer, which reverberate from his literature, all of
which is very peculiar and consistent in its interiority because, at various levels, one can perceive the expression of a human being who managed to integrate aspects of what he read in the realization of his concrete life, as Heloísa Vilhena de Araújo (2020, p.22, our translation) also suggests: "Thus, his existence in general, and his professional behavior as a diplomat in particular, were, as everything indicates, a living expression of his conception of the world, a translation, in concrete and specific terms, of the paradigm he carried in his soul." A lover of words, it is through language that Rosa finds and enchants us, communicating from soul to soul:

This is the attitude of Plato's just man, the man endowed with virtue (areté) and wisdom (phronesis), guided by intelligence (noûs) and reason (lógos) in the acquisition of knowledge (episteme): the man whose soul is ordered - kosmiat - and integrated under the principle of causality. This is the attitude of the aristocratic man, the philosopher, the "philologist," who, both in private life and in public life, is guided by the divine model of the Good - by the organon of the word (lógos) - which is within his soul (ARAÚJO, 2020, p. 17, our translation).

To have an intimate relationship with the world, and with the literature of Guimarães Rosa, one must use the heart because, as James Hillman points out, "to perceive, one must imagine, one must see forms [...] and heart thinking personifies, animates, fills the world with soul" (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 47-48, our translation). This relationship is aesthetic and requires the transit of all the organs of the senses because aisthesis, in Greek, "means 'absorbing' and 'breathing' - a 'sigh,' that primary aesthetic response" (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 48, our translation). We arrive at this text's heart and epigraph: it is necessary to see, feel the spirit, and pay attention to it with kindness. This is the beautiful moment in a person's life when they perceive it; from there, they build an intimate relationship with this force that dwells in everyone. This relationship needs to be awakened and nurtured by the person in their soul or inner forum.

Kathrin Holzermayr Rosenfield (2022), a recognized scholar of Rosa's work, identifies, among other influences, the Platonic orientation in Rosa's writings, as she points out in the video entitled "Nothing and Our Condition - First Stories - 60 Years." She highlights the abundant use of visual vocabulary in Rosa's literature, creating an almost as if the author were drawing a breathtaking landscape through the use of allegorical and written language. The descriptions allow the reader to imagine the characters' plots' scenarios, where life is also contemplated in its complex exuberance as if it were a Dionysian procession.

The reader of Rosa ends up diving into the literary journey, enveloped in a play of symbolic images in transit, often subtle from one dimension to another, from the immanent to the transcendent. Rosa builds the beauty of his literature by exercising the ability to look, listen,
touch, and feel everything in the poetic and narrative effort of using written language. Rosenfield (2022) further states that the reader of Rosa is led to read beyond the lines, enter between the lines, and, beyond the letters, build allegorical and timeless meanings. The reader of Rosa is called upon to awaken to a contemplative life, to create a kind of intimate and syncretic religiosity, very visual, authentic, sonorous, tangible, and concrete at the same time, while something escapes and transcends this reality, composing the two sides that modulate life, in a Platonic sense.

That is to say, profound human questions are presented in apparently straightforward, every day, or almost naive stories. It is repeated: innocent in appearance, however, by delving into other layers of interpretation, profound themes emerge: life and death, beauty and war, good and evil, violence and love, and so on. In the reading of Guimarães Rosa, one quickly arrives at the idea of life as fiction, which we construct for ourselves in the sense of contemplation: what kind of fiction do we choose? There are no simple answers in the play of complementary opposites in Rosa's field, but one can always try to read to understand more about the beauty of the many manifestations of what one experiences. How do we remain still in the center of the hurricane, of life, or of war?

In The Devil to Pay in the Backlands (ROSA, 1986) at the end of the narrative, when the deadly confrontation between Hermógenes and Diadorim takes place, the chief Riobaldo, during the chaos of battle, amid the whistling of bullets and gunfire, alone, he had to command. Precisely he who lives questioning the reason for everything, a human being like so many who have doubts and uncertainties about what is and what is not, precisely at that terrible and almost cinematic moment of the final battle, he closes his eyes because he can no longer see anything in that chaos and confusion. He stays still to command well. As the leader of the gang, at that moment, he could not mix with that world that was falling apart, and then he confesses:

To command is just that: to remain still and have greater courage. [...] The fact is, courage is something you can always absorb more of-like air: you can take more and more of it into your lungs, no matter how full, by breathing deeper (ROSA, 1986, p. 490).

The author, who has one of the symbols of love and beauty (the word Rosa) in his last name, who was born in the heart's town (Cordisburgo), created a character (Riobaldo), a man lacking in senses who remembers all the time that living is very dangerous, and at the same time, he repeats many, many times in the long narrative of The Devil to Pay in the Backlands that one must have courage. We are facing the realization, from the author's name, of an
initiatory journey. Riobaldo, in the excerpt above, intuits, feels, knows, and finally states, despite all the doubts that accompany him, that one must trust the heart! And having courage is to act with compassion, to breathe, to infuse strength into this organ so that it radiates more and more blood throughout the body, as the author himself teaches: one must sip, pull the air into that deep cavity, continuing to breathe so that from the inside of the chest it obtains more and more strength.

When Riobaldo stops, closes his eyes, and breathes, he infuses the heart with pneuma, an inspiring breath that gives the desire and strength to face everything he does not know. At that moment, he fills himself with courage because he has already learned from the song of Siruiz that runs throughout the narrative as a leitmotif: "When I'm about to go into battle, I invite my heart" (ROSA, 1986, p. 101, our translation). I highlight the beauty and educational focus that comes to us through this literary narrative.

An Italian philosopher, María Zambrano (2000), notes how the metaphor of the heart has been subject to various interpretations throughout history. Since the 16th century and with the advent of exact sciences, reason has been chosen as the queen of faculties. However, the metaphor of the heart persists as folk wisdom and survives as archaic echoes:

It's like a space that opens up inside a person to welcome certain realities. A place where indecipherable feelings are harbored, leaping over judgments and what can be explained. It is vast and profound, with a background from which great resolutions emerge and truths that are certainties. And sometimes, a flame burns in it that guides through complicated and challenging situations, its light that allows a passage where there seemed to be none to discover the pores of reality when it appears closed. Also, to find the solution to an inner conflict when one has fallen into an inextricable labyrinth due to entangled circumstances. [...] And it is a light that illuminates to escape from impossible difficulties, a gentle light that provides consolation (ZAMBRANO, 2000, p. 22, our translation).

This noble vital organ, like a hermetic chamber that never opens or radiates, is a secret and mysterious space at the center of our body that irrigates and carries strength and courage to all other viscera. Perhaps for this reason, it conveys generosity, and "this (interiority that offers to continue being interiority without nullifying it) is the definition of intimacy. Only what is constitutively closed can be the seat of intimacy" (ZAMBRANO, 2000, p. 23, our translation). At the end of the text, the philosopher concludes that resentment is born from this organ, which, always working, cannot be heard. In other words, we need to listen to our heart, as announced in the epigraph, and literature is one of the ways to access our heart, this secret chamber that harbors our soul, our most profound intimacy. This relationship needs to be built through
contemplation, stillness, at a slower pace, and attentive listening. If we rush our eyes through the texts of Guimarães Rosa or in hurried reflection of nature, we lose the ability to season ourselves with the soul of the world.

I use a descriptive excerpt from another character in Guimarães Rosa’s work, Vaqueiro Mariano, a Pantanal cowboy who, in his daily work with cows, carries out a labor of love and aesthetics in seeing them, observing them, and listening to them in the intimacy of their lives. In the presented passage, what shines forth is also beauty, that something extra:

I milk her plump teats between my fingers, long grapes. She smells strong in the chilly morning air, the healthy female comforting. She turns, and small sounds crack from her wet, pure snout, animal-clean. She drools widely. Her fringed eyelids close over dark mirrors. But her absorbed being probes me; her presence alights. And, beneath the inert flight of her ears, the head seems like an uplifted heart (ROSA, 1985, p. 112, our translation).

A beautiful narrative that appears to emerge from a space of companionship and intimacy! What shines is the experience of beauty that manifests in the history of milking in an embrace that harmonizes nature and culture. The cowboy perceives – the narrative presents many aesthetic details – the cow as the female that receives him in the comfort of the morning: her scent, her warmth, her body, her sounds, while the cow's liquid (milk) flows through the gentle and loving hands of the hardworking cowboy. It is indeed another image of beauty, an aesthetic experience, as it involves all our senses, i.e., our ability to perceive:

Indeed, beauty is not "pretty," and Socrates is a witness to this. Certainly, beauty in Platonic thought can only be understood if we can enter an Aphroditian cosmos, which means delving into the ancient notion of aisthesis (sense-perception), from which aesthetics is derived (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 44-45, our translation).

This Aphrodisiac cosmos often reveals itself in Guimarães Rosa’s texts, and in this sense, I affirm that Ave is beautiful! And reading his texts can educate us and help us refine our minds! It is an experience that, on the one hand, puts us in touch with the visual beauty of the narrative and, on the other, seems to awaken us to that same beauty by expanding our senses to the fact of being alive, to perceive the radiance, the manifestation of everything that surrounds us. Let us now immerse ourselves in the beauty of getting to know, in a brief description, another character from Guimarães Rosa’s work, Maria da Glória, in the novella ‘Buriti’ (1956):

Determined. Glorinha is blonde—or or fair-haired. More beautiful than her, hardly anyone else could be. Beautiful, not to say well: she is lovely, beautiful. In her, everything breathes health. [...] Gloria: her bright gaze, always with an undisguised smile as it opens, her facial features descending like a little ocelot.
In the composition of this decisively feminine character, we find almost all the characteristics previously pointed out as those of Aphrodite, starting with the name itself, which is Gloria! But she is also beautiful, with a bright look and smile, golden (like a little ocelot), her strength lies in this kind of weakness that is beauty, the brilliance of being female nature. The Glory of being a woman shows itself, for a moment, as it is, a shining, manifesting itself in all its splendor, just as Rosa manifested himself in the letter to his friend Paulo Dantas, transcribed at the beginning. In other words,

If beauty is inherent and essential to the soul, then beauty appears whenever the soul emerges. This revelation of the essence of the soul, the actual showing of Aphrodite in the psyche, and her smile is called "beauty" in the language of mortals. As they exhibit their innate nature, all things display the golden nature of Aphrodite; they shine, and thus, they are aesthetic (HILLMAN, 2010, p. 46, our translation).

Kerényi (2015, p.75) asserts that "The substance of the stories [of mythology] was contained in the figure of the deity herself, but there was not a single story capable of presenting the whole figure in all her aspects," given the infinite greatness of this divine energy. And beauty is a divine attribute, like many others we haven't dwelled on here. Therefore, each part of this text sought to highlight some aspects of how beauty can manifest. From the unusual form in which a book presents itself for reading, the writing it contains, and what can be seen, understood, and felt from it to the excerpts from academic authors and mythology, the intention was to show, to some extent, how beauty can also be perceived in the literature of João Guimarães Rosa.
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