Pureza (1937) by José Lins do Rego (1901-1957) translated as Pureza – A novel of Brazil (1947/8) - A pearl of a novel, neglected for too long, a love story but much more. A youth falls in love with daughters of the Pureza station master as he tries to deal with his state of mind. Echoing our current lives, finding sense and meaning in one’s life and healing oneself by getting away from it all and taking mindful walks in a paradise-like countryside. Interspersed with references to the intellectual and entrepreneurial legacy of the British in Brazil. Its magnificent setting in the northeast of Brazil at the time of the British steam railway - the Great Western of Brazil (1883-1950), which ran from Brum in Recife to Pureza in the town of Timbaúba! Gilberto Freyre KBE (1900-1987), in his social history Ingleses no Brasil, refers to J. Lins do Rego and other authors, who portrayed histories of the British railway in Brazil. (1948:127).
The timeless appeal of the romance of railways and the literary landscape of Pureza, train station and hamlet, is a delightful 20th century page-turner and a homage to the legacy of the entrepreneurial spirit of the British in Brazil, too!

José Lins do Rego, a very original author of the Recife Modernism, is regarded as one of fathers of the regional social literature in Brazil.

Any 21st century young person (…or not so young) will promptly identify with the protagonist: searching for direction in life, searching for the meaning of love and how to heal oneself from depression in days marked by the railway timetable.

How to deal with the conundrum of loving …or is it lusting after? … the two daughters of the station master?

Follow the pathways of mindful walking in a magical paradise lost— and learn about iconic Brazilian north-eastern trees including those planted by the British.

The railway history:
a group of enterprising Brits met & created the Great Western of Brazil Railway Company Limited in London in 1872 – a Brazilian counterpart of the UK Great

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Western Railway Company launched in 1835 – duly licenced in Imperial Brazil and a first concession ever given in Brazil in 1875 to build a railway in Pernambuco linking Recife to Limoeiro! Originally, the line linked the Brum Station in Recife to Pureza Station, close to the place where the state of Pernambuco borders with Paraíba, becoming operational from 1881 to 1883.

The novel became an immediate success and, in 1940, made into a celebrated film, Pureza, produced by Adhemar Gonzaga and directed by the Portuguese film director Eduardo Chianca de Garcia set to music by some of the best-loved composers and musicians.

**Details of available publications:**

**ENGLISH**


ASIN: B004H3GBBS

Also available as
https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Pureza.html?id=BK0tAAAAYAAJ&redir_esc=y&hl=en

**PORTUGUESE**

*Various editions available to date*

1937 Pureza Rio de Janeiro, Livraria José Olympio Editora, 1ª edição.


**Free download:**


file:///F:/Pureza/Pureza%20-%20José%20Lins%20do%20Rego.pdf

**SHORT HISTORY OF THE BOOK AND TRANSLATIONS**

José Lins do Rego wrote five novels about the sugar cane plantations and industry in the northeast of Brazil before penning his 1937 *Pureza*, namely, *Menino de Engenho* (1932), *Doidinho* (1933), Bangüê (1934), O Moleque Ricardo (1935) and *Usina* (1936).

Most literary histories and critical overviews have created an impression that only the first five novels deal with the sugar cane theme. Often, such an assertion is regurgitated without due critical appraisal. Rare voices have argued that this novel is a thematic abstract of the earlier novels and a very enticing one. The best proof is in the eating of the pudding. As any reader progresses in enjoying *Pureza*, they soon realize
that the claim that the author left the sugar cycle behind to pursue a new thematic course is not exactly accurate.

The Pureza station (operational from 1883) served the hamlet Pureza, which belonged to the Usina Cruangí (sugarmill) in the northern forested area of the neighbouring municipality of Timbaúba. The old railway station is a reasonable state of repair and was used as a residence. Noteworthy is the sheer size of its yard which extends to the sliding, serving the sugar mill. It is an evidence of the size of the freight cars that were maneuvered there as well as the volume of goods transported. Pureza had strategic importance for many decades. The Usina Cruangí in Pernambuco may be the only sugar mill using the railway to transport demerara sugar, ethanol, molasses and the like in specially adapted railway cars. An old steam locomotive remains in the Pureza yard.

The Great Western operated from 1883 to 1950, was bought out by Rede Ferroviária do Nordeste and in 1975 became part of the Federal Railway System (RFFSA).

In writing his novels, José Lins do Rego sought to retrieve memories from his childhood and recorded bits of life in them. His stories are imbued with a huge love of life, at times melancholy, some sensuality (occasionally even eroticism) and offer deep psychological insights into how our early childhood experiences come to shape our future lives as well as our social and mental well-being. In writing memoirs, the author records local history adding a subtle social critique.
Gilberto Freyre KBE (1900-1987) in his influential 1948 social history *Ingleses no Brasil* refers to J. Lins do Rego and other authors, who portrayed histories of the British railway in Brazil.

*Ingleses no Brasil. Aspectos da Influência Britânica sobre a Vida, a Paisagem e a Cultura do Brasil* has been a key and invaluable source for historians almost anywhere since its publication, be it in acknowledged format or not. The original edition includes a number of illustrative plates with copies from original sources in Brazil, offering an additional dimension to the records of the activities of the British in Brazil. A folded handmade map illustrates types of occupations and cities where the British developed their professional lives. Many of those who came as entrepreneurs or in other capacities ended up settling in Brazil, at times marrying locally and established their professional lives in many corners of Brazil. It also contains details of the hardships that some of those Britons faced as their masters in Britain neglected them in their pursuit of business. *Ingleses no Brasil* may also serve as an invaluable source for any British descendants either in Brazil or elsewhere seeking their roots.

G. Freyre’s writing style is dense, illustrated with a bounty of examples and sources, and is underpinned by a set of theoretical ideas, which he developed from those in circulation in the first half of the 20th century, making some passages a bit more challenging perhaps for a non-specialist. It is, however, a treasure trove for intellectual historians. Equally his writing has instances of great literary acumen.

Freyre also speaks of the influence of the English/British novelists and authors in Brazil, many of whom have been translated since 19th century into Portuguese and have captivated the imagination of generations of readers. Illustrating this, Freyre states it was ‘an influence, which brings us surprise, as they are manifest even in those novelists who are strongly attached to their land or province, as is J. Lins do Rego [NK]’ (1948:32). Freyre and Rego became friends when Freyre returned from his studies in the U.S. They remained life-long friends engaging in a variety of intellectual pursuits.

Many of the original sources on the history of the Great Western of Brazil can be found in Ingleses no Brasil by G. Freyre. Of great interest is the fact that he refers to the work of Estevão Pinto (1895-1968), a historian of the Brazilian northeast, an invaluable primary source, at the time of writing unpublished manuscript shared with Freyre, subsequently published in 1949:

**História de uma estrada de ferro do nordeste: (contribuição para o estudo da formação e desenvolvimento da empresa The Great Western of Brazil Railway Company Limited e das suas relações com a economia do nordeste brasileiro)** [History of a north-eastern railway; (contribution to the study of the creation and development of The Great Western of Brazil Railway Company Limited and its relations with the economy of the Brazilian north-east (NK)]

Estevão Pinto has produced a very comprehensive set of history books and articles about the northeast of Brazil, which remain an invaluable source.
It is worth noting that Martin Cooper in his *Brazilian Railway Culture* published in 2011 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing) fails to include either the novel *Pureza* and José Lins do Rego or Estevão Pinto in his publication despite including Gilberto Freyre’s *Ingleses no Brasil. Aspectos da Influência Britânica sobre a Vida, a Paisagem e a Cultura do Brazil*.

José Lins do Rego dedicates his *Pureza* to the poet and art critic Manuel Bandeira (Manuel Carneiro de Sousa Bandeira Filho, 1886 —1968). The author was a friend a circle of distinguished intellectuals. This dedication does not appear in the translation into English.
In *Pureza*, José Lins do Rego refers to Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and particularly to his *Jude the Obscure* (last novel, published as a serial in 1894 & in book format 1895). A most fascinating reference in the north-east of Brazil. Perhaps, not by chance, the author most probably learned about Thomas Hardy from Gilberto Freyre. A closer analysis would offer evidence that Lins do Rego read Hardy. Lins do Rego would most certainly identify with Hardy’s portrayal of the challenges of the Victorian society in England. And one could venture the thought that the manner that both Hardy and Lins do Rego created women characters is quite fascinating.

There is a series of links. Freyre refers to the English engineer Thomas Plantagenet Bigg-Wither (1845-1890), author of *Pioneering in South Brazil* published by John Murray in London in 1878, following a series of lectures at the Royal Geographical Society offering a detailed portrait of the State of Paraná which was read by Thomas Hardy.

Covert references to the content of Bigg-Wither’s book appear in Hardy’s novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented* (1891): Hardy sends his hero to Curitiba and includes comments on some of the hardships faced by British farmers and others elsewhere in Paraná in parts of Covert references to the content of Bigg-Wither’s book appear in Hardy’s novel *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*.

Thomas Plantagenet Bigg-Wither was the 10th son of Lovelace Bigg-Wither. In Paraná, he also played a role in creating land registry as he had spent three years exploring the whole state of Paraná. His *Pioneering in South Brazil* was translated into Portuguese as ‘Novo Caminho no Brasil Meridional’: A Provincia do Paraná by Temístocles Linhares and published by Livraria José Olympio Editora. It is illustrated and contains a map. The original is available at https://archive.org/details/pioneeringinsout021878bigg.

On his return to England, Thomas P. Bigg-Whither wrote ‘The valley of the Tibagy, Brazil’ published with the help by the Royal Geographical Society.
As I have commented and written elsewhere, Bigg-Wither’s great-great—great grandson was a student of mine at the British Institute (Cultura Inglesa) in Curitiba and shared the story of his forebear as we discussed *Tess of the d’Urbervilles*, the set book for Cambridge English Foreign Language exams in 1980s. There is no doubt that this represents a most fascinating migration of ideas. This link between Thomas Hardy and Thomas P. Bigg-Wither is equally relevant for both Brazilians and British.

Ten years after the publication of Pureza, which was an instant success in Brazil, a translation into English by Lucie Marion was published in the First Novel Series (number 3) of the Hutchinson International Authors Limited in London in 1948. There is no foreword or detail about either the author or the translator Lucie Marion.
The British Library lists another two books by a Lucie Marion (1948) Be your own chef: simple French cookery and (1952) The Home Chef published by G. Duckworth. One could even speculate it is the same person. However, no details could be found about the translator, who mercifully produced a good translation. She uses the now politically incorrect word for a black person. The translator uses the names of Brazilian trees in the original (without annotating) and curiously, she mistranslates or misspells the translation of ‘cigarra’. Her translation uses the word ‘consumption’ for what originally was ‘tísica’, the word used for TB. More recent reprints of Pureza have substituted it for ‘tuberculose’ and, thus, lost the additional references conveyed by ‘consumption’. Further research, perhaps of the publisher’s archives, may unveil who Lucie Marion actually was, or whether this was a pen name.

Pureza was adapted to the cinema very early in 1940 directed the Portuguese filmmaker Eduardo Chianca de Garcia (1893-1983) and produced by the Brazilian screenwriter and journalist Adhemar Gonzaga (1901-1978) with a time-honoured cast: Procópio Ferreira, Sara Nobre, Conchita de Moraes, Sônia Oiticica, Nilza Magrassi, Sérgio Serrano, Roberto Acácio, Sadi Cabral, Manoel Rocha, Mendonça Balsemão, Alfredo Calado, Reginaldo Calmon, Zaira Cavalcanti, Dorival Caymmi, Elias Celeste, Carlos Deca, Bandeira de Melo, Pedro Dias, Artur Leitão, Roberto Lupo, Zizinha Macedo, Janir Martins, Jaime Pedro Silva, J. Silveira and Júlia Vidal.

The sound track is most impressive featuring by Dorival Caymmi and Francisco Scarambone and the notable Maestro Radamés Gnatalli.

SHORT BIOGRAPHY

JOSÉ LINS DO REGO (1901- 1957)
José Lins do Rego (José Lins do Rego Cavalcanti) was born in Engenho Corredor, in the town of Pilar in the state of Paraíba on 3rd June 1901, and died in the city of Rio de Janeiro in the state of Rio de Janeiro on 12th September 1957.

Son of João do Rego Cavalcanti, owner of a famous sugar mill, Engenho Tapuá, in the municipality of São Miguel de Taipu, Paraíba and Amélia Lins Cavalcanti. His mother was killed by his father in a fit of schizophrenia, and then young son was moved to his grandfather’s sugar mill.

His grandfather was the prominent Colonel Bubu do Corredor, José Lins Cavalcanti de Albuquerque, owner of eight sugar mills. Young Lins do Rego remained in Corredor until the age of 12. He started his education at the boarding school Colégio
de Itabaiana in Paraíba and, then, at the Instituto Nossa Senhora do Carmo and at Colégio Diocesano Pio X in João Pessoa, capital of the state. Following that he studied at the Colégio Carneiro Leão e Osvaldo Cruz in Recife, capital of the state of Pernambuco. In 1920, he started his law degree at the University in Recife.

He had inherited various roots from his forebears linked to the Brazilian northeast, from a long line of people engaged in the sugar cane plantations, mills and industry, of senzalas and black slaves, who moulded that part of Brazil from the first sugar plantations established by the early Portuguese settlers and Jesuits. In his childhood in the countryside, he witnessed the decline of the traditional sugar mills replaced by industries effecting great socio-economic changes, which greatly concerned him.

At high school, he showed his precocious literary talents. Various literary influences would bring inspiration to him: in 1916, as a boarder he discovered O Ateneu by Raul Pompéia. O Ateneu is a repository of most interesting ideas on education and universal culture. In 1918, at the age of 17 he discovered Machado de Assis through Dom Casmurro and he often reiterated how much Machado de Assis was a major influence on him. Society and ethics was very much a key concern for Machado de Assis and José Lins do Rego would emulate him.

Whilst reading law, he started writing for the Jornal do Recife, which launched in the 19th c. and continued into the 20th with notable intellectuals contributing to it, for instance Tobias Barreto, Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, Assis Chateaubriand, to mention but a few. He made acquaintance with Gilberto Freyre, who influenced him and became a life-long friend. In 1922, he founded a weekly Dom Casmurro with Osório Borba. He made various literary friends there: José Américo de Almeida, Osório Borba, Luis Delgado, Aníbal Fernandes. In 1923, José Lins do Rego became a Bachelor of Law.

In 1924, he married his cousin Philomena (Nanã) Massa Lins do Rego, daughter of the Old Republic Senator Antônio Massa (1864-1958). They had three daughters. In 1925, he started working a public prosecutor in Manhuaçu in the state of Minas Gerais, but soon he resigned moving to Maceió, the capital of Alagoas in 1926 working as a bank inspector until 1930, and consumer goods inspector from 1931 to 1935. There he began to write for Jornal de Alagoas and joined a group of authors and intellectuals, for example, Graciliano Ramos (author of Vidas Secas), Rachel de Queiroz (author of O Quinze), the great lexicographer Aurélio Buarque de Holanda, the poet Jorge de Lima, the notable journalist Valdemar Cavalcanti, Aloísio Branco, Carlos Paurilio.

He published his first book Menino de engenho there in 1932, a key modern Brazilian novel. João Ribeiro praised the novel for which he was awarded the Graça Aranha Foundation Prize. In the following year, he published Doidinho. His literary career was successfully launched and he would move to the federal capital of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro, in 1935 continuing to publish successfully. He was awarded another two literary prizes, the Felipe d'Oliveira Prize for his novel Água-mãe (1941), and the Fábio Prado for Eurídice (1947).
In 1955, he became a patron of chair 25 of the Brazilian Academy of Letters and formally welcomed by the academician Austregésilo de Athayde on 15th December 1956. His address to the Academy needs to be (re)read as it mirrors many of his ideas, motivations and principles and continues to have a great freshness.

His innovative approach to novel writing is further corroborated by the novel *Brandão entre o mar e o amor* written in collaboration with Jorge Amado, Graciliano Ramos, Aníbal Machado and Rachel de Queiroz. José Lins do Rego, wrote the second chapter ‘O mistério de Brandão (Glória)’ for this novel. It was published in 1942 São Paulo: Martins.

José Lins do Rego was also mad about football and served in various capacities at Clube de Regatas Flamengo and the Brazilian Sport Confederation (extinguished in 1978 and replaced by CBF).


In addition to the film based on *Pureza*, other novels were made into films: *Menino de engenho* (1965), by Glauber Rocha and Walter Lima Júnior, directed by Walter Lima Júnior and *Fogo morto* by Miguel Borges directed by Marcos Faria. And documentaries:

- **José Lins do Rego** produced by José Olympic Editora directed by Walter Lima Júnior & awarded the National Cinema Institute Prize (shorts) in 1969.
- **O Engenho de Zé Lins** (documentary, 2006). Produced and directed by Vladimir Carvalho. Awarded prize at Festival de Brasília 2006. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NftT5Mb10jk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NftT5Mb10jk)


There are translations of some of his works into German, Korean, Spanish, French, Italian, Romanian, Russian and Swedish. Only two novels have been translated into English so far: *Pureza: A Brazilian Novel* & *Plantation Boy*.

A museum dedicated to the author - Museu José Lins do Rego (FUNESC). was founded in in João Pessoa, Paraiba in 1985, a large site. The Museum holds 5 thousand items of the author and their website states that they digitalized his materials but, regrettably, no further details are available on their website. It is situated at Rua Abdias Gomes de Almeida 800.
Maria Christina Lins do Rego, one of his daughters, is also a writer. An article on her book launch in 2014 is available at http://oglobo.globo.com/rio/bairros/filha-de-jose-lins-do-rego-lanca-livro-de-contos-de-ficcao-aos-81-anos-14818362#ixzz4fMn86h00

Further details can be found at:  
http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/pessoa5630/jose-lins-do-rego

GOMES, Heloísa Toller – The Presence of Cassandra: Women in Faulkner’s Absalom, Absalom!, and in José Lins do Rego’s “Fogo Morto”

OLIVEIRA, Iranilson Buriti de – O autor e a autoria: José Lins do Rego em cena.  
http://www.estacoesferroviarias.com.br/efcp_pe/pureza_historico.htm


NB. there are numerous articles and books written about a multiplicity of aspects of the oeuvre by José Lins do Rego both in Portuguese and in other languages. However, there is no better starting point that the original text.

Attendance is free, but booking is essential:  
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