IMAGES OF THE UNCANNY: POPULAR IMAGERY IN THE WORK OF WALMOR CORRÊA

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary art establishes dialogues between different fields of knowledge, bringing together art, science, and popular culture and producing new ways of interpreting and engaging with reality. Within this perspective, the work of the Brazilian visual artist from Santa Catarina, Walmor Corrêa, stands out for its use of procedures associated with scientific illustration, comparative anatomy, and taxonomy to represent creatures belonging to the Brazilian popular imagination. By giving fantastic beings a documentary appearance and technical rigor, the artist displaces folkloric narratives into a field of apparent scientific legitimacy, thus challenging the boundaries between reality and fiction.

This characteristic of Corrêa's work can be related to the concept of the uncanny (*Unheimliche*), developed by Sigmund Freud in his essay *The Uncanny* (1919). For Freud, the uncanny is associated with an unsettling experience arising from something that, although it presents familiar aspects, undergoes a displacement capable of producing estrangement. This concept makes it possible to understand how certain images can generate discomfort by preserving recognizable forms while simultaneously deforming or reorganizing them.

The research was primarily grounded in the contributions of Sigmund Freud and Jurgis Baltrušaitis, a Lithuanian art historian. While Freud provides a framework for understanding the effect of estrangement produced by the encounter between the familiar and the strange, Baltrušaitis, in *Aberrations: An Essay on the Legend of Forms* (1957), contributes to the analysis of deformations, hybridisms, and combinations of known forms in the construction of aberrant figures. The work *Brazilian Legends* (*Lendas brasileiras*, originally published in 1945), by Luís da Câmara Cascudo, was also used as a reference for understanding the figures from the Brazilian popular imagination represented by Corrêa.

The objective of this research was to analyze how the concept of the uncanny manifests itself in the work of Walmor Corrêa, investigating how the articulation between art, science, and popular imagination contributes to the construction of unsettling images. To this end, the works *Ipupiara* (2005), *Curupira* (2005), and *Capelobo* (2005) were selected in order to understand how hybridism, bodily deformation, and the use of visual procedures associated with scientific documentation contribute to the construction of bodies that exist between the familiar and the strange.

DEVELOPMENT

This research is characterized as qualitative and bibliographic, documentary, and iconographic in nature.

In addition to examining the theoretical concepts proposed by Freud and Baltrušaitis, the bibliographic research was complemented by the consultation of scientific articles, interviews, curatorial texts, and materials made available by Walmor Corrêa himself. These materials contributed to the understanding of the procedures employed by the artist, his references, and the relationship established between art, science, and the fantastic imagination.

Next, an iconographic survey of Corrêa's work was conducted, encompassing different series throughout his career, including *Unheimlich*, *Natureza Perversa*, *Biblioteca dos Enganos*,

and *Memento Mori*. This stage made it possible to identify recurring formal and conceptual aspects.

Based on this survey, the analytical focus of the research was defined, concentrating on the works *Ipupiara* (2005), *Curupira* (2005), and *Capelobo* (2005). The selection considered the presence of characters originating from the Brazilian popular imagination and the diversity of forms of hybridism and bodily deformation found in the three representations.

An iconographic analysis was then conducted, relating the images to the concepts proposed by Freud and Baltrušaitis and considering both formal and symbolic aspects of the works. Composition, anatomical detail, visual organization, inscriptions, terminology, and elements related to scientific illustration and natural history were examined and subsequently related to the narratives collected by Câmara Cascudo. As support for the analysis, panels were created using the Canva platform, bringing together summaries of the readings, theoretical concepts, analyzed images, and associations resulting from the research, making it possible to visualize and relate the research data simultaneously.

RESULTS

3.1 Art, Science, and Popular Imagination in the Work of Walmor Corrêa

The survey of Walmor Corrêa's production made it possible to identify the approximation between scientific procedures and elements of the fantastic imagination as a recurring characteristic of his artistic practice. The artist draws on references from scientific illustration, comparative anatomy, taxonomy, and museology to construct representations that simulate forms of documentation and classification. In this way, creatures belonging to the Brazilian popular imagination are presented as species that can be observed, studied, and catalogued.

This procedure contributes to bringing myth and reality closer together, giving the creatures an appearance of documentary legitimacy. The selected works present different forms of hybridism and bodily deformation.

3.2 The Concept of the Uncanny Body: Hybridism, Deformation, and Verisimilitude

The analysis of the three works made it possible to identify the construction of uncanny bodies through the deformation and recombination of recognizable elements. The figures do not present entirely unknown forms; rather, they preserve human or animal characteristics that are displaced, inverted, or combined, thereby producing estrangement.

Anatomical precision and the appearance of scientific documentation intensify this effect by lending verisimilitude to the creatures. In this sense, the results are related to Freud's discussions of the uncanny and Baltrušaitis's reflections on deformation and hybrid forms, since estrangement emerges from the persistence of familiar elements subjected to alterations that challenge their classification.

3.3 Summary of the Results

In *Ipupiara*, the uncanny results primarily from the combination of human and aquatic characteristics. The detailed anatomy and the presentation of the creature as a specimen make a being from the popular imagination appear as a biologically plausible organism.

In *Curupira*, estrangement manifests itself more specifically through the inversion of anatomy, particularly in the feet turned backward. The preservation of a predominantly human structure causes the alteration of a familiar element to produce an unsettling effect.

In *Capelobo*, the highest degree of hybridism among the analyzed works can be observed. The combination of human and animal characteristics maintains recognizable references to the body while introducing successive deformations that make it difficult to classify the figure as either human or animal.

CONSIDERATIONS

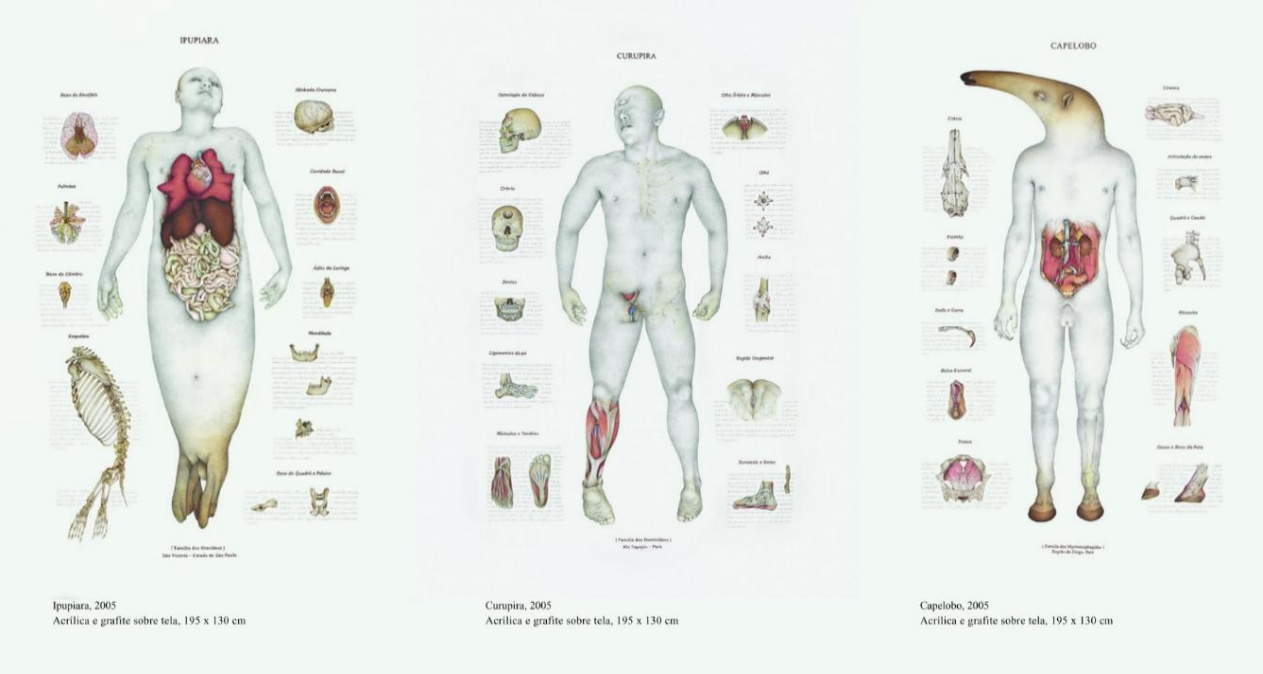
The objective of this research was to analyze how the concept of the uncanny manifests itself in the work of Walmor Corrêa through the articulation of art, science, and popular imagination. The analysis of *Ipupiara*, *Curupira*, and *Capelobo* demonstrated that estrangement is constructed through the transformation and recombination of familiar structures, resulting in hybrid, deformed, or anatomically deviant bodies.

It was also possible to identify that scientific language intensifies this effect by lending verisimilitude to the creatures and bringing the fantastic imagination closer to an apparent documentary reality. Thus, the research demonstrated that the uncanny body constitutes a central element in the artistic practice analyzed, challenging the boundaries between human and animal, reality and imagination.

It can therefore be concluded that the proposed objectives were achieved. The investigation contributed to expanding the understanding of Walmor Corrêa's work and of the persistence of the Brazilian popular imagination in contemporary art. As a possibility for future research, the analytical scope may be expanded to include other works and series by the artist.

Keywords: contemporary art; uncanny; Walmor Corrêa; popular imagination; hybridism.

ATTACHMENTS



Ipupiara, 2005
Acrílica e grafite sobre tela, 195 x 130 cm

Curupira, 2005
Acrílica e grafite sobre tela, 195 x 130 cm

Capelobo, 2005
Acrílica e grafite sobre tela, 195 x 130 cm

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