



Book Review

Diário de Pilar na Grécia, by Flávia Lins e Silva

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Translated into countries in America, Europe and Asia, *Diários de Pilar* - “Diaries of Pilar”, in free translation - is a bestselling series by Brazilian writer Flávia Lins e Silva. She was born in 1971, in Rio de Janeiro, graduated in journalism, worked as a scriptwriter at TV Globo - the main Brazilian TV channel - and wrote the *Diários de Pilar* series. The author also created the book series *Detectives do Prédio Azul* - “Detectives of the blue building” - and many other books. An award-winning book of hers is *Mururu no Amazonas* (2000) - “Mururu in Amazon” - which won the National Book Foundation's (FNLIJ) best children's book award in 2011. Co-authored with Cláudia Abreu, a famous Brazilian actress and screenwriter, she created the *Valentins* series.

The girl Pilar adventures, in each book of the series in which she is the protagonist, alongside her best friend, Breno, and her cat, Samba. Besides loving travelling, she is a questioning girl, with strong opinions and character, she loves and defends nature, animals and people. In *Diário de Pilar na Grécia* (2017) - “Pilar’s Diary in Greece” -, 1st book in the series, Pilar visits the Hellenic country and has contact with the local culture and mythology. Silva lived in many European countries and had the dream of being an international reporter, but as she could not make it come true (Flavia, n.d.). One way of “making it come true” was to project herself on a literary level and create a girl who would make journeys through ancestral civilizations. Therefore, Pilar may be, in that way, her projection in the literary universe.

Originally Silva's book was called *As Peripécias de Pilar na Grécia* (2001) - “Pilar’s adventures in Greece” -, but it received an updated version that changed both textually and visually the original work. The illustrator became Joana Penna, who created Pilar, currently known by the public in several media that the text was adapted, as theatre and cartoons: long hair in braids, blue overalls, striped leggings and a customized brown suitcase. The narrative has changed from the original version of the text, written in the 3rd person as a travelogue, to the 1st person, as a diary/confessional text. This option brings the reader closer to the text and helps in the immersion of the reading, because they can feel like travelling with the protagonist through the contact with her intimate text. In the diary-book there is intimate information of Pilar, as it is expected by this textual genre. In this way, the reader gets to know how the protagonist organizes her trips, her family photos, thoughts, drawings, notes, among others. Through the plot, we get to know the sadness Pilar feels for the absence of her father, who travelled by boat even before Pilar's mother found out she was pregnant, and until then no longer.

The updated edition of Silva's text, launched by the label “Pequena Zahar”, brings on the back cover of the book a cursive calligraphy that simulates Pilar's own signature in her diary-book, which grants her identity to the object in question. *Diário de Pilar na Grécia* is written on pages that simulate lined sheets, with the text precisely synchronized on the lines, which gives the book the appearance of a diary at a graphic level. Other resources that help it is the use of yellowish colouring, which simulates paper that has aged over time and managed to be preserved, like the paperback diaries widely sold in stationery shops and bookstores.

The narrative begins when Pilar's grandfather, Pedro, travels to Greece. After returning home posterior to a fight with her best friend, Breno, Pilar's mother receives a call from the Greek government saying that he has passed away, but Pilar refuses to believe it. Visibly shaken at home, she discovers a note her grandfather left about a so-called magic hammock. Having recently adopted a cat - still nameless - who jumps into the yellow hammock, she follows him and, by accident, discovers the hammock is a portal to other places and historical periods. She and her cat are transported to Ancient Greece, followed by Breno. There they meet Helen of Troy, Silenus - father of the god Dionysus -, King Midas, Hercules, culminating in direct interaction with the very gods of Olympus, all in search of a chance to find their grandfather Pedro.

In contemporary children's literature, Pilar is an example of female protagonist who is not just a girl who could easily be replaced by any boy, but who has her own character and is the owner of her own decisions. From the beginning to the end, she shows herself active, as when she rebels against Breno, who makes a prank against her and does not accept Helen of Troy's suggestion to name her cat "Hercules", having chosen "Samba"- perhaps the best known Brazilian musical rhythm in Brazil and abroad. Pilar shows leadership, and she is the first to act wisely when rescuing Sileno from drowning on the beach, accepting to go into the sea, even dressed, to save him. Even scolded, Pilar always has an answer and does not seem to regret her choices, and sometimes she acts on impulse, such as accepting to compete against Hercules and Hermes in a race through the clouds just to have the chance to know where her grandfather Pedro is. Her determination is admirable as she challenges Zeus himself, even accepting to go to Hades itself, the world of the dead according to the Greeks, to see her beloved grandfather again. Such willpower and courage are worthy of being compared to those of the doll Emília, by Monteiro Lobato- one of the greatest names in Brazilian modernist literature-, Alice, by Lewis Carroll, or Pippi Longstock, by Astrid Lindgren.

The *Diário de Pilar na Grécia* seems to be more than a simple Carrollian or Lindgrenian imitation, since in this book - as in others of the series - Silva employs a successful formula of her own, capable of satisfying her readers: it works knowledge, culture, entertainment. Even if it is a text from a peripheral country like Brazil, this is a case of a young children's book that deserves to be disseminated outside the Lusophone space.

References

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Bio-note

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