

Moacyr Scliar had a very clear vision of the art of storytelling and listening. “It is a deep-rooted human trait, part of our genome,” he said, revealing his fascination with this ancient tradition.

Moacyr Scliar was not just one man. He was many. He was a man of many talents who knew how to put into words the rich universe of cultures and influences that marked his life’s journey. The references ranged from Bessarabia to Bom Fim, from medicine to literature, and from Kafka to Monteiro Lobato. All served as the basis for shaping a singular identity in his work. Jewish and Gaucho roots, fables, magical realism, and a fertile imagination are combined in more than 80 books and thousands of essays and chronicles.

Moacyr, however, did not like the label “writer.” Deep down, he liked to think of himself as a storyteller. And what beautiful stories they are! He had a special talent for captivating readers with his refined writing and unusual passion for storytelling. His characters were a mosaic of fascinating types: Guedali, the centaur; Joel in the war in Bom Fim; Rafael Mendes and his strange nation; the woman who wrote the Bible; Max on the trawler with the cat; Raquel and her gods, Captain Birobidjan, and many others.

These characteristics made his work universal, without ever abandoning his Jewish and Gaucho origins.

Born in 1937, in the Bom Fim neighborhood of Porto Alegre, a haven for Jewish immigrants, he fully absorbed his surroundings and their cultural influences.

Influenced by ancestral traditions such as oral storytelling and biblical parables, he immersed himself in Jewish themes. For Moacyr, the Jew writes because he seeks to understand his complex existential condition and his controversial relationship with the world. By talking about immigrants being persecuted and rejected, he was talking about of all humanity. The author, himself the son of immigrants, understood that Jewish tradition and cultural heritage are manifested through contradictions, which invariably generate humorous situations. Hence the constant presence in his work of bitter humor and the ability to laugh at himself, typical of Jewish literature.

From an early age, Moacyr had an intense sense of community: he listened to Yiddish, ate Jewish food, and, above all, had a Jewish mother “like the ones in books, overprotective and over-feeding.” These references were translated into short stories, novels, and chronicles, and became the raw material for his dialog with the world.

Translated into more than ten languages, adapted for theater and the cinema, taught in universities and elementary schools, and winner of three Jabuti Awards and a Casa de las Americas Award, Moacyr Scliar not only put his city and his neighborhood on the map of universal literature, but he also built a worldview shared in any city, in any neighborhood, in any country.

In person, Moacyr was an affable, clever, and good-humored man. Despite international recognition, numerous awards, and extensive travel, one of his most striking characteristics was simplicity. He never ceased to be the “Mico” from Bom Fim, the generous man who loved to listen to others, to share their uncertainties and concerns. Above all, he was a great supporter of new literary talent.

And the husband? It is impossible to talk about him without getting emotional. I had the good fortune to live with Moacyr for 47 years: two years of courtship and 45 years of marriage. Our relationship was based on partnership and mutual commitment, even in professional matters. I closely followed his evolution as a doctor and writer. As the first reader of his books, I witnessed moments of intense creation and an abundance of ideas. From *The Carnival of The Animals* to *Eu vos Abraço, Milhões* [I embrace you, all of you], writing was always a source of great joy for him, never an obligation.

Moacyr was also a loving and devoted father. He was a great role model for Beto. In addition to their mutual admiration and respect, Beto actively participated in Moacyr’s literary career. As a photographer, he documented important moments in Moacyr’s life. Together, we are doing our best to honor his memory. It’s a flame that will never go out.

I would like to quote Moacyr’s own definition of his craft: “History is made of words. Words are as essential to the writer as wood, saws, hammer, and nails are to the carpenter. Telling a story means establishing emotional bonds between people. That is what words are for: to establish bonds between people – and to create beauty. For this, we must be eternally grateful.

How grateful we are for life, especially when we savor a piece written from the heart. To read Moacyr Scliar is to learn, in an intelligent and compassionate way, what it is to live.

*Judith Scliar*