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Beyond Green Hell and Eldorado: Milton Hatoum's Amazon in *Relato de Um Certo Oriente*

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Since initial contact with outsiders, the Amazon region has often been described through a colonial lens. These descriptions engage with stereotypes of an impenetrable green hell, as well as its opposite, Eldorado, a land of riches and infinite possibility. Listening and engaging with voices from the region is essential to break the most prevailing stereotype: that of an inscrutable wasteland, impossible to understand. To that end, *Relato de Um Certo Oriente* is a 1989 novel written by Amazonian author Milton Hatoum, and it is one example of decolonizing narratives. Set in Manaus in the early 20th century, the plot presents family conflicts the conflict of a family, focusing on Emilie and her adoptive daughter, but including the entire familiar structure around them. It has with the Amazon region as the background. Local populations merge with autochthone (native, pertaining to local) culture, including Brazilian migrants and immigrants from Lebanon and the Middle East.

The author allows these cultures complexity in fullness, avoiding dualisms that have characterized descriptions of the region by outsiders. This is what allows for the forever-fragmentary adjustment of a “Lebanese immigrant” family into a “Brazilian” family. Hatoum's work — linking Lebanon to Amazonia — presents two regions subject to Orientalist points of view, in an infinity mirror of associations. In deconstructing colonial notions about Amazonia, Hatoum questions stereotypical exoticism itself.

Relato de um certo Oriente was Hatoum's debut novel and winner of the 1990 Jabuti Award for literature and translated into several languages. In this analysis, I employ authors that discuss space in literature, such as Antônio Cândido, connecting to theorists of cultural mobility and alterity relations with a political-cultural post-colonial point of view, such as Homi Bhabha, Julia Kushigian and Edward Said.