

# Experiencing Labour and Homosexuality in a Small City: For an Oral History of Gay Otherness in Small-City Brazil

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*This article analyzes the life story of a young fringe worker, in two different moments: 2007 and 2009. The young man is from the small city of Assis Chateaubriand, in Parana State, Brazil. The key issue in the interview, which underlies all of it, is that the interviewee publically admits his homosexuality and discusses it in interstitial terms, which is highly suggestive to the oral historian in terms of the following aspects: a) the alternative directions taken by oral history and its interpretations of the social experiences formed at the border between public life and everyday undercover homosexuality; b) the outlook on work and life in a small city as seen through the eyes of the gay experience in a changing world at both local and national levels; c) the conscious force of the individual narrative with regard to the dynamics of moral conflicts experienced and reconstituted by gay otherness d) the homosexual experience in the everyday life of small cities, without the protection of anonymity and privileged spaces of sociability often found in larger urban centers*

Because if I pay attention to what people say, I never would have left home. It is true, what moves me is my conscience. What I think, what God thinks of me, is what matters to me. What people, other people, that I wanted to accept and support me as I really am, are my father and mother. The rest I do not care what people think. And life is mine, I live it, I am doing it. I am an independent person of legal age. So I think people should open their mind a little to be able to accept the differences. We are living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, people have to put themselves in the current reality, right?<sup>1</sup>

In the interview excerpt above, narration and consciousness go together, giving a particular, subjective force to the report given by a 23-year-old male worker in the agribusiness sector, who lives in Assis Chateaubriand, a small city (pop. 30,000) located 570 kilometers from the capital of Curitiba, Parana State, Brazil and who is openly gay. Throughout this discussion I will call him “Márcio.” Although he

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<sup>1</sup> Robson Laverdi, Interview with Márcio (pseudonym), 23 years old. Assis Chateaubriand: March 2007.

has not expressed a concern or restriction on the use of his real name, I prefer the pseudonym as a means of protecting his physical and social integrity.

Since arriving in this small town (he is from the rural district of Paulistania, in the municipality of Alto Piquiri), Márcio has been working at a large poultry slaughterhouse cooperative that was started with the large investments of a so-called agribusiness concern, whose subsidiary is located in a nearby town [omitted]. Unlike Alto Piquiri, which is located in the northwestern region of the state, Assis Chateaubriand and the neighboring town, where Márcio works, are located in the western part of the state.

The interview with Márcio was conducted in the quiet Praça das Americas, located near the outskirts of Assis Chateaubriand, which currently has an estimated population of just over 30,000 inhabitants. The initial contact was made through reference by another young man, also gay, living in the city of Toledo, who had been interviewed a short time before, as part of an ongoing research project with other young people of gay orientation.<sup>2</sup>

Just over two years after the first interview with Márcio in 2007, another session was recorded in 2009. The idea was to produce interviews at different times. This proposal resulted from questions raised by the subjective force of historical-social consciousness present in the first interview. It must be said that I was touched by the recognition of the extraordinary symbolic wealth in the narrative of this young man as related to other dimensions of social experience.

Among these dimensions, there are profound changes in the relationships he experienced at work and in city life, in turn located in a broader context of tensions and expectations of belonging to his environment. As a result, the complexity of the entire interview comes into focus, acquiring a particular importance for historical analysis.

In almost the entire length of western Paraná state, as in much of Brazil, we are witnessing on the one hand, a process of rampant and overwhelming capital use (as well as of other social and political energies) in the productive sphere of agro-industrialization. The poultry slaughterhouses, established over the last decade, are a concrete demonstration of this process which, consequently, engenders new life dynamics. On the other hand, a destruction of traditional urban lifestyles is a prerequisite for the materialization of the most diverse expectations concentrated in this new experience. In practice, this has materialized into migrations of people from countryside to city, as well as of Brazilian immigrants returning from Paraguay after living there for four decades. Over the past decade a significant number of men and women, poor rural workers and especially young people, have returned to Brazil to be employed in the newly-installed meat

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<sup>2</sup> Robson Laverdi, *A vida “fora do armário” e outras dinâmicas envolvendo jovens de orientação homossexual masculina em pequenas cidades do Oeste do Paraná (2007-2009)* (Marechal Cândido Rondon: Projeto de Pesquisa UNIOESTE, 2007).

processing plants in the area between the border cities of Foz do Iguacu and Guaira.

Despite public recognition that agribusiness' economic progress is a political force to be reckoned with, it must be said that these changes cannot fail to be marked by conflicts and tensions that shape social experience. This experience is narrated in both, the formation of an urban working class, and the creation of gay identities that can be found throughout Brazil in recent decades. Among twelve young homosexually-oriented respondents interviewed in the cities of Assis Chateaubriand, Toledo (pop. 120,000), and Marechal Candido Rondon (pop. 46,000), four of them had worked, or still work, in the poultry industry. This was in addition to many others who expressed a desire to obtain employment in this industry.

While the agricultural industry is often celebrated for creating jobs in cities, there are harsh realities to which people respond. It is interesting to discuss the meaning and scope of involvement of young gay workers, who are involved in the industry and find themselves entangled in these new working relationships and urban conditions.

This concern merits an historical analysis to the extent that it seeks not only to understand how they enter this productive sector or live daily beyond it, but also how they deal with prejudice and homophobia as components of these labour relationships and urban life.

Another dimension of this experience, as evident in Márcio's interview, is also important: to learn the historicity of how these young people are incorporated and assimilated as workers into these production dynamics. This is because these young people have access to jobs in these industrial plants and may remain there for a long time, despite the current and notorious extensive discrimination against homosexuals living in rural or small towns. Thus, it is our objective to learn how gay otherness is processed as a sense of belonging by gays and heterosexuals in these new urban living and working relationships and within rapid ongoing changes.

Faced with the challenge of interpreting the interviews, we must remember that we deal with sources resulting from live human experiences, produced in areas marked by structures of feelings as defined by Raymond Williams.<sup>3</sup> The recorded interviews were added to informal conversations with employees and other city residents, in addition to other ethnographic texts, that offer different interpretative possibilities. These are located beyond the plane of finding productive changes that are repeatedly considered to be substantially capable of resolving contradictions, arising in these relational universes constructed between country and city.

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<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Marxismo y literatura* (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1988).

Let us turn to the trajectory of our interviewee. The son of a small farming family, Márcio was first employed in the fields. He remembered migrating to the city:

Then, it happened like this: my father worked on the farm, in fact my stepfather; my mother, my stepfather, so my brothers, I am their brother by my mother. My step-father is Japanese. And he worked on the farm. And I helped him; I worked as well. My other brother also helped working on the farm. So, the reason was that the owner of the farm was not making a profit with the property, so he decided to lease the property to plant soybeans; before it was just cattle. Hence he would be forced to lay off employees, who were no longer needed. Hence my father was one of the dismissed workers. Then we stood there aimlessly, after we had been living there for ten years. Then we thought: where do we go now? Hence my father had his grandchildren here in Assis, and then he wanted to come here; and me too. At first I was interested in coming here because I thought that here, as a bigger city, I would get a job suddenly easier than in Alto Piquiri or that region there. Then we talked. We got talking and decided that we would be better to come here. Then we came here, and we are here today.<sup>4</sup>

It should be noted that the rural experience remembered by Márcio has not been represented as something idealized. It is remembered as a social space under transformation. Even the big farmer who employed Márcio's family, theoretically under better economic conditions, did not survive the new order. This caused problems for the owner, and he had to change the system of production "compelling" the dismissal of Marcio's stepfather.

We should consider a more detailed view of Márcio's narrative argument. We are told that his stepfather's dismissal by the farmer was without conflict, removing the owner's moral cost. Regardless of how Marcio narrated the episode, from which he indirectly absolved the employer, the crucial part is that he remembers that "I stood there aimlessly."

Marcio's high expectations (of moving to a larger city) seemed to be the cause for the warm tone assigned to summary dismissal by the employer: "at first I was interested in coming here because I thought that here [*Assis Chateaubriand*], since it is a slightly bigger city, I would get a job suddenly easier than in Alto Piquiri or that region there." In other words, the narrative seems not just to consider the dismissal by the employer as the reason for moving but also, in other ways, the expectation that Assis Chateaubriand would improve the

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<sup>4</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

possibilities and choices for his family. It should be noted that the interview minimizes the insecurity represented by moving the family to the city. The fact that there are people known by the family in the city, in this case, grandchildren of his stepfather, whom Marcio respectfully calls “father,” contributed a lot to the process; so much so that: “Then we talked. We got to talking and came to the conclusion that it would be better for us coming here.”

In the ordinary familiar conversation, the decision of moving to the city imposed on the narrator a sublime way out of the universe of agricultural work. In his remembrances, “at this phase of my life on the farm, this coexistence was very difficult, because I saw myself in the middle of those men working. Among men everything is talked about, about women, I do not know what? And I felt completely lost, totally.” The feeling of not belonging to that space gave rise to a crucial question: “My God! What am I doing here?” On the other hand, the crystal clear answer: “Here is not my place!” To Márcio, rural life, and his dealing with other people, all presumed to be heterosexual, disturbed him deeply with feelings of pain and a new longing:

The desire I had was to get away from that place. I did not feel well. I was not happy, not what I wanted for me. Wow! How many times I tried to talk to my mother and said: Mom, this is not for me. Wow! I always wanted to go to town to work, to have a so different life, meet people, people like me. Where I could have friends, share this experience, live together.<sup>5</sup>

The desire of sharing life with people that could relate to his gay existence is a constant benchmark in Márcio’s interview. According to what he relates, Marcio’s difficulty was the fact that in the countryside, where he lived and worked, there were “no gays, no lesbians at all. At least not accepted, and if so it was much hidden, because a place like this [*small size gesture*] has a lot of prejudice.” The hometown dimension contrasts with that of the arrival place; it marks his experience and gives rise to other challenges that at first were not so clear, much less easily solved:

After I moved, it actually happened that I came here to Assis [*Chateaubriand*], I knew many homosexuals, so I got involved with some of them because there was that affinity. But it was an experience for me so far with the homosexuals with whom I became involved; it was not something that made me one hundred percent. I felt that something was missing; until then I had only been involved with straight men, and the

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<sup>5</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

ones I had been involved here were like me, there was that affinity. I felt something was missing, lacked something.<sup>6</sup>

According to Márcio's interview, in addition to the move from field to the city, another important experience is that of homosexual relationships, not necessarily with gays, which until then seemed to be held under idealization. Implicitly, the interview brings to the forefront an awareness of the frustration experienced regarding the expectations of other personal relationships that he understood as difficult, or impossible, to be experienced in the countryside. In reality, he seems to reflect on the difficult breaks brought about by the frustrations imposed on him by society. Also, it forces a comparison and, in turn, a relativization regarding the meanings of urban living. It almost seems ironic, but the young Márcio seems to say that rural life held better experiences, whether gay or not, than the urban life.

To Márcio, the city was not just a promise; it was a reality that needed to be understood, because "many times, almost often, you suffered discrimination. People talked, putting you in situations."

Over time, I learned to live, to filter. [...] Do not make that hurt me. Because I understood that prejudice has always existed and will always exist. We have to learn to live with it. Unfortunately it is one thing, it is reality. It existed, exists, right? We have to learn.<sup>7</sup>

Márcio's narrative puts into discussion a number of situations of conflict and discrimination. One of the most compelling memories brought forth in the interview was related to living his public sexual orientation. In this interview he tells of a number of situations of prejudice experienced on the public transportation system of Assis when he goes to work:

Even on the bus I go, the seat by my side has been empty for two years next May. I will complete two years of work in the company, and no man will sit by my side. I take it and I suffer a bit on the bus because of it. It's happened that the bus is full and there is an empty seat beside me and the guys will stand all the way from here [*Assis Chateaubriand*] to [*omitted*], but he will not sit with me. It happens!<sup>8</sup>

The daily bus transportation is a rather dramatic social space of experimentation for his experience as a worker and as gay. To Márcio, it is not easy to deal with

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<sup>6</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

this situation regarding the prejudice. It is a long trip of about 40 kilometers, equivalent to one hour of travelling, and yet no one will sit beside him. This situation was not limited to transportation, but also on the job. As he said:

Just like yesterday, for example, an event happened. I entered the bathroom, there were two guys talking. Then the other came out and, the other left behind him. They did not want to be seen with me. This! Do not talk to me, do not greet me. It's nasty, but ...<sup>9</sup>

The bathroom is part of the work environment narrated by Márcio. He resents not sharing this space, as other workers in the meat packing plant avoid him due to his being openly gay. According to the interviewee, “this happens a lot.”

In the sector where I am, I work with two guys. There is nothing to talk to them, no matter. It's just a work thing. They begin to talk to each other, talk about football, talk about women, talk about cars and I'm totally lost. Wow! I do not know. From me to them I just talk technicalities, you know? There is nothing to talk about. The subjects do not match.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that the indignation of Márcio is not about an expectation of coexistence marked by sexual or homo-oriented emotional relationships. This young man suffers from the inability to live his work experience in broader terms, and hence beyond the restrictive scope of the condition as worker. For him, the work space means much more than the place to earn a living. The work in the plant is an important space of sociability that, if restricted by prejudice, becomes limited only to talk about “technicalities.” Talking to colleagues about issues usually taken as essentially heterosexual is, in the understanding of this young gay man, a form of pressure against his homosexual presence within that industry. According to Márcio,

What I want is not that people accept me. That's not what I want. I want respect. The fact that they do not accept me as I am, I wish they would not find the right to be condemning me, my life, the kind of life I live. There in the warehouse where I work, for example, people respect me, at least so in the piece of work, respect me, you know? But, there are those people who do not talk to me; there are those people that when I go, they make fun, make a joke, a sting. I try not to give importance to it. Because if I

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<sup>9</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

give importance to what people say, I would never leave home.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the tone of contempt for such issues, it seems that Márcio really resents much about the prejudice suffered, but not enough to remain cloistered at home. According to the elaboration of this process, he acknowledges: “they do not want me on their side, it is clear. So, I go there, when I arrive I change clothes and leave already. At dinner time I go there, brush my teeth, then I leave and go to queue.” The interview, in turn, is not only about the prejudice suffered, but also the understanding of the challenges that his gay orientation imposes to live in that workspace. In this sense, it is interesting to note that this difficult coexistence is not restricted only to the practice of being silent. Here's another example:

And it happened that a guy comes with a magazine [of women] wanting me to look at it while saying: Wow, do you not like? You have to look! And I felt bad because there were more people, more guys and they were laughing, they were messing with my face. So I left my sector and talked to my boss. Then we went to talk to the foreman and it was solved.<sup>12</sup>

It is interesting to note that Márcio acted not only in order to minimize conflict, but also not to confront his co-workers with his gay identity. Thus, he turns to the bosses to deal with the harassment he had suffered. Further on in the interview, he remembered how a situation had been resolved by the bosses in a way that “forwarded and decided, and even later on in the year he came to me and asked how things were, because I transferred from that sector.” Besides telling how the conflict was made and solved by the foreman, Márcio seemed to emphasize his helpful conduct, so much so that “he asked if the staff of another sector is not messing with me, the guys.”

At first, we can sympathize with management for taking such a principled stand, as told by Márcio. But we must go beyond this mere observation, which may help us understand other plots and conflict transformation in this environment. For this we need to deal with the answer that the young man gave to his main concern:

And I said: look when it happens, it happens. But, I do not have the time to listen to what they say or what they do. I did not even know who the person is, but it happened. And he even said that if I felt really hurt I should tell him to take action. In this regard, I have nothing to complain about my boss, because he is *super head*.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>13</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

Although he was concerned to emphasize the sense of this “*super head*” position assumed by the boss, something else seems to be going on in his narrative movement:

And you will be exposed? Of course, you will not. It will be particular and such. But you will be exposing yourself, distressing, that emotional distress. It will mess with you. It'll be bad. The more you move, the more distress, the more it makes you evil. And you end up leaving as a remedy.<sup>14</sup>

While posing dialogue as a response, the fact that he had the courage to pursue his rights as a worker, as well as positively cite the company's response to the prejudice, the young Márcio denotes an understanding the existence of a parameter of possibilities for that gesture: “the more you move, the more distress,” leading him to the only “remedy” of changing to a different work section.

The narrative presents, with relative clarity, the way this young man is led to understand the limits of his courage in denouncing injustices experienced in that workspace. In establishing a dialogue, we must understand that it also opens up a site centered on personal interests: “since I joined the company, I wanted to show my ability, that I have potential, I'm like a man, my life.” At this time, the young Márcio delimits his understanding of what he experiences at work and in his sexual life:

This issue of my sexual orientation, I am gay outside of the [factory] gate. From the moment I walked into the gate, I'll act like a man, I'll work and I will show that I have ability. Also, I do things that many men do not. I carry on, I do happen and, I argue that the fact that I'm gay does not mean I'm not able to work like a man, or if suddenly I have an office position of responsibility, decisions. Instead, I act normally, and always try to show that I have capacity. I am a man, am I not? There I work as such and try to make it happen. But it is tricky because many times, as people already know me, people turn up their nose and think, ah, he is not capable, and he cannot do it. But you, every day, you have to prove that you are able to, that you can. People are very mentally ill sometimes and very malicious in this sense.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, March 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Robson Laverdi, Interview with Márcio (pseudonym), 23 years old. Assis Chateaubriand: July 2009.

Although what Márcio says is his personal experience, we can shift our attention to some elements of this experience that have significance beyond individuality, to the social universe experienced by other gays at the work sphere. They are: the fact of responding, even subliminally, to the challenge of being better than any other workers as a way to “overcome” the perceived inferiority for being gay. Of course this cannot be taken as representing the deepest longings of professional accomplishment of this young man. Much less are we to stop believing that the working environment in question is strongly marked by a high sense of competitiveness in work activities. However, the narrative tone explicitly marks how this dilemma is present in the life experience of this young man, since “every day, you need to be proving that you are able, you can.” The interview, in turn, draws attention to the field of broader tension lived by these workers. Indeed, there was change. “Even a document was released. Everyone went through training explaining that the company cannot discriminate against anyone. Whether sexual orientation, color, religion, political opinion or any aspect.” In the set of tensions around the assumption of their sexual orientation, the reflective framework of his narration unravels with incredible force causing Márcio to assume the role of hostage of this situation:

Currently, I work on quality management. It has been a year and a half since I went to this sector. Wow! After that I then went through, I felt very valued, you know? I was recognized for my work, my effort, dedication, you know? And so when things start to go well in your life you feel more motivated, more acquainted to devote more time. Each time you try harder. Each time you learn new things. And in fact there are two sides: a personal life and professional life. So, we sometimes have to always seek to conciliate both, sometimes one is not so fine, but the other so. But this issue of professional field, you know? Currently, I am very pleased, you know? Thank God I managed to get where I longed to be and I am well pleased.<sup>16</sup>

The desire for personal achievement in labour relationships appears strongly marked by the experience of Márcio. It would be easy enough to believe precisely that, the way he refers to the workplace at the meat packing plant, would be disconnected from a broader reference point, in this case social life. In turn, we are led to think of those elements of the gay otherness experience. These elements acquire, in comparison with the broader interests and manifestations of capital, the ways of work exploitation as an increment in a new area of industrialization.

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<sup>16</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

This leads him to think about the promise of individual emancipation, which engenders further expectations. The interviewee explained:

It is like this: when I accepted myself, I took a position. It is as if some doors were closed, maybe not in the professional field, but suddenly for some people in friendship as well. They closed the door for me so tight that I cannot open it, it is very difficult. It is such a high barrier that it takes time to break down, I have to be patient, you know? And so, sometimes I even say, when there are people [gays] that ask me, talk to me and stuff, and I say: look, this decision is up to you. I can tell you the pros and cons of what I went through, but it is a personal decision. You have to know what you want for your life. I just do not think you should take another life, live on appearances. Now if you want to live in public or suddenly just to some people, friends, maybe you are well, who does not want to suddenly suffer so much ...<sup>17</sup>

In this passage, Márcio places the political significance of “coming out” strictly as what he terms “a personal decision.” Several dimensions emerge from this perspective; and it is worth emphasizing the different dialogic aspects in this regard. First, the narrator structures his testimony by placing the interviewer in a mirror role to Márcio’s own understanding. Thus, the narrative is grounded in mimic: a reality in which “it is like this.” In addition, the narrative assumes a political connotation as established by the statement: “I took a position.” Then, we see Márcio relating his individual experience to that of others who experience the same drama of making public their gay orientation. It is worth finally considering that when Márcio uses the expression “I went through,” he is implying a defense of his decision, while at the same time revealing the implicit costs and harshness of doing so.

Interestingly Márcio, although perhaps feeling more energized by the decisions taken and the accomplishments he has achieved, does not consider his decision as a universal guideline for other gays. For him, it’s up to each individual to understand the game of relationships and possibilities. In practice, the narrative shows, with some clarity, how in this field of labour relationships and in its full consciousness intertwined with social aspects, how much the values and feelings are not fixed, but deeply derived from a set correlation of forces.

And perhaps there is even more than that to what Márcio is saying. After considering the available evidence, what if the position of Márcio is not guaranteed in a supposed cross feeling marked by alleged greater visibility and gay acceptance in Brazil nowadays? If so, then there is a scornful awareness of

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<sup>17</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

the concrete conditions of competition marked by the new working relationships formed in his new environment. In relation to this issue, it is useful to quote Márcio, once again, in reference to the quandaries and pressures involved in publically accepted a gay orientation. Márcio's response strengthens our perception concerning the social vitality present in the individual narrative marked in the intricate experience of otherness relationships:

When I joined [company omitted], I have been there for three months, when I came to the conclusion that I had to two paths to follow: either I adapt and move on or I would try to be as many people, as many men I know. Try to live a life of appearances. What would be convenient was to get a girlfriend, but I would not be happy. I always tell my friends: I would not be able to do this to me, I would not be happy living a thing that it is not for me. I have to live what I want, life is one. I cannot stand living a life trying to please others and forego my happiness. Happiness is also part of us, you have to make your happiness, you write your story; it just depends on you. And so, when I came out of the closet there [company omitted] to people ... and so quickly to a very large proportion, the news spread. And so, it was a very difficult phase of my life, because I was very discriminated by men. People kept away from me; the men that did not have an understanding and did not know suddenly how to live with a person like this. Until then, at that time there were few people who had the courage to accept their orientation with no fear of anything.<sup>18</sup>

Márcio, in this sense, thinks his existence and action as a whole within the social environment, evaluating also the sense of his actions:

Over time I showed, I think, to people that the fact of being gay does not differentiate you from another person. You're just like everyone else; the difference is just this desire you have. This way of life. But in society you can exert your function, another normal person without any difficulty. And many indeed are people with whom you live that have difficulty in accepting you today, along with people well. It's a different way of thinking.<sup>19</sup>

From his "different way of thinking," the narrative plot of Márcio permits us to discuss the social network involved in the process of assuming gay otherness in

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<sup>18</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

that environment. An example is the mention of a co-worker that he chooses in order to represent the dynamics of the tensions within the company and beyond it:

No, I do not know where he [colleague] lives. He works at [company omitted] as well. I even got mad at him. There was one day, a period that I was working on another shift. Then he was working there and such and I went to talk to him. I felt free to speak it to him and then I asked him: look, I really admire people like us who accept their sexuality. Then he stopped and looked at me. Accept what? Then I said: being gay. And he said: but I'm not gay! I was so embarrassed. I was so embarrassed, I ... I did not know what to say. I blushed. I couldn't speak. I... [laughs].<sup>20</sup>

Concerned, Márcio is much more than disappointed at the co-worker who did not relate to the experience in the same way as accepting in public the experience of homosexuality. This practice of dialogue advocating for its “transparency,” evoked by a sense of belonging, did not seem to be the key for all gay experiences. Meanwhile, Márcio revealed to analysis other dimensions of the difficulty of dealing with gay otherness in corporations, which is not exclusive to a homosexual audience:

Thus, here in town where I live, I still do not know, I will not say it is lack of time or not. Because it always ends up leaving a little time, but I do not believe I have made new friends here in town with gay people. I know other people from other cities through friends of friends, so. We know each other and eventually establish a link of friendship. But people here [Assis Chateaubriand], as I already explained to you last time [the first interview recorded in 2007], I do not have many friends in the city. I have a few friends and so these people here in town, those I knew, I can say I have not so much happiness to meet them because they were people who did not come to add up in my life, they didn't do a cool thing. No...<sup>21</sup>

Loneliness seems to be reported as a powerfully active feeling when referring to his life in Assis Chateaubriand. In other words, Márcio has found the city not so welcoming. To have fun among peers, you need to go to “Cascavel [a nearby city]. I do not know if you know, there is an LGBT club and we used to always go there. We go there every Saturday as much as possible.”<sup>22</sup>

A lesbian friend and Márcio share this feeling of loneliness: “I always tell her I do not like going out here in Assis because I do not feel... In parts I do not

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<sup>20</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

feel comfortable when I go out.” Cascavel, which is a larger city with more than 250,000 residents, located just over 80 kilometers from where he lives, has drawn the attention of many young gay men by the existence of spaces of increased sociability for LGBT.<sup>23</sup> And yet this cannot be generalized, as many of the gay young people interviewed did not tread the same path.

The move to the Cascavel city on weekends takes other senses as well:

Just going there I suddenly feel a greater freedom for knowing people, for being really who you are. You can act like yourself. You can have fun without... It's not a matter of arousing the attention, but a matter of being judged, you ...<sup>24</sup>

For Márcio, the LGBT club,

It is a place with no fights. It is a very nice place for dancing, listening to music, meeting people. And by being the closest one here in the region, all the gay people go there. So it ends up being a gathering place. Then suddenly we don't go out only for...<sup>25</sup>

It is possible to state with some certainty that such experiences, even if they are narrated trying to faithfully transmit the social meanings of cruelty and violence experienced by him and shared by other young homosexuals, did not take from Márcio the energy of his purpose of personal fulfillment. Once, during the second interview in July 2009, he had already traced new horizons for his future:

So I'm trying to get back to school. The next year, earlier this year, there is an open college in [city omitted], which is once a week. Then my boss came up to me telling me, supporting me and that she would release me to go once a week to attend the classes. And I'm very excited to start studying. So it'll be something. It is well in the area of management of industrial process. So I'm very excited to start doing this.<sup>26</sup>

To attend an open college to study a subject of interest to the company may sound at first glance like a bland assimilation into the world of insecurity and the internalization of domination. However, from the fabric woven by the experience shared by Márcio in his two interviews, we must think more deeply

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<sup>23</sup> Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals.

<sup>24</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

<sup>25</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Laverdi, Interview with Márcio, July 2009.

about the implicit meanings of breaking paradigms that his story brings to the fore.

From farm to city, city to work, one city to another, Márcio's interview showed a conscious and alert narrative construction as to the field of choices and decisions shaped by the concrete situations of the protagonists. In the story, these protagonists are in constant tension with prejudice and oppression. And in turn, these tensions are circumvented by an existential courage, whose bargaining strength is derived from a very clear understanding of the situation experienced.

From these social universes brought to the reflective scene, made possible through oral history, we cannot nor should we speak of a gay world already formed and crystallized. However, as we seek to highlight in this discussion, oral history assumes not only a methodological role of reflection, but the challenge to test our interpretive capacity to understand the world in its relationships, from the individual universe to the social as was advocated by Raymond Williams.<sup>27</sup>

All of the above permits us, at least in part, to understand and overcome some pitfalls in the discourse on the benefits of industrialization. This is only possible when we take into account the pulsing concreteness of gay otherness as an identity that is also present in industrial plants as well as in other relationships and work spaces.

Still, we must say that we do not penetrate in all fields and directions of this social experience. Partly because, while wishing to comprehend its totality, it escapes us due to our inability to put ourselves in another's place. Elsewhere, because our interviewee, as he clearly explained: "I believe that what I wanted to show you was in response to your questions. Of course I could not show all of me." An interview is a conditioned construction of a source, as Márcio reminded us. Accordingly, it is the proper understanding of Márcio, and also of our own, that the narrative was the result of a relationship "as you were asking the questions." What reassures us in this process, with unsuspected strength of significance, is that "some part of me thinks I could go through with this conversation."

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<sup>27</sup> Raymond Williams, *La larga revolución* (Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 2003).