

## Introduction

### Rewriting, De-writing, and Un-writing: New Languages of Latin American Literature

Kenneth David Jackson  
University of Texas, Austin

On February 28/March 1, 1986 the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Institute of Latin American Studies, and Program in Comparative Literature of the University of Texas sponsored an international conference to honor Edward Laroque Tinker visiting professor João Alexandre Barbosa of the Universidade de São Paulo. The conference theme paralleled a graduate course in Brazilian literature offered by Professor Barbosa during the 1986 Spring semester on the topic of "Transformations of Literary Language in Latin American Literature." Presentations by invited scholars addressed concepts and practices of literary language in contemporary Latin American authors, sharpened by the additional historical focus, "From Machado de Assis to the Vanguards," that is, from Regionalism and Realism of the late nineteenth-century narrative to experimental trends of twentieth-century modernism and post-modernist currents. Within this spectrum, Brazilian literature and criticism provided principal sources for the elaboration of artistic metaphors that motivate and structure the languages of much contemporary writing.

One post-modern critique of the concept of literary language is found in considerations of the Concrete or visual text and its extensive development in Brazilian Concretism, led by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos. Exploring *verbivocovisual* composition and the *Klangfarbenmelodie* aesthetic of composer Anton von Webern, concrete "texts" challenge the traditional concept of literary language as well as the definition of a literary work. Such intertextuality among the arts in the creation of a language of literature, as illustrated by Concrete Poetry, is paralleled in other writers by intertextuality with literary and philosophical traditions. Early poetry of Lezama Lima illustrates the creative transmutation of classical writing and mythology into densely personal literary language. The rewriting of tradition, however accomplished, is frequently interpreted as an art of subversion of traditional uses of literary language. Many authors studied in these essays, including Machado de Assis, Oswald de Andrade, Guimarães Rosa, Borges, and Clarice Lispector, can be read as examples of the negative pole from which an interrelationship or transmutation of texts, operating through parody or irony, often expresses a self-conscious reflection on both writing and writer. The discontinuous and fragmented novels of Machado de Assis, for example, are early evidence of a tradition of experimentation in Latin American literature, affecting literary language through metaphors of textual and linguistic change.

The Baroque model, lying strangely at the roots of contemporary invention, is cited by poet Haroldo de Campos for its contribution toward the originality and authenticity of Latin American writing. Oswald de Andrade's *Manifesto Antropófago* ("Cannibal Manifesto") of 1928 is a dynamic illustration of a Baroque model applied