

Levrerian Idleness: From *La novela luminosa* to the *Atlas Luminoso*.

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Abstract. This article explores the multifaceted concept of idleness as articulated in Mario Levrero's *La novela luminosa* and its thematic continuation in the collective work *Atlas Luminoso*. Levrero's writing intricately navigates the realms of procrastination and the inherent tensions between the yearning to write and the daunting challenges that accompany the creative process. Through his lens, non-productivity metamorphoses into a profound existential reflection, inviting readers to consider the deeper meanings behind the act of creation. *Atlas Luminoso*, developed in the vibrant context of Balneário Camboriú, builds upon these foundational themes, intertwining elements of reality and fantasy to reflect the struggles faced by contemporary authors as they grapple with their creative impulses. By employing a narrative literature review methodology, this study underscores the significance of idleness and procrastination as central motifs in both works. These elements symbolize the complexities of the literary creation process and mirror the broader human experience of navigating desire and self-doubt. The article further delves into the philosophical implications of creative idleness, examining its vital role in the writing processes of Levrero and the authors of *Atlas Luminoso*. Ultimately, this research posits that idleness, rather than merely functioning as an impediment to productivity, serves as a fertile ground for creativity, opening up unexpected pathways for artistic exploration and personal introspection.

Keywords. Idleness, Procrastination, Mario Levrero, *La novela luminosa*, *Atlas Luminoso*, Creative Process, Balneário Camboriú, Narrative Literature Review, Metafiction.

1. Introduction

The concept of idleness, widely discussed by philosophers and writers, gains a unique dimension in the works of Mario Levrero, particularly in *La novela luminosa*. In this work, Levrero addresses procrastination and the difficulty of creating, transforming the act of not writing into a philosophical and existential reflection. *Atlas Luminoso*, inspired by *La novela luminosa*, expands on these ideas by situating them in the context of Balneário Camboriú, a city marked by dualities, just like Levrero's writing, which oscillates between reality and fantasy, failure and the desire to create.

The relationship between the writing process and idleness, far from being trivial, is fundamental to understanding the internal tensions of the writer, both in Levrero and in the fictional authors of the *Atlas Luminoso*. Writing, for Levrero, is a profoundly

physical and mental process, which challenges the traditional view of the separation between body and mind (1). This article proposes to explore the connection between these two works, emphasizing the role of creative idleness and its implications in literary narrative.

In the Latin American literary context, both *La novela luminosa* and the *Atlas Luminoso* stand out for breaking with formal conventions, adopting a hybrid style that combines diary and novel. By analyzing these works, this study seeks to highlight how idleness and procrastination are elevated to central themes of literary creation, reflecting the complexities of the human experience.

2. Methodology

In this work, a narrative literature review will be used, since it allows for a more comprehensive and critical analysis of the works studied, without the need to follow strict methodological criteria, as in a systematic review. The choice of this approach is justified by its flexibility in exploring different materials and perspectives, facilitating a deeper and more contextualized understanding of the works of Mario Levrero and the Atlas Luminoso. This methodology is particularly appropriate for literary and philosophical studies, in which subjective and comparative interpretations play a central role in the construction of arguments and analyses. Therefore, sections 3, 4 and 5 of this article are the result of this narrative literature review.

According to Kauchakje and Rosa (2020), a traditional and narrative literature review does not require the application of systematic criteria for the search and critical analysis of sources. The selection of documents is made according to the subjectivity of the authors, who base their preferences, prior knowledge and qualitative indications of books and articles to be included. However, this approach does not always adopt systematic procedures or a clear methodological strategy for the search and selection of materials. This type of review is quite common in the areas of education, humanities and social sciences, and is used in theses, dissertations and articles, among other works. (2)

3. Idleness in and inspired by Levrero's work

The study of idleness, especially in the context of literary creation, is illuminated by Mario Levrero's La novela luminosa and the subsequent thematic evolution in the Atlas Luminoso, which draws heavily on his work. This article explores how these two narratives intersect and differentiate, focusing on the philosophical notion of "idleness" in contrast to the productivity imposed on modern writing, as well as the implications of failure and procrastination in the creative process.

Atlas Luminoso explores the process of writing, publishing, reading and failing, while also addressing the peculiarities of Balneário Camboriú. The work plays with the traditional forms of the novel and presents thirteen characters who become involved with a mysterious local author and his dark work. The narrative mixes reality and fantasy, bringing references to Borges, Cortázar and Bolaño, while exploring the relationship between Balneário Camboriú, Levrero and the dualities of life and death (3).

Levrero, in La novela luminosa, offers a profound reflection on the desire to write. The book was begun in 1984, but was transformed into an obsessive diary after he received a Guggenheim Foundation grant in 2000. The narrative details the everyday confusions of a 60-year-old man, marked by procrastination,

phobias and superstitions, where the search for the "luminous book" is intertwined with reflections on life and waiting (4).

In the last years of his life, Levrero devoted himself to portraying the writer's routine in his workspace, especially in La novela luminosa, using forms similar to diary entries. He reflects on procrastination, domestic interruptions and the challenge of guiding aspiring writers, highlighting that writing is as much a physical exercise as a mental one, criticizing the traditional view that separates body and mind (1). Idleness, for Levrero, is a pure state that does not seek an end, an unproductive and inappropriate activity, reflecting on the relationship between being and doing (5).

4. La novela luminosa

The original manuscript of La novela luminosa emerged from Levrero's need to reconcile with his past before his death. In this process, he narrates the development of his spirituality and the discovery of a new way of seeing the world, breaking through family barriers and self-censorship to embrace his role as a writer. This process of self-discovery occurred after his divorce, during a period of depression and loneliness, which led him to reconfigure his forms of communication and open himself to new dimensions of existence (6).

Although Levrero had intended to resume his writing project after receiving the Guggenheim Fellowship, this journey resulted in the creation of the prologue *Scholarship Diary* rather than the conclusion of the novel. This prologue, which goes beyond the trivialities of everyday life, serves as a space for deep reflection on idleness and observation of the creative process (7). This reflection highlights the dialectic present in Levrero's writing, where the duty to write intertwines with desire, creating a tension between self-imposition and creative freedom (8).

Thus, Atlas Luminoso not only pays homage to Levrero's work, but also expands his philosophy of idleness and writing, connecting these ideas to a new generation of readers and writers. By exploring the particularities of Balneário Camboriú and the interactions between its characters and Levrero's work, Atlas Luminoso perpetuates the ongoing struggle between procrastination and the impulse to create, between being and doing, so central to Levrero's worldview.

5. Atlas Luminoso

On November 25, 2023, the collective novel "Atlas Luminoso" was released, the result of the literary workshop of the same name held in Balneário Camboriú. The event took place at Arthousebc and was attended by the 13 authors involved: Adriano Salvi, Amílcar Britz, André Ricardo Coelho, Anna

Theresa Schipmann Rebelo, Brianne Lee, Didié Kinsey, Gabrielle Pilotto, Ká Martin, Leonidas Silva Georgoula, Lucas G. Soares, Luiz Ferreira, Monique Neves and Mylena Gomes Espíndola. The 162-page work was distributed free of charge and reflected a combination of literary genres and urban contexts of Balneário Camboriú, in addition to being inspired by the book *La novela luminosa* by Uruguayan writer Mario Levrero. Under the guidance of writer Carlos Henrique Schroeder, the plot followed Leonel, a local writer who decided to write a novel about Levrero's possible passage through the city. The project, sponsored by the Balneário Camboriú Cultural Incentive Law (LIC BC), aimed to promote the visibility and development of local authors, combining theory and practice in the process of literary creation. (9).

The "Atlas Luminoso" literature workshop, the first of its kind in Santa Catarina and sponsored by the Balneário Camboriú Cultural Incentive Law (LIC BC), offered a rare opportunity for the development and publication of novels. Aimed at authors residing in Balneário Camboriú, the initiative selected ten local writers to receive individual and collective mentoring from Carlos Henrique Schroeder, a renowned Brazilian writer. The project aimed to teach creative writing techniques and the structuring of novels, culminating in the free publication of a collective book with a print run of 500 copies. The activities included in-person and virtual meetings, totaling 30 hours of training (10).

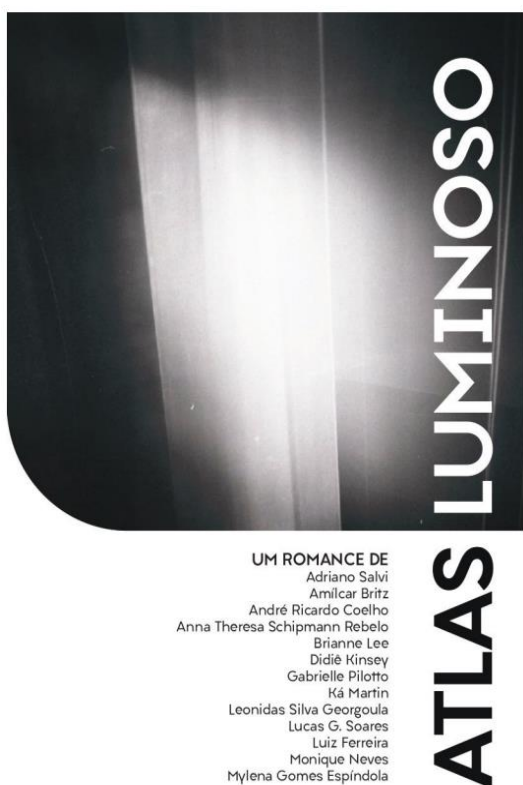


Fig. 1- (3) Cover of the book Atlas Luminoso (2023).

6. Author's self-analysis

While writing my first chapter of *Atlas Luminoso*, I faced challenges similar to those faced by Mario Levrero in his fictional diary in *La novela luminosa*. Like Levrero, whose work reflects the tensions between procrastination and the desire to write, I found it difficult to make progress in my part, which was also composed as a fictional diary. The other authors contributed characters who dialogue with each other in a metafictional narrative inspired by Levrero's work.

It is curious and ironic that, in writing this article about the very book I was involved in, I find myself facing the same difficulties I encountered in writing the first chapter of *Atlas Luminoso*. I believe that the "levreirian" approach to dealing with this is to accept that sometimes idleness and procrastination can lead us down unexpected and sometimes extraordinary creative paths.

7. Final Considerations

The concept of literary idleness, as explored by Mario Levrero in *La novela luminosa*, offers a valuable reflection for contemporary authors, especially when faced with the challenges of creation. *Atlas Luminoso*, directly inspired by Levrero's work, not only pays homage to these ideas, but also expands them to a new context, where authors, like Levrero himself, face the dilemmas of the act of writing. Procrastination, often seen as the enemy of productivity, reveals itself, in these texts, to be a paradoxical source of inspiration and contemplation.

The writing of *Atlas Luminoso* was built on the same tension between the desire to create and the inability to finish, a process that is often frustrating, but also necessary for the development of a narrative that goes beyond mere technical execution. Just as Levrero transformed his frustration into raw material for his work, the authors of *Atlas Luminoso* found in procrastination and failure the central elements for their creations.

The *Atlas Luminoso* project not only connected Levrero's work to a new group of writers, but also redefined his approach to writing and idleness, enabling new interpretations and narrative formats. By breaking with the conventions of the traditional novel, both books invite readers to explore the limits of literary creation and the effects of time, waiting, and idleness on the construction of meaning. This journey, which begins with resistance to the act of creating, finds in the very act of procrastination the space necessary for the imagination to flourish.

Finally, the *Atlas Luminoso* demonstrates that idleness, far from being mere inertia, can be a starting point for profound and unexpected creative

processes. The journey of Levrero and the authors of *Atlas* reminds us that the art of writing is, above all, an art of living between desire and waiting, between the impulse to create and the pleasure of contemplation.

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