BRAZILIAN BILINGUAL BOOK CLUB
| JOÃO DO RIO* | VERTIGINOUS LIFE |
17th MAY 2018, 6.30-9 PM

2018 – The year of reading Brazilian Literary Greats & unlocking the power of our minds!

· JOÃO DO RIO* (1881-1921)
* pen name of
PAULO BARRETO (João Paulo Emílio Cristóvão dos Santos Coelho Barreto)

Vida Vertiginosa (1911)
translated into English as
Vertiginous Life (2017)

You will be swept off your feet by
João do Rio’s whirlwind tour of the future, futurology and futuristic consciousness at the dawn of the 20th century!
The first chapter-chronicle, a glimpse into the dizzying speeds of life and transport in the era of the automobile and aircraft & retracing the shattered dream of flying which the pharmacist, abolitionist, and inventor José do Patrocínio (1854-1905) patented in 1902 - a fabulous 45-meter Santa Maria airship (dirigible balloon) even before the famous Brazilian inventor and aviation pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont (1873-1932) flew his prize-winning airplane 14-BIS, the *Oiseau de proie* in 1906!

The last chapter-chronicle depicts a world of a futuristic ambitious 1920 Highly Evolved Man. You will surely be truly amazed at the uncanny forecasts of future life … in 2020!

On the fast-paced route through the other chapters you will realize that *VERTIGINOUS LIFE* offers a deft appraisal in early 20th century socio-historical, economic, financial, philosophical, anthropological and psychological portraits of ‘BRAZIL - the GREAT COUNTRY OF THE FUTURE’* in the words of by the seventh president of Brazil, Nilo Peçanha (1867 – 1924), a great statesman & the first mixed-raced/black president of Brazil.

*much, much earlier than Zweig’s 1941 *Brazil land of the future*!

DETAILS OF AVAILABLE PUBLICATIONS:

**ENGLISH**


**PORTUGUESE**


SHORT HISTORY OF THE BOOK AND TRANSLATION
*Vida Vertiginosa* was published in book format in 1911 by Garnier. By the time of publication, João do Rio had already published various books of chronicles, short stories, various plays, one novel, travel books and translations, some with various reprints as in the list appearing in the publication shows.

It is worth reminding oneself that by the time this volume was published, the author had already created a unique style of special reports about the city of Rio de Janeiro, which underwent the massive and swift modernization. Equally important is the fact that the collection of chronicles in this volume appeared after the 1908 *Exposição Nacional* (National Exhibition) held to celebrate the centenary of the opening of the Brazilian ports to friendly nations decreed on 28th January 1808, by the then Prince Regent of Portugal, Dom João de Bragança, later Dom João VI (1767 – 1926). The 1908 exhibition was set in a specially designed area in the Urca and showcased the best of the modernity, progress and development of Brazil: industrial and agricultural production, arts and crafts promoted by the federal government. The capital of Brazil had recently been urbanized under the administration of the mayor Francisco Pereira Passos (1936 – 1913) and underwent significant improvements in public health under the guidance of the scientist Oswaldo Cruz (1872 – 1917).

Site of the 1908 National Exhibition & various pavillions – Urca, Rio de Janeiro
The author Paulo Barreto adopted the nom de plume João do Rio, John from Rio, as from 1903 and *Vida Vertiginosa* is signed by this pen name, his trademark. The book is dedicated to Gilberto Amado (Gilberto de Lima Azevedo Sousa Ferreira Amado de Faria (1887-1969)), a lawyer, diplomat and writer.

The title page carries an epigraph in French ‘Quel changement ô ciel! et d’âme et de langage’ which serves as shorthand to the volume. The author gives us an insight into his thinking in his foreword. He states that similarly to the other books which he had published, his concern and desire is to analyse the current times and ‘awaken some historical interest in the most curious period of our social life’, namely, the transformation of the customs, practices and ideas. The study of men/people, crowds, their vices and aspirations ensue in a profile of a nation; indeed, ‘a few of those traits are sufficient to capture the psychological instant of that profile’. He concludes his foreword by stating that ‘both pedestrian common sense and science, which is its extension, have always recommended to state tirelessly that which appears relevant to us’.
The chronicles which are woven together as chapters, are a treasure trove of records of the social and intellectual history of Brazil. For instance, the first ‘A era do automovel’ contains various references to facts and events which may have fallen into general oblivion. The author shows amazement at the fact that the car had gained such prominence in the daily life of Rio and represents a huge change in everybody’s attitudes and behaviours. In a subtle manner, he refers to the shattered dream of flying that the pharmacist, abolitionist, and inventor José do Patrocínio (1854-1905) patented in 1902 - a fabulous 45-meter Santa Maria airship (dirigible balloon).

José do Patrocínio who was of mixed race, imported the first car to Brazil from France in 1892 and was a major figure. His Santa Maria airship broke down and generated great disappointment. Patrocínio died suddenly as he was paying homage to his fellow Brazilian inventor Alberto Santos-Dumont (1873-1932) at a public event. Indirectly, the author thus refers to the various initiatives of building airship and airplanes in Brazil from the end of 19th century. Regrettably, the reference to shattered airship and dream of flying were lost in the translation into English.

The chronicle ‘O povo e o momento’ is an analysis of national identity, citizenship and belonging. The themes which feature in the chapter-chronicles cover topics of similar concern in other large world cities at the time but place it firmly within the Brazilian context. The author tells us how Brazilians behave towards foreign visitors especially how subservient Brazilians tend to be. The fashion of five-o’clock tea and all manner of tea-houses where people meet to chat, show-off or hide. The students and lecturers (mis)behave in Brazilian schools with dire consequences – João do Rio has a great interest in education and highlights some of the educational reforms pursued at the beginning of the 20th century. One chronicle has its title in English, Modern Girls again developing the theme of modern manners and mores. The fashion of travelling abroad he changing types of employment create a crisis in the supply of servants and intrusion into private lives contain a great deal of psychological and social profiling. João do Rio also speaks about the shantytowns, their intricate structure and system on the hills and the parties and entertainment they provide. The (mal)practices of journalists along with their alleged self-image of power continues to be very true to this date along with backbiting and gossip certainly bring many truths to the fore. A history of ‘active feminism’ records the story of women who pioneered various movements and much more. As impressões do bororó, depicts the hypocrisy of the society and its customs through the eyes of an indigenous ‘prince’ living a super unreal life in Rio with a good pinch of sarcasm but also truth. The ‘jogo do bicho’ and vices of games and
effects on human behaviours could be applied directly to the 21st exacerbated addition to the plethora of digital gaming entrepreneurs and social media.

The reference to the first mixed race president of Brazil, Nilo Peçanha (1867 – 1924), is a timely reminder to all who currently claim that Brazil has never had a black president. The author depicts Peçanha’s principled administration and extolls his virtues as a great statesman, who at the end of his term would claim that Brazil is the great country of the future. It begs the question whether S. Zweig read either any of Peçanha’s speeches or Paulo Barreto’s texts. Every chronicle constitutes a part of a jigsaw of large landscape of Rio in the first decade of the 20th century.

The last chronicle is a true gem in futurology. By the describing a day in the life of the highly evolved man – “Homem Superior”, he provides a picture of an intense vertiginous life and the reader will find autonomous cars and planes, digital instantaneous communications with precursors of Alexas or Siris, text message-like systems, drones, and even self-lighting dresses (with fireflies or glow worms) of his wife.

The titles of the chronicle chapters use very specific capitalization. Some of the nouns appear in capitals – highlights the author makes surreptitiously. Regrettably this was missed in the Portuguese section of the 2017 bilingual edition.

The chronicles have wit and humour and contain numerous references to the British and French life and institutions and demonstrate how much of the British and French culture permeated life in Brazil.

Translated into English as *Vertiginous Life* by Ana Lessa-Schmidt, it was published by the New London Librarium, a small literary press in Hanover, Connecticut, US, in bilingual format in 2017. It contains an introduction by Bryan McCann, Chair of the History Department and Professor of Brazilian History at Georgetown University, but omits the epigraph, dedication and original foreword by João do Rio. Instead, there is a foreword by B. McCann.

Ana (Cláudia) Lessa-Schmidt, born in Rio, grew up in the Amazon, and has lived in the UK since 2004. She holds a BA degree in English Literature from the Federal University of Amazon, an MA in Contemporary British Society and a PhD in Brazilian Cultural Studies (Protest Music during the dictatorship) and also teaches at the Federal University of Amazon. She has been working as a Senior Editor Translator to New London Librarium (NLL) and Glenn Cheney since 2014. She is also translating another book by João do Rio *Vertiginous Life*. She translated of one short story *Trio in A Minor* in the Machado de Assis short story selection *Ex-Cathedra* as well. Ana Lessa-Schmidt, who also translated *As Religiões no Rio* mentions the fact that it was Fábio Lima, from the Brazilian National Library, who convinced her to translate João do Rio.

The fact that the translated text appears side by side with the original has various advantages for bilingual readers or those who are learning Portuguese. The whole text would benefit from a thorough revision as various errors were not edited out. In addition, the splitting of syllables has probably been made automatically, which leaves the reader with a niggling feeling detrimental to the enjoyment of reading, as syllables are repeatedly split in the wrong place on the same page. The New London Librarium would need to engage a third-party reader to proofread and weed out errors before printing the translations.

Notes to the chapters appear at the bottom of the page and regrettably some have not been revised and edited, contain redundant details or written in poor English, with value judgements where they ought to be neutral (e.g. Afonso Pena is described as a
‘cool researcher’ (!?), and fandango as ‘noisy’). There is a mismatch between pages 69-71 and various basic mistakes in English in translation and notes there.

Needless to say, there are challenging words and concepts to translate (e.g., povo may be rendered as people or nation depending on the context; velivolo, airship is translated as clipper (?!); groselheira is gooseberry not currant; bonde is translated as tram(way) and streetcar (electric which was not the case); burro - donkey is translated as mule and more). There is an excessive use of inverted commas for direct speech (American English) and sections which are not part of ‘dialogues’ do not follow the register of the original in various sections.

**BIOGRAPHY**

**JOÃO DO RIO** (1881-1921)

**PAULO BARRETO**

( João Paulo Emílio Cristóvão dos Santos Coelho Barreto)

João Paulo Emílio Cristóvão dos Santos Coelho Barreto was born in Rio de Janeiro on 5th August 1881 and died in Rio de Janeiro at a young age on 23rd June 1921. He was a pioneering journalist, chronicler and historian, short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist and translator.

His father Alfredo Coelho Barreto was a mathematics and astronomy teacher, from a traditional family from the State of Rio Grande do Sul, and the founder of the Apostolic Positivist Church and his mother was Florência Cristóvão dos Santos Barreto, a mulatta, daughter of the Director of the Santa Casa de Misericórdia Clinic in Rio. João do Rio was baptized as a positivist by his father in 1883 and his godfather was a famous philosopher and mathematician, a positivist Raimundo Teixeira Mendes (1855 – 1927), credited with creating the
national motto ‘Order and Progress’. The author had a brother Bernardo, who died at the age 12.

João do Rio started his journalistic career in 1899 and wrote for *O Paiz*, *O Dia*, *Correio Mercantil* and various other newspapers and journals under various pen names. As a mulatto or black, the author was allegedly ‘whitened’ by the literary circles which he inhabited. A diatribe with the author Lima Barreto (1881-1922), also a black, ended up portraying João do Rio as a caricature via the character Raul de Gusmão in his novel *Recordações do Escrivão Isaias Caminha* (1909).

João do Rio published his *As Religiões do Rio* in 1904. He was elected to the Brazilian Academy of Letters, patron of the Chair 26 in 1910. His 1908 *A Alma Encantadora das Ruas* (The beguiling soul of the streets) was written from the perspective of a *flâneur* and innovated in merging report writing with chronicling recording the multiple facets of an imagined *belle époque* Rio de Janeiro. He also introduced interviews with the leading Brazilian writers from May 1905, published in *O Momento Literário* by Garnier in 1907.
Not only did João do Rio translate *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* (1890/1) by Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), one of the earliest translations serialized in *A Noite* from 21st June 1911, which later appeared in book format in 1923 published by Garnier, he was a keen promoter of Oscar Wilde’s works in Brazil. He also translated *Salome*. 
There is a translator’s note in his rendering of *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* in Portuguese (see highlighted below) in which he argues that translating is service and that it is always lesser than the original. The date is 1919 and he indicates that he was in London. Certainly, a most relevant source for the historiography of literary translations.

---

**NOTA**

_O retrato de Dorian Gray apareceu no Lippicott’s Magazine em 1890. Foi de súbito o maior escândalo literário de que há memória. Os jornais, numa crise de furor inaudito, diziam do romance os maiores horrores. E consequentemente diziam também do autor._  
_Oscar Wilde escreveu várias cartas aos jornais em resposta aos ataques. O romance apareceu em volume com maior número de capítulos e com muitos cortes. Asseguram que Pater, o grande espírito dos Retratos imaginários, que escreveu um artigo de louvor ao romance, corrigiu com Wilde as provas do livro._  
_Os pormenores da história da vida de _O retrato de Dorian Gray_, artigos, ataques, respostas, foram publicados pelo editor Mason sob o título_ Arte e moralidade._  
_O livro deu uma exasperante fama a Oscar Wilde. O admirável altista teve de escrever para outra edição o Prefácio, que é sua teoria da arte e uma resposta em epígrafes à obtusidade da crítica._

_Em 1895, no seu processo, _Dorian Gray_ voltou ao escândalo. Leram no tribunal vários trechos da edição do Lippicott’s, interrogando Wilde a respeito. Ele foi quase sempre esplendidamente impertinente. Apenas foi suficientemente menos para que Dorian Gray pudesse parecer uma confissão._  
_Essa confissão seria, em todo caso, uma antecipação. Quando o pai de lorde Alfredo Douglas deixou no clube um bilhete dizendo que Wilde posava de vicioso e comprometia o filho; quando lorde Alfredo Douglas, belo, tão belo que parecia ter 16 anos tendo vinte e tantos, exigiu que Wilde processasse o pai, para pregar uma peça ao pai que se divorciara da esposa, quando rebentou o desastre que levou Wilde à prisão, o romance _O retrato de Dorian Gray_ já estava escrito havia cinco anos. E é público que lorde Alfredo Douglas conheceu Oscar Wilde muito tempo depois de aparecer o romance._

_De resto, tudo quanto Wilde escreveu era a história do que se iria dar. E ninguém sabe dos três personagens principais do romance Dorian, lorde Harry e Basil quem é Wilde. São os três decerto..._  
_Os horrores contra esse livro fascinador nada adiantaram, porém. _O retrato de Dorian Gray_ é há trinta anos o livro de ficção mais sensacional da Terra. A sua sedução persiste, é cada vez maior. Hoje passou a ser o credo de uma estética nova na Terra inteira. _O retrato de Dorian Gray_ foi traduzido como _Salomé_ em todas as línguas._
João do Rio travelled abroad extensively: France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, Germany, Greece, Turkey, Russia, Jerusalem, Egypt and Argentina. He also reported on Versailles Peace Treaty.

He founded various literary and cultural magazines and, in 1917, The Brazilian Society of Theatre Authors (Sociedade Brasileira de Autores Teatrais, SBAT) and served as its first chairman.

One important monthly magazine (arts, literary and social affairs) he initiated was the *Atlantida* for Portugal e Brazil, directed by João do Rio and the Portuguese poet, educator and politician João de Barros from 1915 to 1920 for Brazil and Portugal. From 1919, Graça Aranha joined them from Paris, France. The editor and co-owner of the magazine until 1919 was Pedro Bordalo Pinheiro. The aim of the magazine was to promote relations between Brazil and Portugal and demystify the claim that the Portuguese had exited Brazil and no longer played any role there. The editions of the magazine are available on line at [http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_10845](http://casacomum.org/cc/arquivos?set=e_10845)

Claudia Poncioni and Virginia Camilotti have researched the correspondence – published under the title *Correspondência de Paulo Barreto a João de Barros (1909-1921): edição crítica e anotada* (see [https://www.revistas.usp.br/rieb/article/view/137567](https://www.revistas.usp.br/rieb/article/view/137567))
ATLÂNTIDA
MENSARIO ARTISTICO,
LITERARIO E SOCIAL
PARA
PORTUGAL E BRAZIL

ANO I
Nº 1

MENSARIO ARTISTICO,
LITERARIO E SOCIAL
PARA
PORTUGAL E BRAZIL

Sób o alto patrocínio de S. Ex.º os Ministros
das Relações Exteriores do Brazil
e dos Estrangeiros e Fomento de Portugal.

DIRECTORES:
Paulo Barreto (João do Rio)
de Academia Brasileira de Letras e da Academia de Ciências de Lisboa

João de Barros

SECRETARIO DA REDAÇÃO
Elísio de Campos

EDITORES
Pedro Bordallo Pinheiro

Redacção: RUA BARATA SALGUEIRO, 46, t./c.
Administração: LARGO DO CONDE BARÃO, 49
LISBOA
The author died in a taxi in the streets of Catete prematurely on 23rd June 1921 on the way to work. His funeral gathered some one hundred thousand people (a fifth of the Rio population at the time) – a true celebrity funeral. His mother donated his whole library to the Real Gabinete Português de Leitura, a most distinguished intellectual library in Rio de Janeiro founded in 1837, which received it and there is an excellent 2010 article by F. C. de Azevedo describing this (http://www.scielo.br/pdf/pci/v15n3/13.pdf).
Main works: As religiões do Rio (1904), Chic-chic (1906 comedy play); A última noite (1907 play); O momento literário, inquérito (1907); A alma encantadora das ruas (1908); Cinematógrafo (1909); Dentro da noite (1910, short stories); Vida vertiginosa (1911); Os dias passam (1912); A bela Madame Vargas (1912, play); A profissão de Jacques Pedreira (1913, novel); Eva (1915, comedy play, praised by Oswald de Andrade); Crônicas e frases de Godofredo de Alencar (1916); No tempo de Wenceslau (1916); A correspondência de uma estação de cura (2 vols., 1918, novel); Na Conferência da Paz, inquérito (1919); A mulher e os espelhos (1919, short story); Rosário da Ilusão (1921, short story).

Further details on the following websites:
You can see a brief virtual exhibition of some of the author’s books at the National Library site:

http://bndigital.bn.gov.br/projetos/expo/decadentismo/apresentacao.htm

Photos of Rio available at:
http://brasilianafotografica.bn.br/brasiliana/

About J. do Patrocinio’s airship:

http://ronaldofotografia.blogspot.co.uk/2011/06/o-sonho-de-jose-do-patrocinio-nao-se.html

Enjoy your reading!

2018- the year of
#LiteraryGreatsBRAZIL #ReadBRAZILIT

Attendance is free, but booking is essential:
nadia.kerecuk@itamaraty.gov.br

©Nadia Kerecuk
Creator & Convenor of the © Brazilian Bilingual Book Club

@BrazilEmbassyUK