



The edge of one of many circles: homenagem a Irene Ramalho Santos Vol. I

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HOMENAGEM A
IRENE RAMALHO SANTOS

THE EDGE OF ONE OF MANY CIRCLES

ISABEL CALDEIRA
GRAÇA CAPINHA
JACINTA MATOS
ORGANIZAÇÃO

Trata-se de um volume de homenagem à Prof. Doutora Irene Ramalho Santos, reunindo artigos na sua maior parte de consagrados/as especialistas nas diversas áreas – estudos anglo-americanos; estudos comparados; poética; estudos feministas; estudos pessoais –, para além de uma secção com poemas de poetas de várias nacionalidades, que estiveram presentes nos Encontros Internacionais de Poetas, organizados pelos Estudos Anglo-Americanos da Faculdade de Letras da UC., e de uma secção de testemunhos em honra da homenageada.



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VOL. I

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ISABEL CALDEIRA
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PREFÁCIO

Este volume de homenagem a Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos, da iniciativa da atual Secção de Estudos Anglo-Americanos do Departamento de Línguas, Literaturas e Culturas da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra, reúne um elevado número de contributos de colegas, nacionais e internacionais, ex-estudantes, amigas e amigos. Com esta homenagem, pretendemos testemunhar, de uma forma simbólica, o reconhecimento pela sua carreira ímpar, pelo que lhe devemos enquanto docente, investigadora e mentora, e pela sua generosa amizade e dedicação. A diversidade e a profundidade dos seus interesses académicos, patentes no *Curriculum Vitae* incluído neste volume, justificam o grande apreço e admiração que sempre tem suscitado dentro e fora de fronteiras. O elevado nível intelectual do seu trabalho académico, quer na docência, quer na investigação, e o exemplo de rigor e exigência que sempre a caracterizaram, marcaram de forma indelével todos aqueles e aquelas que tiveram e têm o privilégio de aprender com ela.

Maria Irene Ramalho Santos (entre nós, Maria Irene Ramalho ou, simplesmente e com carinho, MIR) foi a primeira doutorada na área da Americanística na universidade portuguesa. Foi, e ainda continua a ser, mentora na formação e responsável pela graduação de praticamente todos os/as americanistas portugueses. Quando regressou dos EUA após o seu doutoramento na Universidade de Yale, em 1973, Maria Irene introduziu a diferença em relação à prática pedagógica

tradicional da então área de Filologia Germânica na conservadora Universidade de Coimbra. Os seus alunos e alunas de Literatura Inglesa e de Literatura Norte-Americana recordam especialmente o estímulo à abordagem crítica dos textos (e da vida) e o espaço alargado e respeitado da sua autonomia de pensamento e criatividade, tudo isto num contexto de proximidade afável e interessada entre professora, alunas e alunos. Ao mesmo tempo, e especialmente no ensino da Literatura Norte-Americana, a atualidade dos conteúdos programáticos e a inovadora metodologia distinguiram, desde logo, a sua prática pedagógica. Os seus seminários de Literatura Americana, nos dois últimos anos curriculares, eram espaços de uma dinâmica de aprendizagem inovadora onde os jovens enriqueciam a sua formação científica, mas, sobretudo, faziam aprendizagens múltiplas como cidadãos e cidadãos e como seres humanos críticos e questionadores num tempo particularmente complexo e transformador como foi o dos anos pós-Revolução de Abril.

Desde o seu regresso a Portugal há também a assinalar um trabalho continuado e absorvente para erigir uma secção (que veio a ser primeiro o Grupo de Estudos Anglo-Americanos ou GEAA), imprimindo-lhe uma orientação profundamente democrática, e uma grande exigência científica. Uma frase do seu texto “American Studies as Traveling Culture”, de 1999, resume muito bem este seu papel:

[A]s a teacher and mentor, I have always conceived of my job as that of a kind of travel agent, not so much telling students what they should or should not study but teaching them as much as possible about the variety of the field, helping them to get to where they think they want to go themselves, and putting them in touch with the relevant specialists (354-55).

O contacto, mesmo o informal, com jovens assistentes em formação era também de contínua aprendizagem e inspiração, partilha

generosa de um saber constantemente atualizado, com que a Maria Irene sempre sabia acompanhar de perto as transformações de um campo de estudos, por ela própria definido como “plural” e “never fixed”, “nonhomogeneous”, “a multiplex diversity of local and global knowledges in different languages and forms” (*idem*: 343). Por isso a Americanista falou de si própria como “wanderer”, aquela que nas suas viagens pelo interior da literatura americana e dos estudos americanos apenas almejava “temporary recordings of *passages*” (*ibidem*). E o incentivo foi sempre persistente e firme, decerto com a esperança de imprimir nos mais jovens a sua paixão em fazer da vida académica “a series of travel encounters or practices of crossing and interaction constantly troubling the localisms of common assumptions about culture” (*idem*: 358).

Esta sua preocupação com a formação científica de alunos/as e colaboradores/as inscreve-se num profundo sentido de Universidade, que já a fazia pugnar no princípio dos anos 80 contra “a transformação das universidades, em particular das Faculdades de Letras, em instituições cada vez mais pressionadas pelas exigências de um ensino ‘profissionalizante’” (cf. 1983-84). A História veio dar-lhe razão...

A vida académica de Maria Irene Ramalho Santos tem-se revestido sempre de um vincado desejo de internacionalização que justificou a sua presença regular nos congressos da American Studies Association (ASA), a participação em mesas redondas sobre o ensino dos estudos americanos no estrangeiro e especificamente em Portugal, o seu contributo para a fundação da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos (APEAA), os postos que com toda a dignidade assumiu na Associação Europeia de Estudos Americanos (EAAS), ou a colaboração anual com a Universidade de Wisconsin-Madison, onde tem sido Professora Visitante desde 1999. Em 2008, a American Studies Association conferiu-lhe o Mary C. Turpie Award, consagrando assim e com toda a justiça o seu valioso contributo para a americanística internacional.

A ela devemos também a criação de uma rede de contactos internacionais que ainda hoje beneficiam a Secção de Estudos Anglo-Americanos. Uma das vias foi o intercâmbio Fulbright, que soube fomentar e aproveitar de forma inteligente, nunca abdicando de um critério de exigência a ditar a escolha de professores/as e investigadores/as visitantes. Como professores Fulbright por aqui passaram Nancy Armstrong, Doris Friedenson, Angela Gilliam, Bernard Bell, Thomas Grant, Jonathan Auerbach, só para mencionar alguns nomes.

Essa grande exigência, rigor e independência pautaram sempre as suas escolhas e justificam o prestígio que granjeia entre os seus pares, quer no plano nacional, quer no internacional. São disso excelente testemunho os laços criados com nomes tão prestigiados como Sacvan Bercovitch, que vem a convidá-la para colaborar na sua *Cambridge History of American Literature*; Harold Bloom, o seu antigo professor em Yale, que por sua mão recebeu um *Honoris Causa* pela Universidade de Coimbra em 2001; Nancy Armstrong, com quem tem mantido uma longa amizade e colaboração académica (estendida à Secção e ao Centro de Estudos Sociais/CES), e que colaborou, a seu convite, nos painéis de avaliação da FCT; Doris Friedenson, também uma amiga para a vida, com quem tem partilhado tantas intervenções na ASA, além de publicações; ou Allen Trachtenberg, Richard Ellman, Werner Sollors, James McIntosh, Emory Elliott, Susan Friedman, Paul Lauter, Mary Layoun, Amy Kaplan, Jean Pfaelzer, Michael Denning, Alice Kessler-Harris, George Monteiro, Helder Macedo, Robert Kroes, Heinz Ickstadt e Steve Matterson, entre muitos outros e outras.

Em 1991, organiza o Congresso Internacional sobre “O cânone nos Estudos Anglo-Americanos”, exemplo claro da sua preocupação com a chamada “crise das humanidades” e da sua continuada interpelação dos objetos de estudo no plano entretecido de saberes e poderes: afinal, como MIR afirma, “Quanto mais estreita, mais fácil de controlar é a área de saber, mas ainda que as leis, ou os cânones,

sejam necessidades, tanto da investigação científica como da própria vida, a sua própria definição enquanto tal exige inúmeras formas de interrogação e transgressão” (1994: 13).

Pelo caminho tem ficado a sua constante interrogação pela ordem das coisas, pela natureza do saber, pelos consensos. Uma interrogação que se estendeu sempre ao seu objeto de estudo, os Estados Unidos da América e que ela quis formular de novo ao escolher o tema para o Colóquio realizado em Coimbra em 2009, reunindo estudiosos deste e do outro lado do Atlântico – “America Where? Transatlantic Scholarship in Search of the United States of America in the Twenty-first Century”, que deu origem à publicação *America Where? 21st Century Transatlantic Views* (Peter Lang, 2012).

A diversidade de interesses de investigação que MIR sempre respeitou e até encorajou no GEAA levou-a, a pouco e pouco, a chamar para junto de si no CES, que ajudou a fundar em fins da década de 70, vários elementos que foram integrando o elenco de investigadores deste centro. É no âmbito do CES que a sua “viagem” se entranha mais pelos caminhos da comparatística, que já ensaiava há muito na sua colaboração na *World Literature Today*, tendo a oportunidade, e aproveitando-a, de incentivar outros companheiros e companheiras de jornada que integra no Núcleo de Estudos Culturais Comparados, que passou a coordenar. Maria Irene nunca quis, no entanto, esquecer a sua “localização específica na cultura portuguesa” pois, segundo ela, “sem um entendimento seguro da sua própria cultura, povos alguns serão jamais capazes de entender a alteridade de uma cultura outra; inversamente, quanto mais os diferentes povos souberem, e *quiserem saber*, acerca de outras sociedades e de outras culturas, tanto mais bem preparados estarão eles para entender a sua própria cultura” (1994: 13). Prossegue, pois – mas recusando muito conscientemente “scholarly nativism” (cf. “American Studies as Traveling Culture” 341) –, um longo e antigo projeto que a liga à literatura portuguesa e faz da sua americanística

também uma viagem de reconhecimento pela sua própria cultura. Este interesse comparatista é claramente testemunhado pela sua presença na Associação Internacional de Literatura Comparada, na Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada, ou na Associação Brasileira de Literatura Comparada, assim como a sua colaboração com vários Departamentos de Literatura Comparada, principalmente o de Wisconsin-Madison.

Constatando que a poesia e a poética não são de modo algum uma prioridade na investigação académica, quer nos E.U.A., quer no espaço europeu, a “agente de viagens”, como ironicamente MIR se autodefiniu, levou muito a sério a sua insistência na inclusão da poesia nos trajetos porventura menos populares do mapa da americanística internacional. O livro que publicou em 2003, *Atlantic Poets: Fernando Pessoa's Turn in Anglo-American Modernism* (University Press of New England)¹ é não só o ponto alto de um longo e significativo estudo do poeta português, que já tinha dado origem a várias das suas publicações, mas também da reflexão comparativa com outras vozes poéticas da cultura americana, à qual tem dedicado toda a sua carreira.

Seria impossível esgotar aqui, numa descrição minimamente inclusiva, o trabalho imenso desenvolvido por Maria Irene Ramalho no campo da poesia. De facto, desde o seu ensino e o seu encorajamento de tantos alunos e tantas alunas à leitura e ao aprofundamento da análise crítica; desde as inúmeras apresentações públicas de obras de poetas já reconhecidos às apresentações públicas de obras de carácter mais inovador no panorama da literatura contemporânea; desde a divulgação da poesia portuguesa contemporânea, e não só, através da docência em universidades estrangeiras, às também inúmeras palestras e publicações por esse mundo fora; desde a

¹ Traduzido no Brasil (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2008) e em Portugal (Porto: Afrontamento, 2009).

participação e a coordenação de projetos de investigação, coletivos e interdisciplinares, em que a poesia ocupou lugar cimeiro, à orientação de tantas teses de mestrado e de doutoramento, que sobre esse modo de escrita se debruçaram – enfim, com toda esta carreira de grande mérito e de prestígio reconhecidos um pouco por todos os cantos poéticos do mundo, como poderíamos nós almejar a dar aqui conta de todo esse trabalho? E, de facto, nem de trabalho poderemos apenas falar. Porque se tratou, e trata, de um ofício – o ofício que é também o de todos e de todas as poetas.

Não podemos deixar de falar do modo como esse ofício se definiu também como parte de uma dimensão que, ao ser poética, se fez também política: a sua preocupação em intervir, através da poesia, no espaço público – para “interromper” a ortodoxia dominante e abrir a outras visões possíveis. Em 1990, num almoço (sim, que quem a conhece sabe como a Maria Irene aprecia esse modo prazenteiro de estar no mundo, com e para as pessoas), lançou a ideia de criar “uns encontros de poetas” para trazer a poesia viva para dentro da universidade. Em 1992, celebrando Walt Whitman, acontece o 1º Encontro Internacional de Poetas da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra – e outras sete edições se seguiram, de três em três anos, sempre a espalhar a poesia por diferentes espaços da cidade. Muitos poetas portugueses presentes nesse primeiro Encontro nunca tinham feito uma leitura pública – e também esse trabalho e o apoio desta professora da velha Universidade de Coimbra em muito contribuiu para o panorama literário atual no nosso país, já com tantos e tão importantes eventos desta natureza a acontecerem um pouco por todo o lado.

Mais de trezentos poetas e mais de quarenta línguas se fizeram ouvir em Coimbra, durante os cerca de vinte anos em que estes eventos tiveram lugar, e inúmeros contactos e colaborações entre poetas de todo o mundo tiveram aqui início. Muitos nos procuraram, ouvindo falar dos “Encontros de Coimbra” em outras

reuniões poéticas, em lugares tão distantes como Singapura, ou tão centrais como Nova Iorque – e Coimbra está hoje no mapa da poesia contemporânea mundial. Também isso há que agradecer a Maria Irene Ramalho – e muitos e muitas poetas o têm feito, em muitos lugares e em muitas línguas. Da sua memória ficaram sete antologias de *Poesia do Mundo*, coligindo muitos poemas originais e as respetivas traduções, trabalho de uma equipa coordenada pela Maria Irene.

Reclamando persistentemente o lugar da sua “inutilidade radical”, Maria Irene sempre nos transmitiu que “a poesia nos ensina na realidade a nada fixar, a perguntar por tudo, a constantemente olhar de novo” (“A ciência e as humanidades” 133). Quanto a nós, as suas discípulas e os seus discípulos, só nos resta dizer que foi com a Maria Irene que aprendemos que a poesia é esse ato de presença que nunca esgota o sentido e que, por isso mesmo, nos encoraja a não desistir de participar.

Maria Irene nunca desperdiçou, efetivamente, a oportunidade de ensinar literatura a um nível mais avançado, instigando o gosto pela pesquisa e, fundamentalmente, pela aprendizagem, em verdadeiro regime de seminário. A essa luz é que podemos compreender a sua teimosia em desconstruir a chamada “avaliação contínua”, chamando-lhe “aprendizagem contínua” ou a sua ação de orientação, apelidando-a com ironia de “desorientação”. Logo que foi possível, e com os escassos recursos existentes, cria em 1982 o 1.º Curso de Mestrado em Estudos Anglo-Americanos; em 1999, o 1.º Curso de Mestrado em Estudos Americanos; e, em 2008, coordena o 1.º programa de Estudos Americanos em Portugal (Mestrado e Doutoramento).

Nessa mesma altura são criados o Mestrado em Estudos Feministas (2007) e o 1.º Doutoramento em Estudos Feministas em Portugal (2008), que Maria Irene coordena, e que finalmente realizam um sonho antigo, o de colocar esta área de estudo em

Coimbra. Há muito atenta às questões feministas, quer nas suas aulas, quer nas suas publicações, Maria Irene já tinha criado um Núcleo de Estudos Feministas no CES, participado, de 1998 a 2000, como *Co-Chair* na *Task Force for International Women in American Studies* (ASA); como *Chair* no *Program Committee for the Third European Feminist Research Conference*, em 1996 e 1997; e como membro do *Scientific Committee for Women's Studies* no Projeto Europeu SIGMA, de 1994 a 1996.

Em toda a sua carreira e a sua vida, afinal uma mesma atitude: interrogativa, questionadora, crítica, de política “interrupção”, preocupada sempre em

suscitar um debate mais amplo para a redefinição e reavaliação das humanidades, enquanto a faculdade por excelência de formular perguntas. . . perguntas que terão necessariamente de ser sempre acerca das estruturas sociais, económicas e políticas que regem também as nossas vidas intelectuais. Perguntas, pois, não só acerca das realizações científicas dos estudos humanísticos, mas também acerca da sua responsabilidade educativa e do seu empenhamento social (1994: 29).

Na organização deste volume, foi nossa intenção fazer jus às variadíssimas áreas de interesse e especialização da homenageada, cuja investigação e produção científica refletem inequivocamente a sua permanente abertura a novas perspetivas, para além de se constituírem quase como uma história dos desenvolvimentos teórico-críticos das últimas quatro décadas. Com efeito, e como referimos atrás, partindo do seu campo inicial de formação nos Estudos Anglo-Americanos, o pioneirismo de Maria Irene Ramalho Santos colocou-a na primeira linha da investigação em Estudos Americanos, Estudos Comparados, a que se foram juntando, sem costuras visíveis, a Poética, os Estudos Feministas e os Estudos Pessoaanos.

As diferentes secções deste volume, dedicadas a cada uma dessas áreas, permitiram, assim, recolher contributos dos/as respetivos/as especialistas, alunos/as e colegas que com ela foram ao longo dos tempos dialogando, aprendendo e refletindo. E, se a divisão se impunha como princípio organizativo do volume, o cruzamento de saberes que Maria Irene Ramalho Santos sempre praticou está ainda presente em muitos dos artigos que nela beberam inspiração e a ela devem um alargar de horizontes e um atravessar de fronteiras disciplinares.

Para além das cinco secções que integram os artigos de natureza científica, não pudemos deixar de contemplar os Testemunhos de quem com Maria Irene privou, seja na qualidade de colega, amiga ou docente. Não menos importante, nesta homenagem, é a pessoa em si; e no caso presente, mais do que em muitos outros, as qualidades humanas e as profissionais são inseparáveis. Os Testemunhos bem dão conta de como o perfil da mulher, da investigadora, da mestre, da amiga e da colega se fundem num todo harmonioso – e irresistível.

Finalmente – “last but not least” – os poemas, a homenagem de Poetas a quem a Maria Irene deu voz, oferecendo-lhes um fórum onde se fizeram ouvir, em muitos casos pela primeira vez, perante um público alargado e presencial. O seu contributo era incontornável e o presente volume impensável sem o reconhecimento da centralidade da poesia – na sua dupla dimensão de objeto de estudo e de expressão artística – no pensar da homenageada.

Não podemos deixar de agradecer ao Diretor da FLUC, que se prontificou a financiar a edição impressa, e à IUC por ter tão prontamente acolhido este projecto.

Por último, os nossos agradecimentos a todos aqueles e aquelas que acederam a colaborar connosco, cujo entusiasmo, empenhamento e disponibilidade são bem a medida da figura que nos serviu de inspiração na organização deste volume, com que pretendemos

prestar homenagem a alguém que é e será sempre, para aqueles e aquelas que a admiram, e ecoando um dos seus poetas eleitos, *'the edge of one of many circles'*.

E bem-hajas, Maria Irene!

Coimbra, 28 de junho de 2016

Isabel Caldeira

Graça Capinha

Jacinta Matos

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P R E F A C E

This volume in honour of Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos (organized by the Anglo-American Section [SEAA] of the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Letters, University of Coimbra) gathers, from Portugal and abroad, the contributions of colleagues, ex-students and friends who wish to pay tribute to Irene's extraordinary career and to express how much they owe her as a teacher, scholar and mentor, and as a devoted and generous friend. The diversity and depth of her academic interests, of which her CV provides eloquent proof, amply justify the regard and admiration she enjoys in her own country and elsewhere. Her high academic standards, both as a teacher and researcher, and the rigour and exigence she unfailingly brings to her work have made an indelible mark on all those who have had the privilege to learn from her.

Irene Ramalho Santos (or, for most of us, Maria Irene Ramalho or simply and affectionately MIR) was the first holder of a PhD in American Studies in Portugal. She was – and still is today – responsible for the supervision of most of our postgraduates in American Studies. When she came back from the US in 1973, with her PhD from Yale University, Maria Irene pioneered new pedagogies in the then very conservative area of Germanic Philological Studies at the University of Coimbra. Her students of American Literature and Culture fondly remember her critical mode of approach to texts (and to life), and the space she gave them to pursue autonomous and

creative thought in an atmosphere of close and interested proximity. In the field of North-American Literature she was distinguished by the innovative content of her courses and new teaching methods. In the turbulent times after the 1974 Revolution, the American literature seminar she taught for students in the final two years of their degree created new dynamics of learning and spaces where students broadened their academic interests and learned how to become responsible and critically engaged citizens. To quote from her essay “American Studies as Traveling Culture” (1999):

[A]s a teacher and mentor, I have always conceived of my job as that of a kind of travel agent, not so much telling students what they should or should not study but teaching them as much as possible about the variety of the field, helping them to get to where they think they want to go themselves, and putting them in touch with the relevant specialists (354-55).

At that time, MIR also devoted herself to the creation of an Anglo-American Department (later the GEAA) which she believed should be both profoundly democratic and academically rigorous. Even when informal, her contact with junior lecturers in the early stages of their career was always an inspiration. She generously shared with them a constantly updated knowledge in a fast-changing academic field she would later define as “plural”, “never fixed”, “nonhomogeneous”, “a multiplex diversity of local and global knowledges in different languages and forms” (*idem*: 343). Hence her typically modest self-definition as a “wanderer” who achieves no more than “temporary recordings of *passages*” (*ibidem*) in her journeys through American Literature and American Studies. But she gave others the incentive to pursue their own with equal passion and helped them to regard academic life as “a series of travel encounters or practices of crossing and interaction constantly troubling the localisms of common assumptions about culture” (*idem*: 358).

An insistence on high academic standards is central and essential to her concept of what a University should be, and that is why in the 1980s she strongly reacted against external pressure and vehemently opposed the idea that Universities, and particularly the Faculties of Letters should turn themselves into mere teacher training institutions. History has proved her right...

Irene Ramalho Santos' career has always been based on a profoundly international outlook. She regularly attended ASA conferences, participated in round table discussions on American Studies in Portugal and abroad, was a founding member of the Portuguese Anglo-American Studies Association (APEAA), served with distinction as a board member of EAAS, and, since 1999, has regularly collaborated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a Visiting Professor. In 2008, the American Studies Association conferred on her the Mary C. Turpie Award in recognition of her valuable contribution as an international American Studies scholar.

The SEAA still benefits from the international network she created, in which the Fulbright programme played a crucial role. Maria Irene Ramalho Santos made brilliant use of it. She never surrendered to dictates of expedience or short-term advantage, or abdicated from the fundamental principle of excellence that brought us such distinguished visiting scholars and professors as Nancy Armstrong, Doris Friedenson, Angela Gilliam, Bernard Bell, Thomas Grant, Jonathan Auerbach, just to mention a few.

Her rigour, excellence and independence of mind amply justify the high reputation she enjoys in Portugal and abroad and the close ties she maintains with many prestigious international scholars: Sacvan Bercovitch, who invited her to contribute to his *Cambridge History of American Literature*; Harold Bloom, a former mentor, who received, through her intervention, an Honorary Doctor from the University of Coimbra in 2001; Nancy Armstrong, a life-long friend,

who extended her cooperation to the Centre for Social Studies (CES) and to the FCT Assessment Panels; Doris Friedenson, also a life-long friend, with whom she has so often co-published and collaborated in ASA Conferences. In this context mention must also be made of Allen Trachtenberg, Richard Ellman, Werner Sollors, James McIntosh, Emory Elliott, Susan Friedman, Paul Lauter, Mary Layoun, Amy Kaplan, Jean Pfaelzer, Michael Denning, Alice Kessler-Harris, George Monteiro, Helder Macedo, Robert Kroes, Heinz Ickstadt and Steve Matterson, among so many others

In 1991, her concern with the “crisis of the Humanities” and her constant spirit of inquiry and questioning mind led her to organize an international conference on “The Canon in Anglo-American Studies”. In her own words, “[t]he narrower the field, the easier to control, but though boundaries and laws, or *canons*, are necessities of scholarship as of life, their very definition requires various forms of questionings, crossings, and transgressions” (1994: 12). The constant interrogation of the order of things and the nature of knowledge is a thread running through MIR’s career, leading her to ask “America Where?”. This became the title of a conference on “Transatlantic Scholarship in Search of the United States of America in the Twenty-first Century” she organized in Coimbra in 2009, later published as *America Where? 21st Century Transatlantic Views* (Peter Lang, 2012).

MIR always encouraged others to expand their horizons and pursue diverse research interests. Having been a co-founder of CES in the late 1970s, she quickly invited colleagues from the GEAA to join her in a journey around Comparative Studies. Already a practising comparatist in her contributions to *World Literature Today*, MIR became the coordinator of a Comparative Studies Group in CES. She never forgot, however, her location within Portuguese culture; in her own words, “without a firm grasp of their own culture, no peoples will ever be able to understand *the other* in a foreign

culture; conversely, the more the different peoples know and *want to know* about other societies and cultures, the better prepared they are to understand their own” (1994: 12). Consciously refusing any “scholarly nativism” (cf. “American Studies as Traveling Culture” 341), she uses her knowledge of America to enrich her journeys inside her own culture. She is a member of the International, Brazilian and Portuguese Associations of Comparative Literature, and has over the years cooperated with several Comparative Literature Departments, mainly Wisconsin-Madison.

Very much aware of the secondary status of poetry in academic research on both sides of the Atlantic, this “travelling agent” strove to put it on the map. Her book *Atlantic Poets: Fernando Pessoa’s Turn in Anglo-American Modernism* (University Press of New England, 2003)¹ is both the high point of her interest in Pessoa (the subject of many of her publications) and a comparative reflection on those other poetic voices of American culture to which she has devoted a large part of her career.

It would be impossible to list in the space available the manifold dimensions of MIR’s work in the field of poetry. Her teaching, in which she encouraged students to read and critically discuss poetry; her many public presentations of famous poets and of other, less well-known and more experimental figures; her promotion and dissemination of contemporary Portuguese poets; her numerous papers and publications both at home and abroad; her coordination of interdisciplinary research projects; her supervision of MA and PhD theses – these are just some of the dimensions of her work in the field of poetry. Work is perhaps not the right word to describe MIR’s engagement with poetry; it is more of a calling – a calling also felt by every poet everywhere.

¹ Translated in Brazil (Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2008), and in Portugal (Porto: Afrontamento, 2009).

Her concern with poetry goes, however, beyond the poetic. For her the study of poetry is a form of intervention in the public sphere, a means of “interrupting” orthodoxies and dominant discourses and of opening up the world to other possibilities and perspectives. In 1990, over a lunch (anybody who knows MIR is aware of how much she enjoys good food and good company) she came up with the idea of a “meeting of poets” to bring live poetry into academia. In 1992, as a celebration of Walt Whitman, the 1st International Meeting of Poets took place in Coimbra (poetry happening all over the town!). This was followed by seven others, every three years, until 2010. Many Portuguese poets in that first meeting had never read their work before a live audience. The event changed the Portuguese cultural scene for ever; MIR’s initiative gave rise to a trend that continues to this day.

More than 300 poets and 40 languages were heard in Coimbra during the 20 years of the International Meetings of Poets, creating networks between poets, scholars and lovers of poetry. Some poets came to us, wishing to participate, from places as far away as Singapore or as central as New York, putting Coimbra on the map of contemporary world poetry. We have MIR to thank for this, and many have indeed thanked her from many locations and in many languages. The seven anthologies of the *Poesia do Mundo*, which gather many original poems and their respective translations, put together by a team under MIR’s coordination, are a testimonial to this fact.

Persistently claiming that poetry has a “radical uselessness,” she has taught us that “poetry teaches us that nothing is fixed, that everything should be questioned, that we should always look again” (“A ciência e as humanidades” 133). From her we have learned that poetry is an act of presence whose meaning is never exhausted and, as such, it’s an encouragement never to give up and never to forget to participate.

Another constant in MIR's career is her commitment to postgraduate studies. A demanding but supportive supervisor ("orientadora" in Portuguese) she always claimed that her supervision left candidates more "disorientated" than before. Even with the scant resources of the time, she was the creator, in 1982, of the first MA in Anglo-American studies at Coimbra, followed in 1999 by the first MA in American Studies and in 2008 of the first PhD program in American Studies in Portugal.

She is also responsible for bringing Feminist Studies to Coimbra, initiating the first MA in Feminist Studies in 2007 and then in 2008 creating the first PhD – a dream come true for MIR, whose involvement with the field was already apparent in her teaching and publications. In CES, she was instrumental in the creation of a Feminist Studies Research Project between 1998 and 2000. Already an internationally recognized specialist in the field, she Co-chaired the Task Force for International Women in American Studies (ASA); was Chair of the Program Committee for the Third European Feminist Research Conference in 1996 and 1997, and a member of the Scientific Committee for Women's Studies in the European Project SIGMA between 1994 and 1996.

MIR's career and personal stance can perhaps best be summed up as one of perpetual engagement with the world and of a deliberate "interruption" of dominant discourses in her attempt

to contribute to the ongoing redefinition and reassessment of the humanities as being, precisely, the faculty to ask questions. . . . questions also about the social, economic, and political structures that govern our intellectual lives. Questions, then, not only about the scholarly achievements of humanistic studies, but also about their educational responsibilities and their social commitments (1994: 28).

Spanning more than 40 years – and still going strong – her trajectory can almost be read as a history of the critical and theoretical developments of the last four decades. In the organization of this volume, we wanted to do justice to the manifold dimensions of MIR's research interests and pay tribute to her pioneering intervention in many crucial areas of study.

The different sections of the book allowed us to gather contributions from specialists, colleagues and students who over the years have reflected on the same issues, entered into a dialogue with her and benefitted from her learning and experience. And if pragmatic reasons demanded separate chapters, we believe that it is still apparent in many of the articles how MIR's perpetual crossing of boundaries and transdisciplinary thought has been passed on and has helped others to extend their intellectual horizons and transgress established lines.

The first five sections are devoted to academic papers; but we could not leave out the Testimonials of all those who have known MIR as a colleague or friend. In these matters, the person is as important as the scholar, and in MIR's particular case, the human and academic qualities are inseparable. The testimonials bear witness to the fact that the figure of the woman, the scholar, the mentor, the colleague and the friend all fuse into a harmonious – and irresistible – whole.

Last but not least – the poems, a tribute from all those Poets to whom MIR gave a voice or provided with a public forum where their voice could be heard. The present volume would have to give poetry pride of place, as it is given pride of place – both as critical object and artistic form – in MIR's thought.

Our thanks are due to the Dean of FLUC for the financial support of the print version of this volume, and to IUC to have made this project viable.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who contributed, in one form or another, to this volume. Their enthusiasm and commitment

were much valued and served as inspiration to help us complete the task of putting together this *Festschrift* in honour of someone who is, and always will be, for those who admire her (to quote from one of her favourite poets) “*the edge of one of many circles*”.

Thank you, Maria Irene!

Coimbra, 28 June, 2016

Isabel Caldeira
Graça Capinha
Jacinta Matos

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I. POEMAS / POEMS

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

ANA LUÍSA AMARAL & MARGARET JULL COSTA

ANA LUÍSA AMARAL (PORTUGAL)

Das mais puras memórias: ou de lumes

Ontem à noite e antes de dormir,
a mais pura alegria

de um céu

no meio do sono a escorregar, solene
a emoção e a mais pura alegria
de um dia entre criança e quase grande

e era na aldeia,
acordar às seis e meia da manhã,
os olhos nas portadas de madeira, o som
que elas faziam ao abrir, as portadas
num quarto que não era o meu, o cheiro
ausente em nome

mas era um cheiro
entre o mais fresco e a luz
a começar era o calor do verão,
a mais pura alegria

um céu tão cor de sangue
que ainda hoje, ainda ontem antes de dormir,
as lágrimas me chegam como então, e de repente,
o sol como um incêndio largo
e o cheiro as cores

Mas era estar ali, de pé, e jovem,
e a morte era tão longe,
e não havia mortos nem o seu desfile,
só os vivos, os risos, o cheiro
a luz

era a vida, e o poder de escolher,
ou assim o parecia:

a cama e as cascatas frescas dos lençóis
macios como estrangeiros chegando a país novo,
ou as portadas abertas de madeira
e o incêndio do céu

Foi isto ontem à noite,
este esplendor no escuro e antes de dormir

.....

Hoje, os jornais nesta manhã sem sol
falam de coisas tão brutais
e tão acesas, como povos sem nome, sem luz
a amanhecer-lhes cor e tempos,
de mortos não por vidas que passaram,
mas por vidas cortadas a violência de ser
em cima desta terra sobre outros mortos
mal lembrados ou nem sequer lembrados

E eu penso onde ela está, onde ela cabe,
essa pura alegria recordada
que me tomou o corredor do sono,
se deitou a meu lado ontem à noite

tomada novamente tornada movimento,
mercadoria bela para cesta de vime muito belo,
como belo era o céu daquele dia

Onde cabe a alegria recordada
em frente do incêndio que vi ontem de noite?
onde as cores da alegria? o seu corte tão nítido
como se fosse alimentado a átomo
explodindo

como fazer de tempo? como fingir o tempo?

.....

E todavia os tempos coabitam
E o mesmo corredor dá-lhes espaço
e lume

But it was being there, being so young
and death so far off,
when there were no dead no funeral processions,
only the living, the laughter, the smell
the light

it was life and being able to choose,
or so it seemed:

the bed and the cool cascades of sheets
soft as strangers arriving in a new land,
or the wooden shutters open
and the fire of the sky

This was last night,
this splendour in the dark, before sleeping

.....

Today, the newspapers on this sunless morning
speak of things so brutal
and so flagrant, like peoples without names, without light
to bring them dawn colours and times,
of dead people who did not pass through life
but had their lives cut short the violence of standing
on this earth on others who have died
scarce remembered or remembered not at all

And I wonder where it is, where it fits
the pure recollected joy
that met me on the corridor into sleep,
and lay down beside me last night

ANA PAULA TAVARES (ANGOLA)

Cachos de pássaros pendurados no fio
Da luz eterna das seis horas
Ondas de pássaros abrindo as asas nas árvores
Sem folhas sem flores cheias do canto
Vagas de pássaros nos limites da noite
Árvores totais abanam pássaros
No sono que avança a noite

ANA PAULA TAVARES (ANGOLA)

A minha cara no espelho

É esta a palavra e não outra
Onde me fixo para limar esquinas
Fios e arestas
Esta é a palavra
Que se parte ao meio
Com a noite frágil
e o dia.

ANNA RECKIN (REINO UNIDO)

November 2015

Or the edge of a wood

From sunlit

into dark-
green darkness, ground on which
small white, springtime, starry –

Flora
and blowsy, gauze-clad Chloris, clumsy bloom
across her mouth, her sideways gaze a slide
of picture plane, mutually embracing Graces,
the
youth
with wings at his heels

but I ignore the figures (gods,
girls, fruit-laden trees)

– field at my back, I'm eyeing the verge:

pale stems, etiolate, in half-shade

ANNA RECKIN (REINO UNIDO)

What you see climbing up

that you missed going down:

amongst the big stones
trees, and a small (associated) slope
the reach of a branch, moss patches,
shadows

set against the boulder's curve, sheet-
metal, brushwood

improvised

fold

From the roadside, next the stone wall (red ropes in front of
'important' paintings)

imagining into, around, round the back of –

avoiding 'the

view'

ANTÓNIO JACINTO PASCOAL (PORTUGAL)

durante a minha infância senti
uma grande atracção por árvores

tudo se passou com simplicidade
e um sentimento de segurança

(aquela vez em que não tinha nada
a que me agarrar
e o pânico me assaltou
largou-me da mão)

tinha diante dos olhos
nêsperas ou cerejas

a minha fantasia no silêncio das tardes
impunha-me que usasse de cortesia
com os ramos das árvores

sei que tive a vaga percepção
de viajar
e muitas vezes mudava de século

elas
as árvores
foram as minhas amantes
não poderia haver mais afinidade do que entre nós

ANTÓNIO JACINTO PASCOAL (PORTUGAL)

as palavras dentro da boca
esfarelam-se
batem asas assustadas

uma após outra
as frases esvaziam-se

agora só soluços
pedras e frutos

uma linguagem muito deserta
reduzida ao tamanho do ninho

as palavras tremeluzem
são escassas como lágrimas por
cair

eis como se regressa ao primeiro
inverno

à estufa

CHARLES BERNSTEIN (ESTADOS UNIDOS)

Autopsychographia

Poets are fakers
Whose faking is so real
They even fake the pain
They truly feel

And for those of us so well read
Those read pains feel O, so swell
Not the poets' double header
But the not of the neither

And so the wheels go whack
Ensnaring our logical part
In the train wreck
Called the human heart

*after Fernando Pessoa
1 April 1931*

CHARLES BERNSTEIN (ESTADOS UNIDOS)

Fado

Who sleeps with me at night's
My secret, but if you must
I'll tell you: Fear sleeps with me —

Just fear, which suddenly
Cradles me in the see-saw
Of loneliness, with a silence

That talks with treacherous
Voice, stalking at reason.
What shall I do when lying —

Staring at the void, screaming
Into space? *Who is asleep*
Beside me, cold as Lazurus?

Scream? Who can save me
From what's inside me
And waits to kill me?

I know it waits
At the edge of the bridge.

after "Quem dorme à noite comigo?"
by Reinaldo Ferreira (1922-1959)

CRISTINA BABINO (ITÁLIA)

estratto da *Ophelia* (inedito)
(Lizzie Siddal come “Ophelia”, di John Everett Millais, 1852,
Tate Britain, London)

L'acqua mi sfiora le orecchie.
Lambisce nel suo ricamo
il broccato tenero dei padiglioni,
penetra nell'oscurità dei condotti
col rifluire di una remota marea.
È una carezza morbida,
un languore stanco, premuroso,
ha l'andamento familiare della risacca
sul bagnasciuga di Hastings,
il crepitio sommesso dei sassi levigati d'arenile.
Ad ogni impercettibile movimento
l'onda infinitesima caricata
dall'ingombro sottile del mio corpo
accende o spegne
la stereofonia dei canali uditivi.
Socchiudo gli occhi, e mi vedo creatura
di un abisso breve e immobile.
Dimentico le gambe.
E allora sono sirena,
ho squame in luogo dei piedi,
lucenti di salsedine
e scaglie robuste di sole.

La mia voce non seduce marinai,
è il tonfo silenzioso e segreto degli oceani.

Ascolto. S'avvicina al rifluire,
e s'allontana, il palpito sommesso
del piccolo umido mondo
ricreato nella stanza.
Distesa in una vasca da bagno
ricolma d'acqua. Tiepida appena.
Un brivido ricorrente
mi percorre in longitudine,
uno scatto di reni
che non so controllare.
E allora non sono più sirena.
No, non abito mari lontani.
S'impossessa di me altra sembianza.
Sono ninfa di fiume,
creatura di muschio e boscaglia.
Ofelia.
Pazza d'amore. Per Amleto
che medita morte e fantasmi.
Che non – mi – vede.
Ofelia che la morte cercata
trascina sul letto del fiume,
che non si vuole salvare.
E annega. Scompare.
(...)
Vagherò coi miei figli mai nati
nelle stanze oscure d'Amleto.
Ma ora.
Sono un'isola senza arcipelago.
Deriva stremata di continente.

ERÍN MOURE (CANADÁ)

En péril

J'ai été abattue par le territoire

Quel territoire

Sonnez à ma porte je vous le dirai

je vous le montrerai (mon veston de miséricordes)

L'avenir est venu dans un mot

territoire (ce mot-là)

avec qui

2

Au cas où

« obligatoire »

une phrase méchante de mon vocabulaire

ou de ma maladie

cachée à l'avant

du cerveau

troupeaux

vêtements déchirés

quelle mode (de vie)

coupable ou

avec quoi

3

Les religieuses en mitaines sont amusantes aujourd'hui
voudriez-vous bien que je vous raconte *cela*?

« un mouchoir dans le jardin »

Ridicule

Ce n'est pas racontable

après toute cette déception

De l'infini

Je m'excuse, je me trompe

je suis trop bornée par mes rêves

FORREST GANDER (ESTADOS UNIDOS)

Two poems for Maria Irene Ramalho

Thanks to Graça Capinha

1.

She said suffering wasn't necessary.
He said it was the gateway.
She said, Drag it back where it came from.
She said, You call everybody baby.
He said, It's like free money, sort of.
She said he said to just stand here.

2.

What a good
human life
looks like. In
bed as
out. An extreme
conjunction.

FRED WAH (CANADÁ)

Person Dom

Midnight, can't sleep, so writing you this letter.
In which I plant my love
Familiar murmur, but you can't hear the silence.
The words rumour the harvest of pines
Nation locked out by the beetle.

The song of our lake is so pure
 we can drink it.
Ocean of us.
That talk of forest and tides, distances.
"older but knowing no better
still in love, wanting
that good song to be sung
inging it ahead into the dark
beyond the high beam
hoping"

FRED WAH (CANADÁ)

Ode to Castles Out

The rope is just the ribbon of desire
The oriental accident just fits a better country
Rampant told the Lion and the Unicorn
To go out on a limb and hold

A coat of arms out at the elbows
A river out of wandering
At first it is a useful coat
 out of sun, snow, rain, and prairie wind
As tidy as England's ponds and fashion
Among us roasting maple leaves and thistles

It fits, coming from the sulphur of Saskatchewan
Out west, the ends of earth

The face that stares,
 a coat spelled out.

ISABEL CRISTINA PIRES (PORTUGAL)

Marinha – Costa Nova

Ainda e sempre este azul ácido do mar:
uma geometria vestida de crianças, uma faixa
de areia como sanguessugas dos anos que fugiram.
No coração está um vazio sem névoa nem cidade
nem claro nem escuro nem tormenta. O coração
ficou-me assim na forma gravítica de um touro,
na luz boreal de um eclipse, brotando papagaios
cor de lama e recusando a espuma azurada deste mar
que de manhã o sol toca. Nenhuma queixa
nos velhos e crianças que olham para as ondas,
nenhum terramoto na terra onde estão o dia inteiro
– a praia é de todos, mesmo dos pagãos que sofrem
a ira de não acreditar. Mas torna-se agora claro
que o astro gira, um cansado apolo de madeira
tingido pelos anos. Torna-se público o mar,
abre-se diante das mulheres, dos pescadores
com suas canas e cestos, insiste no caos de brancos
polígonos que se reconhecem uns aos outros -
e que milagre é a coesão branca da matéria,
esse sal da nenhuma demora em existir. A areia
entra nos sapatos que erram um atrás do outro
e fazem covas tão íntimas, e a gravidade
alonga-nos em pedra o coração e enterra-nos

nas ruas que vão ao pé das ondas. Vejo
que os pescadores foram embora, as mulheres
subiram pela carne e rosaram o sangue dos mamilos
e os velhos seguram o chapéu, agora que faz vento.
É esta a cor do artifício que sopra sobre o mar,
o tom azul sem ser azul que tinge de vermelho
e de castanho as rochas do pontão. Como uma língua
que lambesse a praia inteira e a expulsasse para fora
do horizonte, assim as minhas mãos me reconhecem.
E atrás disso a viagem incerta do meu sangue
tornou a revoltar-se, e patas de gaiotas e conchas
partidas em bocados indicam-me o rumo, não
daquilo que sabia, mas de um outro país à minha espera.

3 de Abril de 2015

ISABEL CRISTINA PIRES (PORTUGAL)

Woody Allen

Toda a gente se sente inteligente a ver Woody Allen, mas eu vejo-o sempre com um fato de banana. É esse o seu segredo, trocou o carnaval por sátira judaica, pregou uma rasteira à funda melancolia do outono e estatelou-a no chão. E atirou tartes de creme à cara da neurose, tudo isto tocando clarinete com os amigos, mas isso não consta dos seus filmes. Todos aqueles cordões emaranhados de gente que boceja, e se imiscui, e fere, e dá sentenças, e amesquinha, e se sente, meu deus, culpada de existir, e tanta rabugice, e acusação entre homens e mulheres, e perda de sentido e weltschmerz enquanto as folhas caem de amarelo no Central Park, tudo isso escorrega em cascas de laranja e se disfarça com grossos narigões à Groucho Marx. O pequeno ruivo de monco no cimento faz de Nova York a nossa aldeia. Como todos os palhaços, alberga a irritação de estar na vida, e deita-a fora em 24 imagens por segundo; e sem que ninguém o impeça neste mundo, Woody constrói os souvenirs do tédio que temos na cabeça.

21 de abril de 2015

LUÍS QUINTAIS (PORTUGAL)

Porto

Vi
A rapariga cega
Com o seu cão negro

Domiciliado na hábil forma da vida
Dela, senhor do labirinto
Dela,

Conduzindo-a
E acolhendo,
Num assentimento animal,
A quotidiana porção
De drama e hábito
Com que ela pedia o lanche

E se debruçava sobre o telemóvel
Para escutar a voz
De que nada sei.

Senhor do labirinto dela,
O cão fixava os tranquilos olhos
Em mim.

LUÍS QUINTAIS (PORTUGAL)

A música

A música evolui, célere, sob a realidade
Sem nome e sem métrica.
Uma casa devoluta, uma memória, um eco
De uma memória.

O que se escreve aqui, nesta parede,
É uma reserva
De palavras, um silo de sombras, um perímetro
De morte de onde a morte se ausenta.
Um parêntese na face mais escondida
Deste atributo, desta milimétrica rede
Com que se vela o rosto.

Um traço de destruições
E vontade
Turva a representação do medo.
Uma casa devoluta abate,
Agora.

JESÚS MUNÁRRIZ (ESPAÑA)

En Coimbra nació, junto al Mondego,
un río nemoroso, reposado;
fue a Italia y supo de primera mano
cómo era aquello del Renacimiento:
Por tierras de Castilla pasajero,
amigo de Boscán y Garcilaso,
escribió en portugués y en castellano
sabios, hermosos, memorables versos.
Volvió a su tierra, retiróse a un pueblo,
y aunque vivió de lo que poseía,
nunca le abandonó la poesía
y envejeció leyendo y escribiendo.
Francisco se llamó Sá de Miranda:
músicos somos de la misma banda.

JOÃO RASTEIRO (PORTUGAL)

A desídia é a flor que alastra

“O gratuito é que faz de nós humanos.”

Maria Irene Ramalho

Agonizamos, como todos agonizamos.
Mas no escárnio, não agonizaste,
como quase todos agonizamos.

*

Hoje, sobre a luz e o escárnio
nem a fé mobiliza os embuços do mundo.
O silêncio é o que se perdeu no trovão.

*

Como um céu infindo,
acostado à fiúza que concebemos, como a ave
sem queixume desvinculada do vínculo
da geografia do voo,
os caibros apodreceram como ossos
na antecipação da injúria e na piedade
do amor do homem
que se cerceie “à sua consumação”.

A desídia é a flor que alastra,
o homem blasfema, não expõe a blasfémia
e na gratuidade incide a incúria da sua liturgia.

*

Na eximição, não é o dúbio friso de deus
que nos obscurece,
mas a áspera segadura do homem.

*

E será no mais profundo escuso do estro
que nos iludiremos mais, hoje,
quando alguém fareja: tem olfacto, tem fé?

JOÃO RASTEIRO (PORTUGAL)

X - Despojamento

Nos céus os ventos secam as vestes do mundo. É assim a implexa dor da fúria dos corpos. Tudo é uma ferida aberta no clarão. O prelúdio do sussurro aquece nos abismos da túnica sobre a insistência da névoa. Ele é o seu próprio espólio entre a lajem que floresce. O seu repudiado verbo é sem costuras. A nudez é uma pura exercitação entrando por dentro do despojamento. A plena religação das vestes. Até somente ser possível despojar tudo. Até o vinho mesclado com fel ser a saborosa seiva das abelhas. Ele é o adorno do mundo. Quem se despojar nele não receará o temporal. Não temerá a omissão na viva obscuridade da fiúza. Mas em seu brutal retábulo possuirá o coração do linho. E assim ficou até hoje. Despojado. Exposto em sua adunada respiração. Ténue como o imprescindível martírio no retorno à unidade. Para que flanco se voltará o corpo quando a nudez do mundo é golpeada por infinitos sóis?

JOHN MATEER (AUSTRÁLIA/ÁFRICA DO SUL)

Sublime, as the cliché would have that aria,
at breakfast in a Brisbane cafe. *Which?* João can't remember
the opera, though he does, well, the Singaporean
poet Cyril, the singer. Years later João would read, when young,
he had been an escort as well as an excellent student of voice,
confiding in the interview how he used to give sympathy
fucks to men whose lives seemed so desultory
the carnal was their only kindness. Recalling Cyril, not as castrato,
as genuine angel, João is reflecting that Sunyata, or Infinity,
is such a being, who in the midst of breakfasting poets
brings "La Traviata" and Brisvegas into a synergy
that can only be listen to unspeaking, marvelled
at. That moment was real, João feels, and worldly.
He had thought, *I hope they've noticed, too. Not just me*

JOHN MATEER (AUSTRÁLIA/ÁFRICA DO SUL)

Merely one of the 108 Buddhist sins erased as the bell tolls,
gonging in the icy New Year night; that team
of monks stepping back, silent, from the released pole
under the TV spotlights. From in the crowd it seemed
to João the shattering of skulls numberless and holy,
pure extinction, as if all the many thousands seeing the bell,
the millions, knew by telepathy what was lurking in his soul,
that ghost. He closed his eyes, felt lost, slowly
recalling, within the depth of his dim, honeycomb body,
arriving at a temple in the far mountains of Honshu.
Pilgrims were already there, kneeling, and the monk,
blessing them with a long leafy branch, beckoned
him in to also pay homage to the transparent box,
the mummified saint. João heard: *He could also be you...*

JUAN ARMANDO ROJAS JOO (MÉXICO)

Desde la ventanilla

30/IX/2014

Desde la ventanilla del avión
mi vista me permite ver la tierra
fértil del llamado medio oeste,
el gigantesco granero del mundo.

Y logro ver la sombra de las nubes,
los trazos definidos de un poblado,
el brillo azul del agua en el estanque.

Durante el vuelo vamos persiguiendo
la corriente del río Mississippi,
su más larga y curva vida feraz,
el curso que en sus sueños navegó.

A los lados los pastizales se alzan,
son los muchos y muy afortunados
fértils campos de trigo y maíz.

Hay verdes, amarillos y marrones,
los hay grandes, medianos y pequeños,
hay otros que se rozan y se tocan,
tan cerca el uno de otro han de vivir.

Algunos desearían estar solos,
aquellos que la lluvia abandonó,
algunos lejanos, otros, cercanos,
para el otoño se preparan ya,
y tejen con la tierra una cobija,
mismos que aguardan un invierno largo,
ya se abrigan con el manto otoñal.
¡Ha, esos campos de trigo y maíz,
de todo hay en la viña del señor!

JUAN ARMANDO ROJAS JOO (MÉXICO)

La casa amurallada

Viajamos por las venas de un vitral
y lágrimas de arena
de cierto mar nocturno

viajamos por el mapa de los cielos
las líneas de las manos
señalaron el lugar

con ceniza y sangre de guerreros
se alzó de esta ciudad el primer muro
y en las rocas se dejaron las ofrendas

de granizo se alzó el segundo muro
para seguir el rumbo de las aves
papalotl enseñó a los habitantes a volar

bajo la lluvia y una lunazul
se construyó en invierno el tercer muro
cantaron las ranas y el pueblo danzó

el cuarto muro se elevó con el fuego
del volcán que nace en la laguna fría
y los hombres aprendieron a nadar

así fue construida
sobre el peñol de los coyotes
la casa amurallada

LIANA SAKELLIU (GRÉCIA)

Raffaello Ceccoli's Icon, 1853

My father liked the icon
in the monastery because Ceccoli
portrayed his dead daughter as the Virgin.
I was alive and he
was not a painter.
«Only this lasts,» he used to whisper
as he held me tightly in his arms
like Ceccoli must have held his heavy easel.

But where was the fountain?
In the lion's mouth?
In the courtyard, beyond the tombs?
Deep in the plane trees' shadows?
I wanted that life-giving spring in the open
so his palm with the unbroken lifeline
would always be there behind the painting.

(tradução para inglês da autora)

LIANA SAKELLIYOU (GRÉCIA)

The Gate

All night beside him
in the endless glow
of his fishing lamp
I spent the sand
I spent the oil
in a cove where the Sleeping Woman
disappears.

Give me your hand, my child.
The signs for the weather are favorable.

But I set my course by the scops owl,
which is infallible, blunt
and doesn't budge.

(tradução para inglês da autora)

MÁRCIO-ANDRÉ DE SOUSA HAZ (BRASIL)

mondego | karinna

sua voz através do mar é o próprio mar em travessia

chamamento remoto
de mulher equilibrada nos rochedos

é também credível viver fora dos peixes
dentro de um farol no extremo das docas

e nos encontrarmos agora
mais por vício das marés
que por desarranjo do acaso

o mar está entre nós e por isso nos une

a mesma palavra que cabe em minha boca
cabe na sua

em sua boca cabem todos os oceanos

MÁRCIO-ANDRÉ DE SOUSA HAZ (BRASIL)

de “Monsanto”

1.

toda a aldeia é um labirinto móvel para cães
e de nunca haver gente sempre nos adequamos a ser outro

a aldeia contém dentro
três outras aldeias que nunca se tocam

e somatizam nos habitantes até deformá-los

mas o pôr do sol é sempre esse
desde o princípio do sol e do estado das coisas

o pôr do sol que se ama como latão velho
e tudo o mais é variação de pedra

neste lugar onde até o deus é de granito
e tem sonhos de pedra
com fêmeas mortais num jardim de areia e pedra

onze paisagens na janela e cada dia é um dia

é preciso partir antes que chegue outro
pois também as coisas parecem mais rápido do que percebemos

e é triste notar que nada permanece de nosso
antes mesmo que não se esteja mais aqui

2.

a última estrela da noite vingou na primeira luz da aldeia

foi quando ela veio atravessando os pomares
e as primeiras flores em seu vestido azul
e sentou-se ao meu lado no meio-fio
e esperamos amanhecer

MIRO VILLAR (GALIZA/ESPANHA)

Para Maria Irene, mestra de saberes

Misión pedagóxica

A misión pedagóxica, e non se fala agora de Machado, de Lorca, de María Zambrano ou de Miguel Hernández, só pretende o reflexo no espello dunha nai que aleitou con tenrura a túa fame de ollos pechados no alimento, esa nai que aprendeu das raíces os nomes que designan as plantas para que fosen teus.

E cando ti regresas sabes que espera o tacto e a revelación fértil de exóticas raíces que traen outros nomes aprendidos nos libros que lle foron negados.

Os seus dedos mirrados tiñan como destino enfiar as agullas nunha máquina Singer e coser para fóra.

Con razón o teu tacto cose as súas feridas.

MIRO VILLAR (GALIZA/ESPANHA)

A metamorfose

Cruzar olhares: uma tarefa curta.

(A outra:

a mais gramatical

forma de amar)

«Gramáticas do olhar», *A Arte de Ser Tigre* (2003),
ANA LUÍSA AMARAL

Cruzar hoxe os ollares: unha tarefa curta, mais de todo imposible porque os teus iris baixan con présa as escaleiras, abandonan a escena, atrás queda o proscenio, atrás tamén o público e no medio da rúa blasfemas contra o vento, nada hai de bohemio, nin nada de impostura na explosión, no Big Bang que orixina o silencio.

Unha metamorfose convértete en anfibio, notas o sangue frío, a pel un tecido áspero que segrega veneno, respiras polas branquias e queres afondar na charca nausebunda.

Recordas «Axolotl», o conto de Cortázar, metáfora sublime do fascínio da ollada.

Pódese ser anfibio, non é literatura.

NUNO JÚDICE (PORTUGAL)

Um Requiem Europeu

por Alyan Kurdi (2012-2015)

Podia estar a jogar ao pião,
com a habilidade de o lançar,
podia estar à procura de pão,
com um saco para o guardar.

Podia ter um lugar na escola,
esperar pelo toque do recreio,
ter amigos para jogar à bola,
e voltar a casa pelo passeio.

Podia ter um quarto com brinquedos,
cadernos novos para desenhar,
irmão com quem partilhar os segredos,
jardins onde poderia saltar.

Mas nessa praia onde o encontraram
é que já não podia ter mais nada
a não ser os sonhos que não voaram

NUNO JÚDICE (PORTUGAL)

Função poética

Pega num ramo de metáforas e ata-as,
como se fossem flores. Não têm o perfume
da rosa, não estão húmidas com o orvalho
da memória, não poderás ver em cada uma
delas uma cor precisa, nem o contorno
delicado de cada pétala. Mas leva contigo
esse ramo, e de cada vez que queiras
colher uma flor, ou que te apeteça sentir
o seu perfume, ou que precisas de
uma cor viva no teu espírito, arranca
uma metáfora do meio desse ramo
que guardaste e põe-na em frente dos
teus olhos. À primeira vista, talvez não
a percebas – o sentido da metáfora
nem sempre é fácil de descobrir. Mas
quando ela ganhar forma no teu
espírito, encontrarás tudo aquilo de
que precisas – a flor branca do campo,
a fúnebre violeta do outono, ou o lírio
de um corpo que nasce de dentro
da sua imagem; e aprenderás
o sentido de cada metáfora.

RÉGIS BONVICINO (BRASIL)

Notícia do lixão de Tabatinga

Terra porosa, água escura
moscas chupam os braços dos meninos
homens, mulheres e urubus disputam
cada palmo de lixo

entre as velas um deles tropeça
na cabeça talvez de um sagui
carcaças de capivaras
tudo fede

um curió ávido bica uma lata vazia
entre as embalagens, uma harpia
pega um lagarto pelo fígado
unhas sobre o motor corroído do barco

sol pesado, um quati definha
barracas, folhas secas do açaí
um ticuna pisa em carniça
quem? abocanha um detrito

saúvas infestam a cúpula de um abajur
um armário de aço sem porta
vitória régia, branca, abre as folhas
nas águas rasas do córrego

samaúmas adultas ao fundo
morrer afinal é lucro
o que se apaga no poema
dá de cara com o mundo

RÉGIS BONVICINO (BRASIL)

Arte

É o relevo das luzes de uma torre
no dia seguinte

é o mendigo que, mão aberta, não pede esmola

é um MSF – menino sem futuro –
amarrado no obelisco
depois de roubar um mendigo

é um faquir com fobia de pregos

é a antena da mosca furando um pneu
de um Simca Chambord, vermelho,
num velho anúncio realista

é uma poltrona bubble chair sobre a faixa amarela
da estrada

é um cartaz vintage da atriz Hedy Lammar em *Êxtase*

é um fantoche da Guerra Fria com um tumbleweed alojado na cabeça

é um soldado da ajuda humanitária
muçulmanas más sem nicabes

é um imigrante boliviano demolindo
a marretadas
as vigas de um edifício

é também um sociólogo de binóculo, num navio,
disfarçando a cegueira

é um relógio sobre uma lápide

um escravo
orelha roxa, passos lentos
foge da fazenda Bom Retiro

é o conflito econômico progressista
um foie gras de pato selvagem

é um colchão com lençol largado na calçada

é um menino negro que passa, apressado,
pela calçada da porta da igreja do Pari,
camiseta regata do Spurs,
de repente se lembra faz o sinal da cruz

é um enfiador fuzilado por um garoto
num ponto de ônibus à tarde

é um rolo de fio elétrico amarrado ao pé de um poste

um casal se pega, de dia, sob o luminoso Star India
desligado

é um camelo pronunciando palavras assassinas

é um cara algemado, disparando contra a própria cabeça

é um artista se entregando à polícia

RITA DAHL (FINLÂNDIA)

El Corazon del Tiempo

The heart of time is made of half-moon shaped leaves, crumpled, paper balls in bundle, crushed by wanderer's shoes, bits and Jack, from a miserable desire towards talking colibris of the heaven, from all of them and much more is made the heart of time. The heart of time talks only for those who do not know, because those who know, do not have time to listen to it. Time itself has gone, because it cannot be forced into a mould, it always flows over the borders, escapes to the horizon, further away, it cannot be tamed, like a heart can be stopped from beating extra times, even a heart, which has lost its hope, a name, a mirror and an image on it, because a heart is always new, at every beat new, it overcomes mountains even when its bearer is sleeping, it does not contain only one image, which would be superior to another, it is a democratic heart, it beats, without a pause beats, until the sun darkens in the sky and a song of the last bird fades away far away, still it beats, beats, beats, until a stone gets broken, a chain, an image, whatever, that makes the wind blow, the clouds move, a human being to forget, to remember, time when the forest was the home of the heart, it lived under the bare sky with the birds, until worries began.

(tradução para inglês da autora)

RITA DAHL (FINLÂNDIA)

Högklint I

A pinetree climbs up a rock ledge,
bending backwards by the hit of the wind,
keeps persisting, clings with all his force to the rock.

I sit under the rock ledge on a rocky shore
with an orange-coloured round stone in my hand
and I am looking at a fishing boat.

A fisherman unravels his tangled nets
in front of a red cabin
after he has pulled his boat on the shore.

The wind draws furrows on the face,
on the rocks which have lied centuries on the shore.
The swans bend their necks under the water hoping for the prey,
even in the teeth of the waves they do not stop hunting.

Among stony crowd I look for the traces of Vikings.
An instinct of walking down the rocky shore among trilobites
is everlasting.

The boats pass on the border of the water slowly
by.

(tradução para inglês da autora)

SABINE SCHOLL (ÁUSTRIA)

Der Teppich

I.

Ich kann ihn nicht leiden.
Für die Kinder ist er ein Ort.
Deswegen darf er nicht fort.

II.

Da hängt mir der Dreck im Blick
Und der Teppich staubt die Nase voll.
Toll. Mein Sohn kracht aus dem Mund.
Zimtkrusten zwischen seinen Zähnen.

III.

Heute hat der Teppich zu mir gesprochen
Ich legte mich flach
Und habe mit den Augen die Geschichte gehört.
Als er uns mit dem Schiff nachreiste
Inzwischen von Kisten

Flüsterte sein Muster:

Ich bleibe.

Meine Kinder loben ihn dafür.

Nur ich will ihn fort und nicht mehr

Haben.

Entweder er oder ein Tier

Verlangen die Kinder und

Füttern ihn mit Staub.

**II. ESTUDOS ANGLO-AMERICANOS /
ANGLO-AMERICAN STUDIES**

(Página deixada propositadamente em branco)

PENTIMENTO: ACROSS LAYERS OF TIME

Teresa F. A. Alves, Teresa Cid

Resumo: Este ensaio incide sobre analogias. Tendo em conta ou descartando constrictões de tempo e espaço, pretende-se auscultar vertentes essenciais, fazendo uso de um processo semelhante à técnica usada por pintores conhecida como “pentimento.” Lillian Hellman baseia-se nesta técnica num dos seus textos autobiográficos, um livro que ilustra como uma vida individual se entrecruza com a de outras pessoas que, de uma forma ou de outra, exercem influência no seu percurso de vida, desde a infância até à velhice. As incursões de Hellman sobre teatro e cinema, juntamente com pormenores cruciais da sua própria experiência, oferecem uma variedade de enquadramentos que servem de fundamento ao argumento apresentado.

Palavras-chave: Lillian Hellman; Dashiell Hammett; (auto) retrato literário; pentimento; compromisso cívico; amizade.

Abstract: This essay focuses on analogies. By considering or dismissing time and space constrictions, we hope to probe the essentials, making use of a process similar to the painter’s technique known as “pentimento.” Lillian Hellman draws on

this technique in one of her autobiographical writings, a book that illustrates how an individual life intersects with others who, in one way or another, exert an influence on the progress from childhood to old age. Hellman's forays on theatre and cinema, together with the crucial details of her experience, offer a variety of frames by means of which we seek to support our argument.

Keywords: Lillian Hellman; Dashiell Hammett; literary (self) portrait; pentimento; civil engagement; friendship.

Pentimento. A Book of Portraits (1973)¹ is an unusual autobiographical work, the subtitle announcing the use of a structural device that is seldom associated with the narrative of the self, and which, even in its literary transposition, entails a posture focused on something exterior to that same self. The portrait is originally connected to the world of painting and from such a world Lillian Hellman borrows a metaphor to inaugurate her narrative and support a digression upon the effects of the passage of time on a picture; the sometimes resulting transparency betrays the difference between the initial conception and the latter achievement. It is the painter's act of repentance or change of mind that interests Hellman, and may become a particularly fruitful analogy not only in terms of *Pentimento*, to which it is directly related, but also when we consider the autobiographer's full achievement, brought together in a volume titled *Three: An Unfinished Woman. Pentimento. Scoundrel Time* (1979).²

In his Introduction to this volume, Richard Poirier interestingly refers to the three books as "essays in recollection," and although

¹ Henceforth referred to as *Pentimento*.

² Henceforth referred to as *Three*. All quotes are taken from this volume.

Hellman's recollections may veer away from canonical narratives of the self, they are certainly focused on the three elements which are always considered constitutive of the genre and which James Olney has deconstructed as "autos", "bios" and "graphein", while arguing for their specific interagency in so-called "stories of a life" (113-123). Published in 1969, *An Unfinished Woman* covers the span of Hellman's life as she wishes it to be remembered, in active engagement until the very end, death visiting her on June 30, 1984.

The intriguing title of Hellman's first life study might lead the reader to believe that the subsequent ones would be sequels to *An Unfinished Woman*. This, however, is not the case. The meaningful events and relationships that amount to the story of Hellman's own life are all covered in this first book of disparate forms of narrative presentation – the first fourteen chapters, chronologically organized but internally disrupted by regular flashbacks and flash-forwards, are followed by diary entries of Hellman's trips to Spain and the Soviet Union, the last three chapters being devoted to literary portraiture. In terms of technique, *Pentimento* presents a pattern which shows the author taking up where she had left off in her first autobiographical venture, making use of the literary portrait as a strategy that primarily allows for a more focused narrative and, in some measure, redirects Hellman's talent as a playwright. The dramatic style that had indeed made her famous between the Thirties and Sixties, and turned her into a celebrity in the American Theatre, where plays like *The Children's Hour* (1934), *The Little Foxes* (1939), *Watch on the Rhine* (1941), *The Autumn Garden* (1951) or *Toys in the Attic* (1960) most innovatively blend strong politics with human stories of individual struggle.

When we bear in mind the analogy with the art of painting, it may be safely argued that *Pentimento* adds new layers to the first memoir and, ultimately, sheds light on the intriguing title of the previous book. In *Three*, Hellman avows her reluctance to

change any of the texts but adds some comments of her own to the collection, admitting, for instance, that “nothing seems to explain the stubbornness of the fight [she] make[s] against going back to anything [she has] written, returning in any form to *finished work*” (“On Reading Again” 4; emphasis added). *Pentimento* and, some years later, *Scoundrel Time* (1976) offer, we venture to claim, the finishing touches to what had been left “unfinished” in the first narrative of the self and allows the author to complete the picture, not by exposing it to different episodes of experience, but by digging in and recovering what lies beneath the glossy surface of a life and is buried within the hidden recesses of the self.

The painterly analogy is transposed into Hellman’s words when she presents her gallery of portraits in *Pentimento* as a “way of seeing and then seeing again” (309). On drawing the portraits of “Bethe” and “Willie”, a German cousin on her father’s side and a great-uncle on her mother’s, the autobiographer goes back to childhood, adolescence and family influences. This, in her case, means two different social backgrounds and cultures, the eccentric, spiritual, not so well-off Southern culture of the father and the materially richer slavery-driven plantation culture of the mother. By focusing her portrait on Bethe, Lillian Hellman presents the reader with asides on the hazards of immigration, since this cousin arrives to be married to a good-for-nothing husband on her father’s side of the family, is neglected by him, and eventually enters the marginal world of the Italian Mafia by becoming a “common-law wife” to Al Arneggio. Later, after the murder of her lover in a gang war, she ends up in a mean cottage, living with a “nondescript plumber” at the end of nowhere.³ Nevertheless, Bethe’s proud vindication of her womanhood when she is living

³ We owe the fortunate expression to Markus K. Billson and Sidonie Smith, whose analysis, to our knowledge, is the first that Hellman’s autobiographical achievement received, and which, from a psycho-analytical point of view, highlights some interesting aspects in the portrait titled “Bethe.”

with Arneggio – “No longer am I German. No longer the Bowmans. Now I am woman and woman does not need help” (327) – gives this opening portrait a touch of liberating energy that goes hand in hand with the dream of American citizenship articulated as a claiming of the self. Glimpses of the New Orleans cityscape and its different cultures are also included in the opening portrait, concurrently with reminiscences of the witty impulsive father’s ancestors, cultural and social habits, even the furniture brought from the old country. Less prominently than Bethe but related to her by family ties, characters move in a row, such as the German immigrant grandfather vying with Lilly’s father for a “beautiful hand” in Gothic letter writing, and his two daughters, Jenny and Hannah, affectionately remembered as two eccentric maidens who made their living by running a boardinghouse. In their own quiet unassuming way, they have befriended Bethe, acted as Lilly’s guardian angels, and together with the child’s father share “a true distaste for unhappiness” (316).

“Willy”, the second portrait, shifts the focus to Hellman’s maternal family, whose wealth is initially a source of attraction for the budding teenager. Willy is evoked by the fascination that betrays an adolescent first crush on an older glamorous relative, whom she associates with “fast cars, a hundred-foot yacht, the St. Charles Avenue great house, an apartment at the old Waldorf in New York, a hunting place on Jekyll Island” (367). On a fishing excursion with Willy, she almost gets sunk in a swamp, before he pulls her out of it. Throughout the chapter and as the winds of chance take a different turn for the great-aunt’s husband, his less admirable features are more often than not balanced by the negative portrayal of those close to him. Honey, the lunatic son, is first evoked by his advances towards the four-year-old Lilly, and Willy’s wife, after whom she is christened, is caught in tender intimacy with Peters, the driver. “He was married to my ridiculous great-aunt” is Hellman’s introductory sentence to the portrait.

Perversion, drug addiction, and a husband who lives off the material generosity of his “ridiculous” wife, is a womanizer and smuggles guns into South America, build a deep contrast to the early vignettes about the father’s family. At the same time, Hellman’s mother’s secondary role befits the representative cultural status of each of the parents, which the very structure of the narrative supports. In Willy’s portrait, Caroline Ducky, who was as much a part of the mother’s childhood as Sophronia Mason had been of Lilly’s, also testifies as a sensible witness to the world of glitter and deception that surrounds her and which the remembering voice also ends up chastising. Caroline and Sophronia, her niece, are linked, not only by family ties but also by racial ones and both represent the peculiar affection that may bind a white woman to her nanny in Southern culture. As to Hellman’s mother, she hardly fits into her family’s portrait. There is, however, a telling reference at the beginning of the evocative portrait when, immediately after Aunt Jenny’s indictment of Hellman’s lack of affection for her mother, the portraitist writes: “By the time I knew how much I loved my mother and understood that her eccentricities were nothing more than that and could no more be controlled than the blinking of an eye in a high wind, it was, indeed too late” (361).

The remaining portraits deal with Hellman’s adulthood memories. In the opinion of Estelle C. Jelinek, here “her writing is even more oblique than when describing her childhood.” She then adds:

Adult frailties and mistakes are closer at hand and more difficult to face than childhood pains. Thus in writing about her mature years, she applies her dramatic artistry to shape portraits that center even more on others and even less on herself, though her own feelings are always conveyed elliptically. (158)

Without contending with the pertinence of such a critical opinion, we would like, however, to point out that by establishing an analogy with the art of the portrait, Hellman is deliberately oblique, making use of a strategy that is grounded in the people she knew throughout her life and about whom she draws a literary portrait not for literal likeness but for the possibility of confronting her first conception of those people with her present view of them. In her own words: "That is all I mean about the people in this book. The paint has aged now and I wanted to see what was there for me once, what is there for me now" (309). And this is, indeed, a specific feature of portraiture, an art that under the pretense of catching literal likenesses imposes upon those likenesses the very style or presence of the painter.

Bethe and Willy do not, on such account, stand as autonomous entities but as people whose relation to Hellman allows her a specific strategy to work out a specific purpose. In *Pentimento*, the constant sway between the here and now of the narrative and the then and there of the events, takes the shape of a regular flashing forward and backward in each chapter. The first two portraits recurrently intertwine with other times and other places, bridging the span between the author's engagement with the portrait and whatever situations cluster around it. Regarding, for instance, the emotion of love, it is not fortuitous that Dashiell Hammett, Hellman's life-long romantic partner, is mentioned in connection with both episodes, the first, in which the child Lilly has a first inkling of such an emotion by looking at Bethe and Arneggio, and the following one, in which she almost drowns in the swamp because of the intensity of her crush on Willy. These same strategies structure the remaining portraits.

As such, the evocation of Hellman's "beloved childhood friend" (404) in "Julia" allows for a number of pages about Dorothy Parker, whose portrait had been drawn in the closing section of *An Unfinished*

Woman. Dottie is the other friend of Hellman's adult years, whom she values for her wit and personality. But whereas Julia's friendship is reverently written about, pervaded by almost sacred emotion, when she evokes "a New Year's Eve in Julia's grandparents' great Fifth Avenue house" (412) or when she recalls a camping trip in the Adirondacks near Lake Champlain, Dottie's is a more mundane recollection, a bridge to the social environment or the literary world that both writers shared. Julia's portrait, stage-like, builds on the meeting of the two friends in Berlin, after Hellman's 1937 train ride across Germany to deliver, upon Julia's request, the ransom money that would help free "five hundred, and maybe a thousand people", half of them Jews, but also "political people", "Socialists, Communists," and "plain old Catholic dissenters," who suffered Nazi persecution (438-439). The vignette is thus built on the author's wish to once again meet her New York girlhood friend who had left the United States to study first at Oxford, then in Vienna's medical school, before her political involvement in clandestine anti-Nazi action took her to Berlin.

In *An Unfinished Woman*, Hellman's own anti-Fascist commitment had been recorded in the diary entries that report the Spanish Civil War and its devastating consequences for the victims of the fratricidal conflict. In *Pentimento* this same commitment fosters a poignant personal evocation of her friend and the ageing author admits that she had always omitted the story of her trip through Berlin because she did not really feel able to write about Julia (cf. 401). In drawing this portrait, the poetic reminiscences about her young friend's nobility of character and sense of social responsibility are gradually overshadowed by the unsettling signs of evanescent beauty and physical injury that were a premonition of Julia's tragic end: "I went through a revolving door and was so shocked at the sight of Julia at a table that I stopped at the door. She half rose, called softly, and I went toward her with tears that I couldn't stop because I saw two

crutches lying next to her and now knew what I had never wanted to know before" (*ibidem*, 437).

In an oblique fashion, this chapter substantiates the ideological posture of Lillian Hellman, who took a leftist political stand from the Thirties, throughout the Sixties, and until the very end of her life. *Scroundel Time*, published three years after *Pentimento*, in 1976, presents another instance of a postponed recollection of Hellman's fears and anxieties before the House Un-American Activities Committee. It becomes a detailed account of McCarthy and Cohn's witch-hunt, a time when Hellman herself is blacklisted and receives a subpoena to appear before HUAC. The memoir of those bleak years does, however, invite the usual back and forth reminiscing about people and places. Thoughts of Dashiell Hammett or Sophronia Mason, of Pleasantville, the farm that had to be sold at the time and felt like a home to the couple, draws the narrative away from its dominant focus on the witch hunters or on those intellectual contemporaries who shied away from the author's brave attitude. A letter addressed to the chairman of those infamous hearings is rightly inserted in the book. In it, we are faced with Hellman's conditions to appearing as a witness. However, it may additionally be read as a statement of principles:

I am not willing, now or in the future, to bring bad trouble to people who, in my past association with them, were completely innocent of any talk or any action that was disloyal or subversive, I do not like subversion or disloyalty in any form and if I had ever seen any I would have considered it my duty to have reported it to the proper authorities. But to hurt innocent people whom I knew many years ago in order to save myself is, to me, inhuman and indecent and dishonorable. (659)

“Theatre” may appear to be an odd piece after the memorable portraits of Bethe, Willy and Julia, in *Pentimento*, but Hellman’s life was closely knit with that of the American stage in New York and, concurrently, the Hollywood scene. In the matter-of-fact considerations about the art of the playwright or in the successive vignettes that allow their author to look into the images of others and build her own mirror-like resemblance, “Theatre” not only offers important features of Hellman, as playwright and screenwriter, but also adds depth to the sketch of her womanhood. In her reviewed theatre pieces, from *The Children’s Hour* to *Toys in the Attic*, she unbraids the deep meaning of life-in-the-theatre, not as a theorizing of her own experience, but as a metaphor of her own creative talent: “You are good on boats,” she writes, “not alone from knowledge, but because water is a part of you, you are easy on it, fear it and like it on such equal parts that you work well in a boat without thinking about it and may be even safer because you don’t need to think too much” (454). Like a good boatswain, Hellman follows her hunches in most of her dramatic work, acknowledging success or failure, whatever the case, together with meticulous references to dramatists she admires, namely Chekhov and Shaw, or to literary figures like Henry James whose novels, *The American* (1877) and *The Europeans* (1878), were acknowledged influences in her own dramatic ventures. “Theatre” also offers a valuable repertoire of the miniaturist technique, as successive vignettes and anecdotal episodes about the Hollywood film producers, film and theatre directors, eccentric actors and actresses are included in the narrative.

When, however, Hellman draws these miniaturist likenesses, as in the case of Samuel Goldwyn, Mordaunt Shairp or Jean Anouilh, and of eccentrics like Tallulah Bankhead and Lee Schubert, the memoirist’s keen eye focuses on the recovered scenarios of her own fleeting image. None as vividly, however, as the full portrait

of Arthur W. A. Cowan, who is rendered in fuller detail. Why, then, give the brilliant Philadelphia lawyer, with very conservative politics, the dimensions awarded to Bethe and Willie, to say nothing of Julia? Could the reason be, as Jelinek suggests, that the author was fascinated with this figure she admired for his eccentricities? (cf. Jelinek 161). Once again, we believe that in drawing Cowan, Hellman did not shy away from her usual strategies. It is true that he allows for an outstanding illustration of the eccentric in human nature but, throughout her life studies, Hellman gives full proof that she, herself, was not a stranger to such a condition. On the other hand, she paints him in the contradictory colors of the American Century, giving him his due as a conservative with quixotic leanings who financed legal defenses for victims of McCarthyism in the Fifties. At the close of the portrait, she is full of compassion for the void in his life, which, in her view, he tries to compensate through “new cars, new houses, new friends, new women half forgotten at the minute they were half loved, new faces for himself, teeth set and reset, even new writers” (*Pentimento* 559). The catalogue goes on and on, finally anticipating the tragic exit in a car crash that puts an end to his lifelong flight.

Cowan’s portrait indeed presents a valuable testimonial of Hellman’s talent to vary the angle on the mirror-like figments of her personal reminiscences. She starts with references to some of her literary friends, namely Theodore Roethke, Molly and Mark Howe, but these sound gossipy and superficial in comparison with those passages in which she expresses feelings of loyal devotion to people who enter her close circle of friends, such as she professes Helen, her house helper, to be when she writes: “All my life, beginning at birth, I have taken orders from black women, wanting them and resenting them, being superstitious the few times I disobeyed” (549). Helen is, indeed, the subject of one of the three portraits that Hellman draws at the close of *An Unfinished Woman* and will again be invited to

play a significant part in the last three pieces of *Pentimento*. To look into the origin of such emotions, the reader must, however, wait another three years, when *Scoundrel Time* presents the full account of their real source:

my own liking for black people maybe came a few days after I was born, when I was put into the arms of a wet-nurse, Sophronia, an extraordinary woman who stayed on with us for years after. It was she who taught me to have feelings for the black poor, and when she was sure I did, she grew sharp and said it wasn't enough to cry about black people, what about the miseries of poor whites. She was an angry woman and she gave me anger, an uncomfortable, dangerous, and often useful gift. (611-612)

There is no individualized portrait of Dashiell Hammett in *Pentimento*. It had been drawn in *An Unfinished Woman*, and does not need to figure again in the *book of portraits*, where he is given the role of the “significant other”, who is recurrently remembered in all the pieces, alongside Hellman’s oblique portraiture. The two concluding chapters, “Turtle” and “Pentimento,” stand out as poetic evocations, which celebrate their emotional relationship as something that endures beyond the limits of material presence. In the first piece, the snapping turtle which Hammett and Hellman capture and decapitate, while still the owners of Pleasantville, goes through the motions of life even when it becomes a headless trunk, as if, against all reason and resolution, *eros* were able to conquer *thanatos*. It is an almost comic parable about cosmic endurance and by extension the ties that continue beyond reasonable expectations. Published when Hammett had been dead more than ten years, “Turtle” has the ring of a belated reply to Hammett’s last letter addressed to Hellman, dated November 25, 1960, in which the first

sentence reads: “On this thirtieth anniversary of the beginning of everything, I wish to state: The love that started on that day was greater than all love anywhere, any time, and all poetry cannot include it” (Hammett, 622).

“Pentimento,” the last piece in this book of portraits, orchestrates the deprivation caused by Hammett’s death in Hellman’s recurrent night walks to the nursing home he was supposed to have been taken to following her invitation to lecture in Boston, when he was already very sick. It is the shortest piece in this book, which, nevertheless, also replicates the mysteries of Lillian and Dashiell’s enduring relationship in the light of their respective singularities. In Hammett’s portrait, this relationship had been evoked as “the deep pleasure of continuing interest, the excitement of wanting to know what somebody else thinks, will do, will not do, the tricks played and unplayed, the short cord that the years make into a rope hanging loose, long after death” (*An Unfinished Woman* 297-298). In “Pentimento”, Hellman devises another strategy, in miniature-like fashion creating an unusual analogy with Helen, “that great big fine lady, doing her best in this world” (599), and Jimsie, a black student whom the “fine lady” befriends and with whom, in the end, he falls in love with. The analogy is disclosed when, some years later, Hellman almost chides the young beau for not having told Helen about his feelings before her death and is informed that he did confess his love the night he had looked up “pentimento”, a word he had learnt from Hellman herself.

By seeing, and then seeing again, in the course of drawing these portraits, Hellman builds her own self-portrait, assuming several personas, as reflections of the portraits she is composing. The process reveals a common humanity that brings other times and other places as close to her as the mirror in which she seeks her own likeness. For this reason *Pentimento* stands as the necessary and intermediate chain that links *An Unfinished*

Woman to the as-if-finished portrait of herself in the opening pages of *Scoundrel Time*:

Whatever is wrong with White Southerners – redneck or better – we were all brought up to believe we had a right to think as we pleased, go our own, possibly strange ways. And since few people in the New Orleans of my day had much money, middle-class considerations didn't have much to do with things. This was not true of my mother's rich middle-class Alabama family, but I had revolted against them early on, and took pattern from my father's family, a group of rather mixed-up eccentrics who as deeply believed in the equality of the Negro, for example, as they did in the theory that all black people had a high odor for something called "glandular reasons". But however confused they were, there was a generosity of spirit and money, an independence of thought that was attractive to a rebellious child. (611)

In his inspiring Introduction to *Three*, Poirier argues that "Hellman's sense of place and of people is a strongly Southern one, not simply because much of her childhood was spent in New Orleans but because she intuitively responded to the intense familial and communal relationships she encountered there" (x). We would underscore that it certainly endowed her with a peculiar instinct for all her commitments in life, whether such commitments show her loyalties engaged with matters of love and friendship, as in the case of Hammett, Bethe, Julia, Arthur Cowan or Helen, or with questions regarding ideology and social justice, as when in the succeeding decades she took her stand against fascism, McCarthyism and, in the Sixties, gave her support to student activism. Poirier also points out how involved she is with common people like Sophronia and the whole gallery of friends mentioned above, whereas, conversely, celebrities, like Samuel Goldwyn or Lady Asquith, only play a secondary role.

As in most contemporary life studies, Hellman's singular self lies, however, hidden in its manifold layers, such an awareness having determined our choice of *Pentimento* as the narrative that might offer the clues for our tentative "reading" and "reading again" of the three life studies. We have been inspired by Hellman's technique as the only possible way to explore this woman's quest for the meaning of her life and we have tried to base our conclusions on the reflection of each of the life studies upon the others. With the central metaphor of the portrait in mind, we see their placement in the same volume as serial portraits in which convergence and dissonance render the effects of time upon repeated memories. Presenting themselves as variations on sentiments and situations, they may deepen the reader's gradual understanding of the intriguing self. Hellman's three memoirs, however, interact in the same fashion as serial self-portraits that, similarly to those of James McNeill Whistler or Frida Kahlo, also bear witness to the memoirist's intense remembrance of the different moments of her life. Controversial as those memoirs might have been – and we are often made aware of the controversies by her own notes in "On Reading Again," which she added to the collected life studies in *Three* – her frequent commentaries about the selective nature of autobiographical writing, her stated uncertainties given the time elapsing between the episodes she describes and their description, offer important clues not only to the authenticity of her intentions, but also to the self-awareness that she brings to the fashioning of her autobiographical enterprise. Likewise, her extraordinary command of language, the vividness of her style, her wit and gift for observation serve the different episodes of her storied memories with the keen performance of a talented writer.

To come full circle, *Pentimento* ultimately offers us a suitable metaphor for an essay written in homage to someone who has been very influential in our lives as scholars. In fact, our choice of subject has thematically been motivated by our awareness of feelings that

run the rich gamut of emotion, from deep gratitude for guidance to true sentiments of friendship. Beyond superficial courtesy, they are to be revealed when the surface layer wears away. Thank you, Maria Irene!

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HOW TO IMAGINE COMMUNITY WITHOUT PROPERTY¹

Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse

Resumo: Este artigo baseia-se no pressuposto de que os primeiros romancistas americanos sentiam que a circulação internacional de pessoas e bens estava a corroer a fantasia de um isolamento que um mundo apoiado na propriedade parecera garantir. É possível retirar esta conclusão a partir da grande percentagem de romances que sistematicamente revertem a lógica da propriedade segundo Kant, Malthus e outros intelectuais europeus do mesmo período. Ao dismantelar a fantasia da propriedade, os romances dos primeiros tempos da República estão claramente a mudar a forma do romance para testar uma base alternativa das relações sociais. O que procuravam? Que objetivo comum os incitava a criar romances que dispersavam pessoas e bens, assim desafiando a fantasia que a Europa tinha da América como uma terra virgem disponível para ser apropriada? Se tivermos em conta a sua proliferação nos E.U.A. durante o período de 1789-1820, estes romances, pelas redes que constroem, parecem corresponder à necessi-

¹ In deep appreciation of the years spent in Portugal enjoying the intellectual generosity of Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos.

dade dessa alternativa por parte de um público amplo e ele próprio disperso.

Palavras-chave: romance; rede; propriedade; primeiras décadas da América; comunidade imaginada.

Abstract: We assume that early American novelists felt that the international circulation of persons and property was eroding the fantasy of self-enclosure that a world made of property promised to guarantee. This is what one may gather from the sheer percentage of these novels that systematically reversed the logic of property shared by Kant, Malthus, and any number of European intellectuals of the same period. By so dismantling the fantasy of property, the novels of the early republic make it only too clear they were changing the novel form to try out an alternative basis for social relationships. What were they after? What common sense of purpose prompted them to fashion novels that so dispersed persons and their property as to challenge Europe's fantasy of America as a wasteland awaiting appropriation? Judging by its proliferation in the United States during the period from 1789 through the 1820s, the network novel addressed a felt need on the part of a diverse and scattered readership to imagine such an alternative.

Keywords: Novels; Network; Property; Early American; Imagined community.

The early American novel invariably begins by scattering the contents of some well-established social unit – generally a version of the family, but sometimes a local community, a congregation, or members of a craft or profession. The early American novel achieves

its form as it strips all such materials of their status as property and provides them with new footing in an Atlantic World. That it does so appears at first glance to bear out Locke's fantasy of America as the best place in that world to assemble a little commonwealth of one's own, something like Robinson Crusoe's island sanctuary, a social unit complete with its sovereign exceptions, excluded populations, and internal hierarchies. But the early American novel fails – and fails conspicuously – to produce such an enclosure. Where the meandering of the European picaresque exposes the abuses that maintain the various levels of a society based on hereditary privilege, the meandering narrative of early American fiction opens up that relatively closed system and puts its elements into motion. Once this happens, it no longer makes sense to think of social interactions as the formation of community. We are far better off understanding community as a process that tries out different ways of making community.

In response to recent multidisciplinary scholarship concerning networks and networking, literary criticism and theory are also making use of terms that describe the formation of a network as a “flow” of bodies, goods, and information. Because this metaphor so readily lends itself to a biopolitical reading, or perhaps because of the sheer number of early American novels that experiment with shipboard communities and migrant people, we were initially tempted to think of social relationships in these novels as a “flow.” For the purpose at hand, however, we found the fluidity it implies too likely to obscure the collisions and joints that occur as characters move with or against one another in a way that prevents us from asking what moves them. Then there's the more obvious problem that “flow” creates the illusion that the relationships formulated by early American fiction can be read as an allegory for relationships that people form when they are on the move – an allegory, if you will, for the formation of “a nation of immigrants.” or “a melting pot.”

To do so, however, is to see homogeneity where actually there was heterogeneity. The concept of “flow” obscures not only the stop-and-start character of migration patterns. It also obscures the fact that at any given time in recorded history, the majority of the world’s population has been relatively sedentary.² Eighteenth-century America was no exception. To read the disjointed, multiple, and contingent narratives of early American fiction as allegories for a “flow” of populations therefore amounts to ignoring what we regard as “the event” of these novels, namely, the transformation of what Georg Lukács calls a “biographical” form into a network that circulates people, goods, and information among disparate communities to form a population (77). This transformation within and of the novel form does not refer outward to a political transformation occurring elsewhere – or if it does, that reference provides the occasion for an alteration of the novel’s inner form that also alters its relation to the world of history.³

In preferring the semiotic potential of the term “dispersal” over the term “flow,” we are keenly aware that “dispersal” is no less a borrowed term and carries a certain amount of cultural baggage that it shares with “diaspora,” thus to the considerable work in the field of diaspora studies.⁴ “Diaspora,” as we see it, implies a group that imagines itself bound to a vanished origin and so counts on some “inalienable possession” to differentiate its members from all other

² We are indebted to Khachig Tölölyan for alerting us to the fact that although “flow” is often used to describe the movement of diasporic peoples, the metaphor tends to be misleading; it does not acknowledge the blockages and obstacles that often prevent the regular and continuous flow of electricity, water, and peoples. Nor does it account for the fact that most people are relatively sedentary (“The Contemporary Discourses of Diaspora,” 654).

³ For a more extensive argument to this effect that takes aim at Benedict Anderson’s formal description of the national community that novels imagine, see Armstrong and Tennenhouse.

⁴ For an account of the term “diaspora” in relation to British North America, see Tennenhouse, *The Importance of Feeling English*, 9-13.

members of a population, no matter how frequently and widely that group has been deterritorialized.⁵ By contrast, the early American protagonist characteristically undergoes a sequence of divestments that strips away the protocols that would attach that individual to such a group and then scatters the features and practices that indicate such group affiliation. “Dispersal” comes closest to describing the scattering of populations and their properties that allows early American novels to try out new social formations. Despite the fact that they were published in small editions that reached chiefly local readerships, across the board these novels showed not only where the social model implied by British fiction broke down, but also how its pieces could be reassembled without suppressing the incompatibilities among them.⁶

The besieged enclosure

By the end of the eighteenth century, Europe was fixated on this problem with an eye toward controlling the dispersal of people

⁵ In *Inalienable Possessions*, Annette B. Weiner explains that no matter how much of their culture a group of people gives up, they must hang onto the one feature or possession that “is intrinsic or ineffable” to the identity of the person, family, or tribe and necessary to that identity remaining intact (6-7).

⁶ As Trish Loughran notes, “Royal Tyler lived in New Hampshire and so published in New Hampshire – with the consequence that readers in Boston who might have wanted a book like Tyler’s *Algerine Captive* could not get their hands on it” (21). Joseph Dennie, Tyler’s friend and collaborator, explains the problem: “Your novel has been examined by the few and approved. It is however extremely difficult for the Bostonians to supply themselves with a book that slumbers in a stall at Walpole [New Hampshire], supposed by the latest and most accurate advertisements, to be situated 400 miles north of their meridian,” *The Letters of Joseph Denie 1768-1812*, ed. Laura G. Pedder (Orono: University of Maine Press, 1936), 165, August 30, 1797. See also William Chavrat, *Literary Publishing in America, 1790-1850* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1959), 25-6. See also James N. Green, “The Rise of Book Publishing,” ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, Vol. 2. *A History of the Book in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 75-127.

and property.⁷ Writing in the wake of the French and American revolutions and the moment of England's industrial takeoff, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Malthus could not contemplate the erosion of national boundaries without recalling the former settler colonies in North America and the experiment in nationhood that was currently underway there. At the moment in history still thought to have instigated the greatest growth spurt of European nationalism, we find these two influential thinkers regarding the nation as an endangered species. Despite their conflicting notions of the ultimate cause for the increasing permeability of territorial boundaries, both thought of the nation in terms of enclosure, and they proposed defensive strategies for preserving it in the face of hostile forces. To do so, moreover, each found it necessary to grant the inevitability of international commerce and devised a way of balancing the self-containment of persons, property, and local practices over and against the movement of people, goods, and information. Thus, despite the imperial expansion of European nations into other regions of the globe, and although Kant and Malthus approached the problem from quite different theoretical positions, both equated the nation with property and the nation's laws, with protecting that property.

Immanuel Kant's "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" (1795) is his signature attempt to resolve the conflict between the free movement of people and commerce and the sanctity of boundaries that identified one's property in oneself, one's labor, one's household and lands, and one's community or ethnos. As an alternative to promoting the one at the expense of the other, Kant proposed a "law of hospitality" to guarantee the integrity of a person, kin group, and

⁷ As Charlotte Sussman explains, throughout the eighteenth century "population" usually meant the opposite of "depopulation," which was of greater concern until Malthus shifted the emphasis entirely. We thank her for sharing with us the manuscript for her forthcoming book, "Peopling the World: Imagining the Population from Milton to Malthus."

nation in an age when Europe was becoming increasingly dependent on international commerce. Given that “the natural state is one of war” (112), as he put it, echoing Hobbes, no amount of hospitality would actually put an end to conflict, but he thought that requiring each individual to pledge security to his neighbor could go a ways toward mitigating the natural hostility between one individual and another (111). On the assumption that republican states already had laws on the books protecting the persons and property of their citizens, what was needed, Kant argued, was a “law of hospitality” that would ensure “the right of an alien stranger not to be treated as an enemy upon his arrival in another country” (118).

Derived from the Latin “*hospes*,” meaning “host,” “guest,” or “stranger,” which comes in turn from “*hostis*,” meaning “stranger” or “enemy,” “hospitality” is one of those fabled primal words whose meaning, like that of the “uncanny” itself, can easily turn into its opposite. From the previous quote, it is not difficult to see how Kant intended to exploit this reversibility to transform a concept that promoted tribal loyalty, the trading of women, and a gift economy into a concept that would promote the interests of a cosmopolitan group of property owners. To do so, he simply extrapolated the logic of property to the level of the nation, where he used it to insist that each nation with laws that protected property rights would agree not to violate the sovereign rights of other nations. The principle of hospitality would not only grant such rights to individuals but also entitle them to travel safely throughout the world and associate with other people. It is not in softening the intolerance of the host so much as in ensuring the visitor’s right of association that Kant seizes on the inherent reversibility of the term “hospitality.”

“By virtue of their common ownership of the earth’s surface,” he reasons, people “cannot scatter themselves infinitely, but must finally tolerate living in close proximity” (118). To guarantee what

he initially describes as the positive “right of association,” Kant needs a means of extending the security of one’s home to the entire world before individuals can enter into “peaceable relations with each other.” Before civilized individuals can safely move through the world, however, the right to association must be transformed into a negative right that curbs “the inhospitable conduct of civilized nations, especially commercial ones” (119). The sense of entitlement to appropriate the resources and people of the places that the Europeans visited is, in Kant’s view, what makes the behavior of otherwise law-abiding individuals resemble “the inhospitableness that coastal dwellers show...by robbing ships in neighboring seas and by making slaves of stranded seafarers or of desert dwellers.” They are bandits “who regard their proximity to nomadic peoples as giving them a right to plunder” (118).

Was he intent on showing that all men exist in a natural state of warfare when Kant pointed to members of the civilized nations as those most likely to seize the persons and property of people and resources not so protected by property law? Or was he questioning whether or not the immunity provided by property was sufficient to create a foundation for hospitality? As he put it, “[T]he injustice that [civilized men] display to foreign peoples... (which is the same as *conquering* them) is terrifying. When discovered, America, the lands inhabited by the blacks, the Spice Islands, the Cape, etc., were regarded as lands belonging to no one because their inhabitants were counted for nothing” (119). Kant offers this evidence to support his belief that nothing short of the universal protection of property rights will counteract the natural law of hostility. But inasmuch as he also believed that America belonged in common to its inhabitants rather than to individual property owners, it could not be considered “waste.” Nor, then, were resources there for the taking. At this point in his career, Kant comes close to admitting that his law of hospitality applied only to societies with laws guaranteeing property

rights. Hospitality would not protect those who belonged to societies organized otherwise.

Published in 1798, only three years after Kant's proposal for achieving "perpetual peace," Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on The Principle of Population* argued that neither law nor human reason could bring about peace that did not take into account the alternate cause of human hostility. For Malthus, the cause not only of war but also of famine and disease could be boiled down to the relationship between two immutable principles: "First, That food is necessary to the existence of man. Secondly, That the passion between the two sexes is necessary" and cannot be effectively curtailed on a mass basis (19). The relationship between these two laws produced what he called "the principle of population" – namely, that "population, when unchecked, increases in a geometric ratio" while "subsistence increases only in arithmetical ratio" – determines that population growth will either be checked by famine or disease or bring people to war over the resources necessary for their survival (19). A significant imbalance between people and food will, in Malthus's view, ultimately make men cruel.⁸

That neither property law nor individual reason are sufficient to deal with the problem becomes especially clear as Malthus compares the United States to England in terms of population growth, a comparison he uses to counter William Godwin's late Enlightenment belief that human reason would eventually control man's physical passions and instincts. According to Malthus's sources, the population in British America grew from 21, 200 in 1643 to an estimated three

⁸ With the French Revolution undoubtedly at the back of his mind, Malthus argues that even Europe has experienced the apocalyptic consequences "arising from the want of subsistence... Want was the goad that drove the Scythian shepherds from their native haunts, like so many famished wolves in search of prey. Set in motion by the all-powerful cause, clouds of barbarians seemed to collect from all points of the northern hemisphere. Gathering fresh darkness and terror as they rolled on..." (28).

million before the War for Independence. England – having recovered from losses incurred through emigration, just as it had from the ravages of the London Plague – experienced nothing like that surge in population, a discrepancy that Malthus attributed to a combination of factors: that workers had not begun to amass in North American cities; that several states had abolished the inheritance of land; and that Pennsylvania even passed a law granting uncultivated land to anyone who agreed to cultivate it. Here, Malthus’s biopolitical analysis approached Kant’s legal reasoning in that both took as given that a nation is just so much potential property. Bent on arguing that the passion between the sexes has remained nearly the same across time and geography, Malthus held their respective food supplies responsible for the discrepancy between the rates of population growth in England and North America, where considerably more land was available for this purpose.⁹

A notably tortured simile makes it clear why, contrary to commonsense, Malthus would see such an increase in food production as a problem and not a solution to the problem of population. In order to grow an unnaturally large flower by adding “richer mould” to the soil, he explains, an “enterprising florist” might “burst the calyx and destroy at once its symmetry.” The same holds for political change. “In a similar manner,” Malthus contends,

the forcing manure used to bring about the French revolution, and to give a greater freedom to the human mind, has burst the restraining bond of all society... And however large the separate petals have grown, however strangely or even beautifully marked,

⁹ Malthus objected to industrial labor and believed the nation was better off “if the wealth that supported two hundred thousand men while they were producing silks and laces would have been more usefully employed in supporting them while they were producing the additional quantity of food,” *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 107.

the whole is at present a loose, deformed, and disjointed mass, without union, symmetry, or harmony of colouring. (91)

If we carry it over to North America, as Malthus invites us to do, this figure of a disfigured flower yields two conclusions. First, that a more even distribution of resources (through emigration, as well as the relaxation of property laws) not only disrupts the proportionate distribution of resources that maintains social relations within the civilized nations, but ultimately leads to yet more uneven distribution of the resources. Secondly, the botched experiment with natural growth, if put into human practice, yields a nation that is a “loose, deformed, and disjointed mass, without symmetry, or harmony of colouring,” a situation that clearly applies to the social disorder in the United States as well as in post-Revolutionary France. Thus despite the fact that Malthus’s argument, as he said, “considered chiefly the mass of mankind and not individual instances” (91), he nevertheless shared Kant’s assumption that a reasonably stable social order is bounded, homogeneous, relatively harmonious, and legally designed to maintain the correct balance between owners and laborers. In that it erodes boundaries, encourages heterogeneity, and disrupts the ratio of population growth to food production, international commerce will, like the “enterprising florist,” dismantle the body it wants to enhance.

Malthus, much like Kant, confronted a body politic capable of spreading beyond the boundaries of self and nation that guaranteed his own identity as author and intellectual, and he envisions this body in monstrous terms, as a violation of the very principle of form. Early American novelists understood – at least as well as any European – that the international circulation of persons and property violated the fantasy of self-enclosure that owning property seemed to guarantee. As a result, the early American novel systematically reverses the logic of property shared by Kant, Malthus, and any

number of other European intellectuals. By so dismantling the fantasy of property, novelists made it clear that their purpose, by contrast, was to formulate alternative possibilities. They had no intention of using the novel to reproduce an unworkable model. For this reason, and not by virtue of collective ineptitude of these early novelists, the post-World-War II scholars of American literary tradition would not find a novelist prior to Cooper who measured up to the British standard of form as the means of producing an ethnic synthesis and enclosed habitus.

Unsettling Form

The term “dispersal” is not only basic to the formation of a system of social relationships that might otherwise seem continuous and all but self-explanatory, “dispersal” is also the first step in understanding that system. Rather than think of this formation as either a flow (as in a journey or voyage) or a container (as in home or settlement), the term “dispersal” invites us to consider how a network forms a social world while not becoming either one. The story of the early American protagonist usually proceeds by stripping away whatever features attach him or her to some group. This protagonist has no interest in securing his property against appropriation by another group. Nor can we say that he or she has his own wife and her own husband and children and belongs in turn to them; the trading of women among men of property makes no more sense than lines of inheritance that would keep that property within the kin group.

Then perhaps it is wayward sexual passion that causes the dispersal that sets a narrative in motion. When Arthur Mervyn’s widowed father succumbs to the wiles of his milkmaid, the relationship sets off a chain reaction, and Mervyn must start from scratch to form a character. When a man swindles her father, Constantia, the

protagonist of *Ormond* (1799) loses everything but her good name and becomes vulnerable to the advances of the libertine Ormond who would degrade its meaning. In *The Power of Sympathy*, Harrington Senior's seduction of Maria Fawcet leads to his son's suicide upon learning that the woman he loves is actually his half-sister. Dispersal is not only the fate of every family in which a young woman is seduced by a libertine. Such novels as Sarah Woods's *Dorval* (1805) and Isaac Mitchell's *The Asylum* (1811) insist that a downturn in economic fortune can as easily break up a family and send its members out in the world either to perish or to find a livelihood. But no matter how many times they repeat this pattern, we will insist, these novels do not anticipate Malthus's case for the persistence of sexual passion, any more than they do Kant's claim that human beings are naturally inclined to exploit one another.

When we consider how often sheer curiosity is offered as the reason for dispersal, sexual passion and competitive aggression begin to lose their explanatory punch. Captain Farrago begins his travels in *Modern Chivalry* simply "to see how things were going on here and there and to observe human nature" (Brackenridge 4); it seems appropriate to think of them as symptoms of a more basic drive on the part of human beings to combine freely and disperse widely. The American picaresque often begins in a community bound by practices that maintain its homogeneity over time, a standard that calls attention to the extraordinary social and cultural diversity the traveler encounters in the new United States. That the place of origin need not be European, so long as it is characterized by enforced homogeneity, is demonstrated by a minor surge in Algerian narrators during the period of the early republic. Peter Markoe's *The Algerine Spy in Pennsylvania* (1787) is an epistolary novel consisting of letters largely by Mehemet, an Algerian official. The tyrannical Osman, Dey of Algiers, has dispatched Mehemet to the United States to discover the political climate of the new nation. Disguised as a

Frenchman, he travels first to Gibraltar and there learns his first lesson in tolerance, namely, that Spain's decision to cast out the Moors "weakened Spain at least as much as the banishment of the Protestants reduced the resources of France in the reign of Louis the XVIth" (Markoe 14).

Mehemet's second lesson in tolerance reinforces the first in even more personal terms. Rumored to have become a Christian, he receives notice that "[b]y order of the Dey, thy lands, house, furniture and slaves (two excepted) are confiscated to the state" (112). Should Mehemet be found in "the territories of Algiers," his correspondent warns, "thy life will be forfeit" (113). No more bound to respect his right to property than Spain or France, Algeria expresses its nationalism by means of religious intolerance. Pennsylvania, by contrast, offers both Mehemet and his estranged wife the land on which to start up separate households. Pennsylvania, he writes, "has promised to succor and protect the unhappy, that fly to thee for refuge." Mehemet cites American tolerance as the reason why he thinks of himself as "formerly a Mahometan." He has renounced, this suggests, only what he now understands as Islamic intolerance in order to enjoy, "in the evening of his days, the united blessings of FREEDOM and CHRISTIANITY" (125). Christianity becomes a code word for tolerance and variability in this novel.

What role does property play in this fantasy of America as a place where an Algerian spy can settle down? As he concludes his story, Mahemet certainly makes it seem as if he and his wife have not only converted to the dominant religion but also acquired property. As he describes it, owning property does not carry out the defensive strategy of removing oneself from community. To the contrary, because Mehemet and his wife can own property, the implication is that anyone can. By becoming a Christian, he defines himself as someone who could not be tolerated in Algeria, someone who consequently rejects intolerance. When Mehemet and his wife decide

to settle in Pennsylvania, however, his story appears to contradict our claim that his is a story of dispersal, or unsettlement novel. But if we recall that his marriage has dissolved, then it becomes clear that their decision to settle in Pennsylvania does not land them in a domestic sanctuary (in the manner of the English Joseph Andrews) but allows them to circulate within a community that is the more heterogeneous for their doing so. Having begun as if aiming to settle, this novel holds true to the pattern: it disperses anything like a community should it begin to form. In this way, it reverses the process by which an individual accumulates property in himself and produce a narrative that moves through a sequence of dispersals.

Narrated by a French traveler, Samuel Lorenzo Knapp's *Extracts from the Journals of Marshal Soult* (1817) finds much to admire in the United States. His journal entries conclude as he is about to leave New England for the American South, which he expects to find even more congenial to his habits and sensibility. Before he can do so, however, Knapp himself decided against having a Frenchman as narrator and more or less rewrote the entire account. Published as *Extracts from a Journal of Travels in North America* (1818), the second version of this fictional journal of travel in the United States surveys the nation from the perspective of an Algerian spy who has come to America to assess the possibility of converting its people to Islam. If in the sophisticated world of the Boston Brahmins, Ali Bey encounters only an unpromising unanimity of taste and opinion, then he assumes he will surely encounter dissent and division on visiting a political caucus. To the contrary, he reports, "I was surprised to find all the speakers coincide in their opinions" (Knapp 41).

But when it comes to the religious climate in America, the American people seem to him as fractious as they were elsewhere univocal, and he arrives at the conclusion that religious schisms extend through the country: "Scarcely a week passes but the belligerent parties assail each other from the press or pulpit, The state

of irritation produced by this warfare can be easily [sic] imagined. And a change that will restore harmony is doubtless considered a desideratum by all sober and reflecting spectators” (125). To this stranger, it seems as if conflicting views of the many Christian sects that flourish in America put national unity outside the realm of possibility. But if Ali Bey imagines that conversion to Islam will “restore [the] harmony” that “is doubtless considered a desideratum by all,” he is mistaken. There is no such univocality to be restored. Contrary to the situation in Spain and Algiers, the American “press or pulpit” has created forums that attract even the most divisive arguments. In tacitly agreeing to disagree, those who participate have agreed to tolerate one another’s right to avail themselves of this forum, which thus offers a mechanism for dispersing any position that begins to take over.

To show how the early American novel does much the same thing at the level of social relationships, let us call attention to the first volume of Royall Tyler’s *Algerine Captive* (1797). Here, Tyler introduces the protagonist, Updike Underhill, a physician in training with a genealogy both British and American. Despite the empty land that attracted so many people to America, this combination of features did not produce the farmer his father wanted him to be. Rather than develop the family holdings in property, ironically, Underhill lives out its legacy of migration until it is clear that his family no longer belongs anywhere in particular in the United States even though it is an unquestionably American family. So long as he wanders from region to region within the United States, Updike is at once hospitably received and barred from forming any relationships, personal or professional, that would let him belong to a community. When a schoolteacher, he finds his students mock rather than learn from him. When a physician, he discovers his patients prefer the nostrums of frauds and quacks. Because he is a New Englander, to his great disappointment, southern women steadfastly refuse his

advances. Yet, as a ship's surgeon, he is recognized as an American and valued for his skill and unfailing good nature.

In 1799, *Arthur Mervyn* offered readers a novel organized by a sequence of ingeniously choreographed dispersals that summed up the formal moves of the earlier American fiction to which Brockden Brown pays homage. By 1836, Robert Montgomery Bird could turn this form inside out in *Shepphard Lee* and do within the phenomenological bubble of biographical experience what *Mervyn* did at the level of household and community. Bird's protagonist occupies one such bubble. Should Shepphard Lee encounter an obstacle, as happens with great regularity, the encounter is likely to separate his personal from his material property. This in turn releases his consciousness, thoughts, memories, tastes, physical abilities, and emotional inclinations into the category of virtual subjectivities, leaving what remains of his material property to the arbitrary rules governing the public domain. Much of it, including the body, becomes waste there for the taking. And so it remains – until another self stumbles upon those pieces and brings them to life as himself. Initially glad to become an individual by this rather absurd process, Sheppherd Lee invariably finds himself possessed by his body and attendant property and literally stumbles on the means of dispersing himself until he happens upon another available position to occupy.

The formation of successive versions of this single protagonist not only demonstrates that one man can actually become many; these recombinations of his personal and material property also render the novel's biographical narrative as a string of short stories. The account of each life breaks off from the previous account of Sheppherd Lee, as his story begins anew with a different constellation of personal and material assets, finally looping back again to settle into what had been Lee's inherited property, his body and patrimony. Once detached from his consciousness, however, they had been put into circulation. When he finally recovers that body and the land to which

it entitles him, neither can consequently restore Shepphard Lee to the individual he once was – not that he wants to be that individual. It is their ability to shuck off and disperse their property that frees both Arthur Mervyn and Shepphard Lee to inhabit discarded clothes, discarded bodies, and the now unowned property once occupied by the bodies wearing those clothes. It is this ability, then, that identifies such protagonists as a perfect medium for forming social connections that reverse the logic of property.

If it requires a dispersal to set the protagonist in motion, always in pieces, then it takes a sequence of such dispersals to transform the framework within which he must become someone in relation to others. This seismic shift in the conditions for forming a community changes the rules by which early American novelists assembled a human figure that could serve as protagonist.¹⁰ To create such a figure out of the contents of the biographical form necessarily involved them in a project like that of the recombinatory art of *bricolage*. Although there is no critical consensus as to what specific aspects of the British novel they altered, classic accounts of the American novel invariably explain its Americanness as a compulsion to pit its own sense of good form against that maintained by the British prototype.¹¹ We believe, to the contrary, that early American

¹⁰ In “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” Bakhtin proposes that “the image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.” That is to say, the image of man in literature is always the result and centerpiece of the spatialization of time specific to a historical moment. “In the literary artistic chronotope,” he explains, “spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history” (84-85).

¹¹ To describe what he calls “a native tradition,” paradoxically, Richard Chase sees “this tradition, inevitably, as springing from England, but as differing from the tradition by its perpetual reassessment and reconstitution of romance within the novel form” (*The American Novel*, viii). Covering the American novel from 1789 to 1959, Leslie Fiedler sums up his effort as demonstrating “that the American novel has a character and fate different from the novel in France, Germany, even Russia” (*Love and Death*, 11). In a more recent account of the rise of the American novel,

novelists must have had a more positive sense of what they were doing in order to create such very different protagonists who nevertheless – to a man or woman – exceeded the boundaries and leveled the internal hierarchies that characterized the British prototype. What were they after? What common sense of purpose prompted them to fashion novels that so dispersed persons and their property as to mount a direct challenge to Europe’s fantasy of America as a wasteland awaiting appropriation?

The Art of Statelessness

In *The Art of Not Being Governed*, James C. Scott considers those inhabiting a national landscape dotted with “little nodes of hierarchy and power [that] were both unstable and geographically confined” as virtually stateless people. Given that most of its inhabitants indeed lived outside the ambit of colonial government, much of North America would, in all likelihood, have struck the European as a periphery without a center. Scott would describe it “as a zone of refuge or ‘shatter zone,’ where the human shards of state formation and rivalry accumulated willy nilly” (Scott 7). If its inhabitants also saw it that way, then American novelists of that time could not have hoped to

Philip Gura also finds it necessary to distinguish the early American novel from the “narrative form imported from Europe” by virtue of the fact that the former provided an author with “a means for articulating her theological position and her prescriptions for her fellow citizens” (*Truth’s Ragged Edge*, xii). Early on in *The Dream of the Great American Novel*, Lawrence Buell observes that “[a]nyone who cares about U.S. literature and culture has a natural interest in trying to understand what is distinctive about it” (10). Especially helpful for our purposes is Buell’s demonstration, by means of an exhaustive survey of attempts to define the Great American Novel, that the idea of such a novel remains as inconclusive as it is tenacious. The definitional problem is not a function of the concept of “greatness” so much as a function of the assumption that novels are linked to nations, which prompts all these critics to define the American novel in negative terms, i.e., as one that is not British. Our own sampling shows that while most everyone agrees that American is not British fiction, no one can agree on why.

make sense of their world in relation to some form of sovereignty – whether that of the federal government or of those opposed to the state’s imposition on their individual sovereignty. To address the inhabitants of such a middle ground – natives, immigrants, refugees, outcasts, speculators, adventurers, military people – the early novel had to imagine ways of occupying this territory that did not prevent the flow of goods and people by subjecting them to a single form of domination. Judging by its proliferation during the period from the 1780s through the 1820s, the network novel apparently addressed the need to imagine community without one.

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**FACTICITY VERSUS FACTITIOUSNESS:
THOM GUNN'S POEMS ON ANDER GUNN'S
UNTITLED PHOTOGRAPHS**

Mário Avelar

Abstract: This essay ponders on the dichotomy “facticity versus factitiousness” on a sequence of Thom Gunn’s 1966 ekphrastic poems *Positives*, a book that develops a dialogue with his brother Ander Gunn’s black and white pictures. Anchored in those concepts – facticity and factitiousness – the essay deals with the social dimension of photography and Thom Gunn’s capacity to develop subjective insights that somehow expand the visual report of a time that only remains in the photographer’s eye.

Keywords: Thom Gunn; ekphrasis; facticity and factitiousness; photography.

Resumo: O ensaio reflete sobre a dicotomia entre facticidade e ficcionalidade na sequência de poemas de Thom Gunn, publicada em 1966 e intitulada *Positives*, obra que estabelece um diálogo com as fotografias a preto e branco do irmão, Ander Gunn. Ancorado nestes conceitos – facticidade e ficcionalidade – o ensaio explora a dimensão social da fotografia e a

capacidade de Thom Gunn de criar sentidos que de algum modo se expandem para além do relato visual de um momento que ficou apenas no olhar do fotógrafo.

Palavras-chave: Thom Gunn; écfrase; facticidade e ficcionalidade; fotografia.

This essay ponders on the dichotomy “facticity versus factitiousness” on a sequence of Thom Gunn’s 1966 ekphrastic poems *Positives*, a book that develops a dialogue with his brother Ander Gunn’s black and white pictures.

Although Thom Gunn chose to remain a resident alien in the U.S., he spent more than 40 years there, offering an excellent example of the ongoing dialogue between English and American poetry. As Langdon Hammer shows in “The American Poetry of Thom Gunn and Geoffrey Hill” (118-136), Gunn owes much of his poetic idiom to his teacher, the influent academic poet-critic Yvor Winters: “Gunn’s sense of poetic form as an epistemological tool for dealing with experience comes directly from Winter’s teaching and criticism” (Hammer 122). Does this mean that Gunn should be placed within an American poetic tradition? This actually is a debatable question.

Hammer concedes “the Americans suggested them [Gunn and Hill] ways of placing themselves in literary history from which their careers have continued to unfold” (118). This statement means that the virtual influence of an American insight didn’t lead those poets into an expatriate idiom and sensibility. Donald Davie, with whom Gunn and Larkin still share the *Movement* label, emphasizes “the real gulf between British English in poetry and American English whenever traffic between British poets and American poetry is in question, we encounter this notion that British English is more “experienced”, more *knowing* (for good

and ill) than American English is, whether in poetry or politics or anything else” (Davie: 89).

One common trait is, however, shared by both: the sustained tradition of a dialogue with the visual arts, which leads us back to Gunn’s 1966 book, *Positives*. In his autobiographic memoir “My Life up to Now”, Gunn unveils the personal context the book emerged from:

Looking through some of Ander’s photographs I found interesting possibilities in collaboration. I had always wanted to work with pictures, and he was taking just the kind that made a good starting point for my imagination. That was the beginning of the book called *Positives* (the title being Tony White’s suggestion, as was much else in it). I was never very sure whether what I was writing opposite the photographs were poems or captions – they were somewhere between the two, I suspect – but that didn’t matter, because what I was looking for was a form of fragmentary inclusiveness that could embody the detail and history of that good year [1964] I enjoyed working on the book, the only collaboration I have yet tried. (Gunn 1982: 181)

Before approaching the book’s structure, one must bear in mind the importance of its title. Although Gunn had admitted that the title was Tony White’s suggestion, it became the poet’s final choice. *Positives* calls up a specific technical topic endogenous to the photographic process, a mechanical process of encapsulating a certain sign. The positive is a visual image, true to the original in light, shade and color. It is developed from a photographic negative, where colors and luminance are reversed. The positive reminds us of the other (bright) side from whose darkness the sign comes to life. When Gunn chose to emphasize the mechanical dimension of this art, when he decided to make it evident, he meant to put forward a

point of view, a specific way of capturing reality, which would also determine the tone of his poems.

The book starts with a picture of a newborn infant and a poem on the opposite page. Several pictures of children follow, the focus on this early stage of life (and of writing) anticipating the core of the book, pictures and poems about adulthood. The (diachronic) sequence culminates in “[t]he last three images of a wretched, old”, and (either as the poems would have it, or indeed in fact) homeless woman make up the book’s only sub-sequence. The final two of these images are uniquely paired, in that the second is an enlarged detail of the first, zooming in on the old woman’s face, hands, and upper body, as if to pick up a previously unnoticed detail, and/or to remove by cropping what a deeper perception would want to rule out as inessential distraction, or even a falsification of something” (Hollander: 295).

Human chronology somehow provides a structural unity and a diachronicity to *Positives*. Yet the social settings here depicted are widely different, thus creating a surprising and stirring effect on the reader. Most pictures actually deal with middle-class women either in ordinary, daily life rituals – crossing a street, working in a pub, having tea – or exceptionally, in special ones – before a wedding ceremony. Among these signs of social stability eccentric signs emerge. These are the signs of a working class submerged by its daily routines that challenge the beholder’s perception of an idealized postwar baby-boom society. Reading and looking become instants of uncertainty. This uncertainty culminates in a topic sub-sequence, the pictures of the homeless old woman and the three final poems that promote the dialogue between them (Gunn 1966: 74, 76, 78).

In *Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, Pierre Bourdieu claims that ordinary opinions (criticism?) about photography carry with them the burden of an *ethos* (2003: 166). This

burden is connected with another, which Miles Orvell designates as the “burden of truth” (2003: 61). Both burdens have, as it were, been a recurrent presence in photographic aesthetics since its emergence in the mid-19th century. Facticity, the supposedly direct and truthful relation between referent and visual sign, has been an inevitable trait of this artistic discourse, stressing its relevance as a historical document. Later visual touchstones such as Jaboc Riis’ 1890 *How the Other Half Lives* and Walker Evans’ 1941 *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* testify to photography’s impact as a social and political document, and as record and narrative about the Other.

This dimension emerged in the 1860s with the American Civil War, the first great historical event to be systematically documented by photography. Among its more relevant documents stands Alexander Gardner’s *Photographic Sketch Book of the Civil War*, published in 1866. Despite the impact this book had in a society ravaged by war, some questions concerning its factual record of the Real, its facticity, must be raised.

In his historical study of American Photography, Miles Orvell points out that in *The Harvest of Death*, there is a picture which, according to legend, was supposed to depict dead Rebel soldiers: “. . . these were Union soldiers but. . . that fact would have been too painful for Northern readers. . . In another photograph, a corpse is identified as a Union sharpshooter; in the next image the same body, moved to another position on the battlefield, is identified as a ‘Rebel’ sharpshooter.” Besides “. . . an image purporting to be the ‘Field Where General Reynolds Fell’, depicts a scene that couldn’t possibly be that particular field where the famous general was slain” (Orvell: 67).

Composition, the building of an aesthetic aura (not in the sense put forward by Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*) through the means of perspective, of nuances of color (even in black and white, of course), of tensions

between foreground and background, emerges insinuating what the American poet and critic John Hollander considers to be *factitiousness*, fictionality: “Among the special problems attendant upon the ekphrastic reading of photographs are those of a certain kind of facticity (as opposed to the factitiousness – the fictionality) of the drawn or painted image” (293). Yet, in the above-mentioned example, fictionality doesn’t delete the referent’s shadow, the phantasmagorical presence of the real. And this is a problematic issue.

Roland Barthes reminds, “in Photography I can never deny that the thing has been there. What I intentionalise in a photograph is neither Art nor Communication, it is Reference, which is the founding order of Photography” (58). We are dealing here with a new aesthetics that challenges conventional attitude vis-à-vis the visual sign, thus demanding a new relationship with the object, towards a new artistic paradigm, which eventually means a new hermeneutics. I keep on quoting Barthes’ superlative essay since it helps to clarify my point:

In Photography, the presence of the thing is never metaphoric; and in the case of animated beings, their life as well, except in the case of photographing corpses; and even so: if the photograph then becomes horrible, it is because it certifies, so to speak, that the corpse is alive, as *corpse*: it is the living image of a dead thing. For the photograph’s immobility is somehow the result of a perverse confusion between two concepts: the Real and the Live: by attesting that the object has been real, the photograph surreptitiously induces belief that it is alive. (Barthes: 59)

Michael Fried’s recent and polemic study *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (2008) shows how late aesthetic developments have emphasized theatricality both as sign (the theatre and the stage

in Hiroshi Sugimoto), as dramatic narrative (the carefully studied and prepared narrative simulations by Jeff Wall), and as debt to avant-garde painters (Mark Rothko summoned by Jean-Marc Bustamante); but Thom Gunn's book, and consequently Ander Gunn's pictures, precede them. So I will keep these fascinating aesthetic dialogues for another occasion.

We should perhaps remember at this point Roland Barthes' words: "Reference, the founding order of Photography". In Gunn's above-mentioned sub-sequence – the final poems on the homeless old woman – this aspect is crucial. We have to bear in mind that in this sub-sequence the photos depict the most shameful Other of developed, rich societies – the homeless. The homeless are a mirror of deception, of our own failure, both as individuals and citizens, and collectively as a society. The homeless remind us that our wealth is not universal; that our cozy neighborhoods reveal, in their gardens, hidden shadowy corners and benches, those whose existence our shame tries to deny. When the homeless is a woman, especially an old woman (a grand-mother?), our subconscious is confronted with our deepest shame.

The sub-sequence of the homeless woman is thematically and visually foreshadowed by the picture and the previous poem that depict a homeless man crossing a bridge. The excessive visual weight of the stone bridge, and the diagonal line it delineates towards a vanishing point that culminates in the homeless figure, provide a symbolic anticipation of this artistic (both poetic and visual) diachronicity. This is in fact a voyage that the artists (photographer and poet) have undertaken, hand in hand with the reader; a journey through the streets of London, through its sublime, ordinary beauty; a voyage that would soon become a log of the past, eventually a reminder of nostalgia. Thom Gunn admits, ". . . it [*Positives*] contains a London I found hard to recognize only eight years after" (1982: 181).

The sign, the picture, aesthetically composed as it may be, with its play with perspective, with its balance between spatial (vertical and horizontal) lines, with its nuances of shades, still reminds the reader of its referential dimension, as Barthes wisely noticed; the sign is a social document that conditions and challenges the poet's ability to create a verbal insight, hopefully a meta-narrative. Photography is thus both objective and subjective at the same time; it's up to the poet to articulate these poles.

Positives is anchored in two diachronicities: a thematic narrative of macro-progression from childhood to old age, and a visual micro-progression. The sub-sequence delineates the latest. It starts with an overall plan of the old woman in what we may describe as a state of absorption. She is looking at her own hands; she is centered on some activity of her own. Her eyes focus on her hands. The old woman thus ignores the gaze of the camera, which voyeuristically captures her gesture, her meditation. Visually she is a line vertically crossing the picture, forming a parallel with the other vertical line, the tree. But since her body draws a curve, it touches another curve, the one drawn by the branches of the tree. Both lines in the foreground draw a gothic shape framing the door in the background; the visual vanishing point coincides with the door – her refuge's door?

This was the critic's eye. Now here is how Gunn, the poet, *saw* his brother's picture:

The mould from baked beans that
even she can't eat edges
onto the damp sticks, netting,
bones, leaves, slabs
of rust, felt, feathers,

all disintegrating to
an infected compost.

The infection in it is slow,
slight, deep, and it has certain needs,
for see, it responds to warmth.

Outside the abandoned house
where she slept on old papers
she stirs in the sun. (Gunn 1966: 74)

The poet's voice keeps a decorous distance from his referent as if he wasn't able or didn't want to merge deeply into it. We can rigorously assert that the poem keeps an ekphrastic tone in its more literal sense, as a description of the visual sign. In the first two stanzas the poet provides a catalogue of the several signs that build this microcosm. The third stanza somehow comments on the social disphoria here represented. Eventually the fourth stanza confirms the social context. We conclude that poem and picture share a decorous tone, a respectful distance from the Other.

Then the reader turns the page and unveils the same character in a different posture. The eye of the camera changed its perspective, its point of view. Nevertheless, it reiterated its focus on the same sign as if it was looking for something it had not found before. The eye of the camera assumes a status, the status of a voyeur. Meanwhile, a noise, a sound, maybe the mechanical sound of the camera, disturbed the old woman, and removed her from her state of absorption. Her eyes search for a place, for the entity (human or mechanic, or both) that made this sound. The trees now visually frame her; she is under their (visual) protection.

This is my point of view, the critic's eye. Now this is how Gunn, the poet, saw his brother's picture in the next poem/sequence:

Poking around the rubbish,
she can't find what she wants.

Near Maidstone once, hop-picking
with the four babies and Tom, she
worked all day along the green alleys,
among the bins,
in the dim leafy light of
the overhanging vines.
In the village, shopkeepers
put cages on their counters
to prevent snatching. But Tom
took something! What was it?

All in the rubbish heap now,
some rotting, most clean vanished. (Gunn 1966: 76)

The tone in this poem is radically different. Instead of the ekphrastic tone of the previous poem, Gunn chose to build a narrative. Through this narrative he fills the sign with humanity. While facticity was dominant in Ander Gunn's picture, in Gunn's poem factitiousness prevails. Thom Gunn somehow shares the burden that Pierre Bourdieu pointed out in *Un art moyen*, not in the sense of carrying the burden of the ethos, but in the sense that his point of view carries the burden of the ethos' subconscious, of our collective shame when we try to find out answers about someone's history, about a personal decline and fall into the radical solitude of the homeless. When we try to find out the answers, the causes, the justifications, we, both reader and poet, become confined to fiction, to fictions.

Then, one more time, we turn the page and we face a close-up. This is not formally a new picture, since Ander Gunn chose to select a fragment of the previous one, a fragment he enlarged in order to bring center stage his character's face, the woman's humanity. I won't insist on the exhausted and most debated topic of the aesthetic and psychological function of the close-up. Suffice

it to say that it frames and enhances the main signs of someone's expression, virtually of someone's identity. However, in this case, the mechanical dimension of photography – the material constraints of photographic development – also betrays a psychological revelation. Notice how the inevitable graininess (we are still far away from digital cameras, of course) builds a distance from the referent. John Hollander points out the irony. After having asserted that “[s]uch graininess is, of course, an eventual necessary consequence of the process of enlargement itself”, he reminds that

[t]he epistemological puzzle about the limits of photographic knowledge emerging from the fact that repeated enlargement, in its quest for finer detail, will only result in that very detail being obliterated by increasingly coarse grain was given sensational treatment in Antonioni's film *Blowup*, which was made the same year that Gunn's *Positives* was published. (Hollander: 296)

After having signaled the critics' analysis, one must turn our attention to the way Gunn, the poet, saw his brother's picture in his last poem about the old woman:

Something approaches, about
which she has heard a good deal.
Her deaf ears have caught it, like a
silence in the wainscot
by her head. Her flesh has felt
a chill in her feet, a draught
in her groin. She has watched it
like moonlight on the frayed wood
stealing toward her
floorboard by floorboard. Will it hurt?
Let it come, it is
the terror of full repose,
and so no terror. (Gunn 1966: 78)

This last poem on the old woman synthesizes the tones of the previous poems. The first line follows the ekphrastic dimension that prevailed in the first poem devoted to her. Then in the second line the poem summons the atmosphere of the following poem and keeps on building a fiction with the referent as his main character. A slight difference must be pointed out: the inner focus, which allows us to dive deep into the woman's humanity.

The last stanza introduces a new shift in the tone. John Hollander remarks that "[t]he last three lines . . . [compose], after what have been most seven-syllable ones, a perfect haiku" (296). This formal deception means that the wheel has come round full circle. The haiku introduces decorum, a dramatic turning away from the inner fictions. It also means a formal turning away from colloquial speech, thus inserting a distance from the referent. Only a poet, who is able to manipulate the different tones and moods of language, can operate these prosodic shifts and build these approaches to visual encapsulations of the real.

As we have seen above, Gunn confessed that he wasn't sure if "opposite the photographs were poems or captions" (1982: 181). Yet while reading them one is led to recognize the singularity of their verbal approach to a specific time and place; their ability to apostrophize the visual sign, since, as I have mentioned above, the positive reminds us of the other (bright) side from whose darkness the sign comes to life. Their ekphrastic dimension clearly answers to this question and clarifies the poet's doubts. In his journey through space and time in the streets of London postwar baby-boom society, Gunn confronts the signs of a working class submerged by its daily routines, and help to challenge an idealized fiction about those years. His poems debunk the visual facticity, the supposedly direct and truthful relation between referent and visual sign, thus unveiling the ethos' factitiousness. The final sequence of poems about the homeless woman, and eventually the one on her close-up, culminates

the revelation of the social subconscious, since it verbalizes a “terror of full repose” that still remains today in our major metropolis’ routines.

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**“WHAT MOVES AT THE MARGIN”:
AS VOZES INSURRETAS DE TONI MORRISON,
BELL HOOKS E NTOZAKE SHANGE¹**

Isabel Caldeira

Resumo: Neste texto procuro demonstrar como escritoras afro-americanas como Toni Morrison, Ntozake Change, ou bell hooks, depois da década de 70 do século XX, revêem modelos de discurso e representação, ora apropriando-se deles e reinventando-os, ora subvertendo-os numa linguagem que assim se torna *sua e negra*. Debatendo-se na tensão entre a libertação pela linguagem e o aprisionamento que ela também constitui, propõem-se escolher as margens (hooks) para desconstruir um discurso hegemónico, naturalizado e transparente, que se arroga o direito de ser totalizador, universal e é, afinal, “branco” e patriarcal. Por isso é insurreto o discurso que se move nas margens, reclamando na sua insurreição o mais genuíno sentido de cidadania plena.

¹ A minha paixão pela literatura e cultura afro-americana, que não se esgotou em todos estes anos de estudo, devo-a à minha Mentora, Maria Irene Ramalho Santos, com quem comecei por conhecer Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison e Malcolm X nos idos anos de 1970. O seu saber imenso, distribuído pelas suas diversas paixões, tem sido uma contínua inspiração. A sua amizade uma jóia preciosa!

Palavras-chave: escritoras afro-americanas; Toni Morrison; Ntozake Shange; bell hooks; racismo.

Abstract: In this text I examine how African-American female writers, such as Toni Morrison, Ntozake Shange, or bell hooks revise dominant models of discourse and representation, either by appropriation and reinvention, or subversion, creating both a literature *of their own* and a *black* literature. In their deconstruction of a hegemonic discourse, which claims to be universal, totalizing, and is, after all, “white” and patriarchal, I sense a tension between language as both liberating and imprisoning. These women writers therefore choose the margin as “a space of radical openness” (hooks) to offer us an insurgent discourse which fulfils their call for full citizenship.

Keywords: African-American female writers; Toni Morrison; Ntozake Shange; bell hooks; racism.

We've only just begun . . . to fashion a woman's vocabulary to deal with the “silences” of our lives.

Toni Cade Bambara (*in* Tate 1983)

It's not that we haven't always been here, since there was a here. It is that the letters of our names have been scrambled when they were not totally erased, and our fingerprints upon the handles of history have been called the random brushings of birds. . . . But Black women have survived. And our words have survived.

Audre Lorde (1989)

And all the while the richness of our embodied difference pulses between us and through us, beckoning our attention, too fluid and vivid to be quantified at all, least of all as equal.

Irene Ramalho Santos (2013)

But Some Of Us Are Brave: All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men: Black Women's Studies é o título de uma antologia publicada nos Estados Unidos em 1982, que reúne textos fundadores do Feminismo Negro (*Black Feminism*). O título denuncia a dupla exclusão sentida pelas mulheres negras em relação à visão hegemónica do Movimento Feminista, liderado por mulheres brancas de classe média, cuja acção lhes era pretensamente dirigida também, e ao nacionalismo negro, liderado por homens, invisibilizando as mulheres e acorrentando-as a ideais masculinos e patriarcais. Nos textos reunidos na antologia reflecte-se uma consciencialização amadurecida pelas lutas pelos direitos cívicos das décadas de 60 e 70 nos Estados Unidos, embora as mulheres negras tivessem sido relegadas para a retaguarda.

É também na década de 1970 que Adrienne Rich nos oferece uma reflexão sobre re-visão, inspirada por esse tempo de mudança e de esperança, que ela não deixava de sentir como, a um tempo, confuso e doloroso – “It’s exhilarating to be alive in a time of awakening consciousness; it can also be confusing, disorienting, and painful” (Rich 1972: 18). Bem previa Rich, nesta sua ambivalência, que os frutos da movimentação social que observava à sua volta trariam debaixo da doçura o rasto acre da luta sempre incompleta e demasiadas vezes sujeita a recuos. Quando Rich se interroga sobre os fatores da opressão das mulheres, se estarão no sistema económico de classe ou na estrutura sexual de classe, não entra no

seu raciocínio a raça, o outro fator ideológico subjacente à ordem ocidental desde o colonialismo, a “colonialidade do poder”², que na divisão social do trabalho do capitalismo se orientou pela divisão racial.³ Por isso, a muitas mentes esclarecidas e clarividentes como a de Adrienne Rich, outras tiveram que se juntar, para com a sua experiência vivida numa “outra metade” da América ajudarem a despertar “os sonâmbulos” para novas realidades políticas. Mas, para isso, é imperioso re-ver “from a new critical direction”, como Rich nos incentiva a fazer, uma re-visão que ela apresenta como “an act of survival”, levado a cabo pelas mulheres que pretendam deter o processo da sua própria auto-destruição ou invisibilização. Um dos aspetos deste processo faz-se, também para Rich, através da linguagem, para entender “how *our* language has trapped as well as liberated us” (Rich 1972: 18, ênfase minha).

Neste tipo de preocupação, Rich alinha perfeitamente com escritores e escritoras de grupos minoritários, dupla ou triplamente invisibilizados.⁴ Também na década de 1970, um escritor afro-americano, Ralph Ellison, refletia sobre a língua inglesa, que era também dele, mas ao mesmo tempo o excluía, pois nela se inscrevia, inexoravelmente, a discriminação racial:

Perhaps the most insidious and least understood form of segregation is that of the word. And by this I mean the word in all its complex formulations. . . For if the word has the potency to

² Refiro-me ao conceito de “colonialidade do poder” proposto por Anibal Quijano (2000).

³ Para o entendimento da forma como o capitalismo gerou a divisão racial, veja-se o artigo de Quijano e Wallerstein (1992).

⁴ Um exemplo significativo desta solidariedade está na combinação entre Rich, Audre Lorde e Alice Walker, todas nomeadas para o National Book Award para a poesia em 1974, de que, fosse qual fosse a que ganhasse, partilhariam o prémio e o usariam, da melhor forma, em prol das mulheres. Foi Rich a ganhá-lo e leu na cerimónia de entrega uma declaração nesse sentido escrita pelas três.

revive and make us free, it has also the power to blind, imprison and destroy. (Ellison 24)

Mais tarde, bell hooks, outra intelectual afro-americana, na sua obra de 1990, *Yearning*, mais especificamente no capítulo que intitula “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness”, ecoa a retórica dos sermões afro-americanos na repetição coralista da frase “Language is also a place of struggle”, para se questionar sobre as possibilidades de expressão numa língua que traz a marca da opressão, mas que ela pretende re-animar com a energia da luta e da resistência:

Dare I speak to you in a language that will move beyond the boundaries of domination – a language that will not bind you, fence you in, or hold you? Language is also a place of struggle. The oppressed struggle in language to recover ourselves, to reconcile, to reunite, to renew. Our words are not without meaning, they are an action, a resistance. (146)

Esta reflexão sobre a tentativa de apropriação de uma língua contaminada, porque foi sempre o veículo da dominação, está presente em muitas vozes que pensam sobre as marcas de um passado de colonialismo e racismo nas vidas, nos corpos e, perigosamente, nas mentes colonizadas. Esta preocupação parece-me predominante no texto esfíngico que Toni Morrison escreveu para o seu discurso de agradecimento do Prémio Nobel, em 1993. Morrison recorre à metáfora para falar da linguagem como um organismo vivo e da sua utilização como um acto de grande responsabilidade – “an act with consequences” (1994: 13). É esse ensinamento que Morrison transmite através da parábola que é, afinal, esse texto, em que se confrontam uma figura da geração com memória do passado de escravatura e dois jovens. A mulher, uma filha de escravos, muito

idosa, cega e cheia de sabedoria, aprendeu com o sofrimento a preservar com muito cuidado as formas de vida da língua, porque a língua estiolada pela dominação e pelo preconceito é, para os negros, uma língua morta: “characterized as censored and censoring, the language of dominance, which preserves privilege, sanctions ignorance and is [u]nreceptive to interrogation, it cannot form or tolerate new ideas, shape other thoughts, tell another story, fill baffling silences” (14). Esta é a língua que foi inventada “for the estrangement of minorities, hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek. . . Sexist language, racist language, theistic language, which limits knowledge, and tucks its fascist boots under crinolines of respectability and patriotism” (16). Para re-ver e re-animar a linguagem, propõe-se a escritora uma tarefa, abrir espaço para novas sonoridades:

A sound made up of all the elements that distinguished black life (its peculiar brand of irony, oppression, versatility, madness, joy, strength, shame, honor, triumph, grace and stillness) as well as those qualities that identified it with all mankind (compassion, anger, foolishness, courage, self-deception and vision). (“Rediscovering Black History” 43)

A lista de emoções e atitudes não basta para caracterizar essa especificidade da língua falada pelos negros, por isso vem a necessidade de nomear os sujeitos dessa fala, os anônimos, homens e mulheres, que nas histórias convencionais são falados por quem tem o poder. Mas nem assim é possível explicar. Ainda no discurso do Nobel, vem a interrogação: “What makes a work ‘black’?” (1994: 136). Como resposta, uma nova lista, ela própria expressão da dificuldade em definir, mas, desta vez, incorporando na linguagem a diferença cultural e racial, que se sintetizam numa estratégia de insurreição: “The most valuable point of entry into the question of

cultural (or racial) distinction, the one most fraught, is its language – unpoliced, seditious, confrontational, manipulative, inventive, disruptive, masked, and unmasking language” (*ibidem*).

Desde finais da década de 70 do século XX, mais propriamente desde a publicação de *Orientalism* por Edward Said (1978), que a desconstrução de uma visão hegemónica do Outro, erigida pelo império colonial europeu, tentou deslocar o ponto de vista de análise e teorizar aquilo que se denominou perspectiva pós-colonial.⁵ Em 1989 surgiu a obra de referência para esta linha teórica: *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* de Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths e Helen Tiffin. Se a menciono, é porque nela se enunciam conceitos fundamentais para esta minha análise: império, hegemonia, estratégias de reposição (“re-placement”) – revogação e apropriação – dos modelos de discurso e representação, em busca de um reforço de identidade e emancipação para sujeitos que foram vítimas de processos de colonização, destituição e silenciamento.

Neste trabalho interessa-me propor uma nova reposição – em vez do Outro, *a Outra*, em vez de “the empire writes back”, “the ghetto writes B[la]ck”, a formulação e o sentido da escritora afro-americana Sherley Anne Williams, no seu ensaio de 1993, “The *Lion’s* History: The Ghetto Writes B[la]ck”. Quando Williams escreve este artigo, o seu intuito é chamar a atenção para o momento em que os negros – homens e mulheres – saem do silêncio a que tinham sido votados e, ao fazê-lo, elevam vozes que reclamam a sua própria especificidade, tanto porque se re-posicionam numa história que se propõem re-escrever – porque estão cansados e cansadas de sofrer a obliteração e a deformação da história hegemónica – como porque querem

⁵ Uso o termo pós-colonial não no seu sentido cronológico, mas sim cultural, na pegada de Ramón Saldivar, como um conceito dentro da lógica de culturas marcadas pelo imperialismo e pelo racismo (cf. “Historical Fantasy, Speculative Realism, and Postrace Aesthetics in Contemporary American Fiction.” *American Literary History* 23.3 [Fall 2011]: 575).

revogar modelos de discurso e representação, ora apropriando-se deles, ora reinventando-os e subvertendo-os numa linguagem que assim se torna *sua* e *negra*, num movimento que é de *rei-vindicâre* (“write back”), ou seja, reclamar aquilo que é seu.

É esta preocupação que encontro, por exemplo, na literatura produzida por mulheres afro-americanas, vozes que se elevam contra o racismo, o sexismo, a hegemonia cultural do império e do patriarcado que removeram as suas vidas e memórias para espaços de subalternização, que as desvalorizam e apoucam. Delas recebemos também os sinais da resistência. “Language is also a place of struggle”! lê-se à guiza de refrão, ou coro, no texto de bell hooks (1990), que convoca os sons e imagens “that mainstream consumers find difficult to understand” (147). Para a autora, é preciso fazer o esforço de incluir as “múltiplas vozes” negras no discurso, mesmo o acadêmico, para abrir nele o espaço para a oralidade, para o vernáculo – “talking the talk”. hooks surge-me, assim, na pegada do crítico Houston Baker, Jr., que, já em 1987, propunha uma nova forma de ler toda uma tradição discursiva afro-americana a partir do vernáculo e dos *blues* (1987); ou do crítico Henry Louis Gates, Jr. que, um ano mais tarde, buscava a especificidade da cultura afro-americana na matriz Yoruba do “signifying monkey”, perpetuada nos rituais discursivos do “signifying” (1988). Afinal, o que aqui testemunhamos é o ato político de intervenção como dissensão numa língua que os disse escravos, levando-os desde sempre a desconfiar dela. Por isso, temos Houston Baker numa obra posterior (1989) a caracterizar a voz afro-americana como aquela a quem não basta dominar os códigos do discurso dominante – “mastery of form” –, mas sim avançar para uma subversão desses mesmos códigos – “deformation of mastery”.⁶ Afinal, trata-se de encontrar a linguagem rebelde,

⁶ Houston Baker encontra exemplos vários dessa subversão de códigos e desmontagem irônica dos discursos dominantes que caracteriza o discurso afro-americano.

subversiva, inventiva e insubordinada, capaz de desmascarar, e ao mesmo tempo hábil no utilizar das máscaras, de que fala Morrison, que escolheu para si própria o epíteto de “saboteur”.⁷

Mas interessa-me refletir ainda sobre o sentido que bell hooks, na obra acima referida, coloca na expressão “intimate intervention”, que ela explana como “[p]rivate speech in public discourse”, o lado íntimo da linguagem “normally save[d] for family and loved ones” (147), abrindo um espaço seu (e para a comunidade negra) numa língua que lho negou. Em todo o seu texto se pressente a tensão entre o esforço para o conseguir e a frustração nele envolvida, visível no anacoluto: “. . . making another text, a space that enables me to recover all that I am in language, I find so many gaps, absences in this written text” (147). Ao lado político da intervenção como dissensão alia-se a dimensão de intimidade e sentimento que convoca uma vivência comunitária para imaginativamente a fortalecer, visível na prefixação que compõe uma rima inicial “to recover ourselves, to reconcile, to reunite, to renew” (146) – e ao mesmo tempo arredar o Outro, o “mainstream consumer” (o branco?) da comunicação. Conquistado um espaço seu, está consciente de que não pode ser um espaço seguro (“[i]t is not a ‘safe’ place”), mas que lhe possibilita, ainda assim, a reunião de uma comunidade de resistência (“a community of resistance”) (149). bell hooks tem o cuidado de explicitar o sentido positivo de margem que, quando imposta, habitualmente é conotada com inferiorização e discriminação, mas quando é escolha pode ser um local de resistência: “I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one

Um primeiro exercício do crítico está na análise da figura de Trueblood em *Invisible Man* de Ralph Ellison. Uma maior elaboração dessa primeira tese está patente na sua obra *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1989).

⁷ Esse epíteto é mencionado por Adam Langer, na entrevista que lhe faz, em 2003 (Langer 212).

chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility” (hooks 153).

Está, assim, encontrada uma fonte de energia para levar a cabo a abertura de novos mundos, novas alternativas (149-150). No texto de Rich que atrás referi, “When We Dead Awaken”, diz-nos a autora que, se a imaginação “is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives” (23).

É na margem escolhida como espaço de “radical openness” (hooks 153), que vejo o sentido de “interstices”, tal como Homi Bhabha os apresenta em *The Location of Culture*, como os espaços em que “the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated” por grupos que partilham histórias de despojamento e discriminação. (2). Mas, para aqueles e aquelas que escolhem a margem, em vez de viverem de facto na margem, a negociação é bem mais consciente.

À ideia de resistência (hooks) e de negociação (Bhabha), Toni Morrison acrescenta a ideia de soberania (1998). Para ela, o exercício de linguagem que é a escrita de ficção pode constituir-se como espaço de soberania e autoridade, talvez o único possível para quem conhece a dupla opressão por ser mulher e negra. E à noção de hooks de “intimate intervention”, Morrison contrapõe uma “deliberate intervention”. A conquista de poder através da linguagem permite combater “the potency of racist constructs”. Só assim “the racist house” se poderá converter em “home” (*idem*: 4). A constituição de um espaço comunitário exclusivo através da linguagem, tal como é proposto por hooks, encontra eco em Morrison quando esta privilegia um público leitor negro: “I’m interested in black readers and me” (*idem*: 109). Novamente se percebe um sentido comunitário numa experiência partilhada, que não tem de ser explicada para fora da comunidade:

There are certain things I don’t want to expose, not because Whites shouldn’t know, but they are not who I’m addressing the

book to. The Black people who never pick up a book – the Black people in my books who don't read books – are the people who authenticate that book for me. (*idem*: 15)

A referência à autenticação não é gratuita. Traz consigo a associação à necessidade vivida pelos ex-escravos ou escravos foragidos, autores de narrativas autobiográficas que serviam a causa abolicionista. Esses textos tinham sempre que ser “autenticados” por abolicionistas ou outros brancos respeitáveis da comunidade, chamados a atestar quer a verdade das experiências narradas, quer a autoria, já que esta não condizia com as expectativas de um público que crescera na convicção da inferioridade intelectual dos negros.⁸

A outro nível, mas na mesma linha de rebeldia e subversão na linguagem, encontro na ficção de Toni Morrison a tematização da noção de “wildness”, associada à forma como os negros são percebidos na sociedade americana. Em *Jazz*, o seu romance de 1992,⁹ “wild” começa por ser a própria música de jazz, que é referida como “the dirty, get-on-down music the women sang and the men played and both danced to, close and shameless or apart and wild” (*J* 58). É ela que invade a cidade, junto com os migrantes negros vindos do Sul para Harlem, nas primeiras décadas do século XX. O jazz é representado no texto como a irrupção de uma “complicated anger”,

⁸ Neste contexto, é fácil entender como o acesso à alfabetização e à escrita se tornou um instrumento fundamental para a emancipação. Houve quem chamasse à palavra um “certificado de humanidade” (Paulin Hountondji, citada por Henry Louis Gates, Jr., em “Writing ‘Race’ and the Difference It Makes.” *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 [Autumn 1985]: 12). Uma obra pioneira para a primeira fase de definição de uma tradição literária afro-americana pós-década de 60 é a de Robert Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1979). Nela, o crítico traça a linha matricial do discurso afro-americano a partir da conquista da palavra, o que se traduziu num processo que começou pela necessidade de autenticação, passou pela auto-autenticação e caminhou em direção a uma total autonomia.

⁹ Doravante, as referências a *Jazz* serão parentéticas com a inicial *J* e o n.º de página.

acumulada num passado de opressão e discriminação, na memória mais recente da exploração económica e dos linchamentos no Sul, a que se acrescentam as novas dificuldades na competição capitalista no meio urbano, na segregação do gueto, ou na revolta dos veteranos de guerra, abandonados ao seu não-destino – um cocktail explosivo rebentando a par e passo em tumultos raciais em várias cidades. Tal como comenta Doreatha Mbalia,

Wild, in *Jazz*, signifies defiance, rebelliousness, aggressiveness, and silence – all caused by class exploitation and race and/or gender oppression. Because conditions throughout the U.S., indeed the world, in the 1920s are so oppressive for African people, there are traces of Wild in everything and everyone. (*JMbalia* 106)

Mbalia, quando escreve com maiúsculas a palavra, está já a converter a personagem com esse nome numa espécie de alegoria. Wild é referida pela crítica como o ressurgimento da personagem Beloved do romance homónimo de 1987.¹⁰ Em ambos os casos, trata-se de personagens intrigantes, que não se deixam conter nos padrões convencionais de uma tradição racional ocidental e os põem em causa. Wild é a mulher estranha e misteriosa que habita os bosques e os canaviais, vive numa gruta e ninguém consegue bem entender. A sua nudez, a pele intensamente negra, os olhos de gazela, e o facto de estar grávida e dar à luz uma criança que não sabe tratar como filho aumentam a sua associação a uma natureza selvática. Vai deixando vestígios pelo seu caminho, “traces”, refere o texto, e é por isso que o filho adota o nome de Joe Trace. Joe sofre o abandono

¹⁰ Numa entrevista, a própria autora reforça essa associação: “Wild is a kind of Beloved. . . . The woman they call Wild. . . could be Sethe’s daughter, Beloved. . . who runs away, ending up in Virginia, which is right next to Ohio” (Carabi 96).

e procura a mãe, seguindo esses vestígios, sem nunca a encontrar. Não podemos deixar de nos lembrar do sentido de traço (“trait”) em Derrida e essa busca humana de sentido condenada à frustração e/ou a possibilidade de retorno (“retrait”).¹¹ Na busca incessante e frustrada de Joe alegoriza-se a busca incessante e frustrada de um passado perdido para os descendentes dos Africanos feitos escravos e nesse processo privados para sempre de uma origem com possibilidade de regresso. Mas Wild é também vestígio de um passado que teima em retornar.

Em *Beloved* (1987), o primeiro romance em que a escritora intenta representar o passado de escravatura, Morrison utiliza significativamente o termo “rememory”, pois a memória direta há muito se perdeu.¹² Na boca de Sethe, que tenta explicar à filha Denver a forma como não se consegue fugir ao passado, surge esse termo e a noção de que não se trata apenas de memórias individuais, mas sim do acesso a um passado partilhado: “Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something going on. So clear. And you think it’s you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It’s when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else” (*B* 36). E é por isso que o passado de escravatura nunca se apagou. Nem da memória dos negros, nem da memória dos brancos. Não está a identidade de uns implicada na dos outros? *Beloved* é o fantasma encarnado da filha morta, que não só traz consigo o reviver do trauma para Sethe, ou a hipótese de libertação, mas também os fragmentos

¹¹ Para um estudo que também lê “trace” à luz de “trait” de Derrida, cf. Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida. “O legado da rememoração: traços e vestígios memoriais nas Américas.” *Alea* 15.1 Rio de Janeiro (Jan./Junho 2013). Web. 13.03.2015.

¹² Poderemos relacionar a noção de “rememory” com o conceito de “prosthetic memory”, tratado por Alison Landsberg em *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York, NY: Columbia UP., 2004) e o de “postmemory”, estudado por Marianne Hirsh em *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Columbia UP, 2012). Doravante, as referências a *Beloved* serão parentéticas com a inicial *B* e o n.º de página).

de uma memória da escravatura que remonta a África e ao trauma originário do abandono – da terra, dos entes queridos, das origens. É neste mesmo romance que Morrison utiliza, para esses “traços” (“traits”) do passado, a expressão “unspeakable things unspoken”, a memória da violência que tenta irromper na palavra, mas se retrai (“retrait”), pois certas realidades são inomináveis.¹³

A associação de Wild à natureza, à selva (que nos faz retornar a *Beloved* e à forma irônica como Morrison utiliza esta como metáfora – “White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle.” (B 198-99)¹⁴ – sugere a percepção negativa que se impôs à população de origem africana nos E.U.A., colada à percepção da própria África como um mundo não civilizado. No dizer de Morrison, para a sociedade branca, as gentes de origem africana continuaram a ser a um tempo “unsettled and unsettling” (1992b: 6). A reflexão sobre essa presença africana na sociedade americana desde os seus primórdios – “which shaped the body politic, the Constitution, and the entire history of the culture (*idem*: 5) deu origem a uma série de conferências na Universidade de Harvard, depois coligidas e publicadas em *Playing in the Dark* (1992). Aí, Morrison propõe o conceito de “Africanismo” num sentido novo, a figuração simbólica da presença (feita ausência) dos Afro-americanos na literatura americana, “constructs of blackness” com que o discurso nacional codificou uma presença desde o início incômoda. Tratando-se de uma invenção, um tropo – observa Morrison: “the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings,

¹³ Derrida joga com as noções de traço (*trait*) e retrair, retroceder (*retrait*): enquanto a primeira noção sugere a memória de uma identidade, quando a linguagem intenta dar-lhe forma, a segunda sugere a incapacidade da linguagem, dada a sua contingência e a limitação da conceptualização; vem ao de cima o aspecto de palimpsesto do texto, que se dá apagando-se, escondendo-se, retraindo-se.

¹⁴ V. meu artigo “Morrison and Pepetela” (2008).

and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people” (*idem* 6-7) –, tem servido no discurso não só para implicar, veladamente, a presença dos negros, mas também para a controlar e policiar, ao nível da classe, da sexualidade, e do exercício do poder. A presença dos Africanos converte-se, assim, em ausência, e é por isso que a escritora intenta desvelá-la e comprovar que eles estiveram lá sempre “playing in the dark”. Ganha, pois, um profundo significado essa tensão que observo entre a imperiosa necessidade de desvelar, pela incisão do traço (“trait”), o que foi obliterado (“unspoken”) e a incapacidade de dizer porque há realidades que são indizíveis (“unspeakable”), e a linguagem, que é humana, é débil, contingente e limitada (“retrait”).

À fixidez do estereótipo (Bhabha), contrapõe Morrison, ironica e subversivamente, novas figurações de “wildness”, incorporadas em várias mulheres que percorrem os seus textos, todas elas fortes e perturbadoras.¹⁵ A *Beloved* e a *Wild* acrescentam-se, assim, outras figuras de mulheres rebeldes na ficção morrisoniana, que afrontam valores convencionais, como é o exemplo paradigmático de Sula, no romance homónimo de 1973. Na entrevista de Adam Langer, de 2003, a própria Morrison refere a ideia da “wanton woman”, “anarchic figure”, “pariah”, figura presente em quase todos os seus livros (230). Pensamos em Pilate de *Song of Solomon*, Thérèse de *Tar Baby*, Junior de *Love*, Florens de *A Mercy*, ou mesmo Bride de *God Help the Child*. Na sua “wildness”, parecem deixar no seu caminho reminiscências, ou “traços”, de uma origem africana; ou

¹⁵ Para estudos que têm como centro figuras de mulheres insurgentes na ficção, veja-se, por exemplo: Joanne M. Braxton & Andree Nicola McLaughlin. *Wild Women in the Whirlwind: Afro-American Culture and the Contemporary Literary Renaissance* (Chapel Hill, NC: Rutgers University Press, 1989); Molly Hite. *The Other Side of the Story: Structures and Strategies of Contemporary Feminist Narratives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989); Elliott Butler-Evans. *Race, Gender, and Desire: Narrative Strategies in the Fiction of Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1991).

tornam-se “wild”, numa loucura que irrompe da tensão acumulada, tal como em Sethe, quando corre a atacar Mr. Bodwin, desvairada pela memória daquele dia traumático em que viu a aproximar-se os brancos que a reclamavam, a ela e aos filhos (“her best thing”), de volta à escravatura.

Na minha leitura, estas associações perifrásticas atuam na obra de Morrison como estratégias desconstrutivas de um discurso racista. Maria Irene Ramalho, a propósito da sua teoria da interrupção, considera como o “político-que-interrompe” “. . . a estrutura naturalizada da sociedade ocidental que dá forma às vidas das pessoas e as condiciona, e, ao mesmo tempo, o modo como as pessoas são levadas a perceber e a experienciar a sociedade, e não a capacidade de intervir na sociedade e de a transformar e melhorar” (2000: 2). O discurso naturalizado é “transparente”, como nos diz Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak a partir de Derrida, e arroga-se o direito de ser totalizador, universal (1988). E “branco”. Na escrita de sujeitos que sempre se viram distorcidos nessa “estrutura naturalizada” e “transparentes” numa narrativa totalizadora que assim os fez ausentes da História, percebe-se a necessidade de resistir à tendência unificadora dos códigos. Daí a urgência de “intervir na sociedade e de a transformar e melhorar” (Ramalho Santos 2000: 2), impondo a sua presença e revertendo uma secular violência epistémica (Spivak). Por isso é insurreto o discurso que se move na margem, reclamando na sua insurreição o mais genuíno sentido de cidadania plena.¹⁶

Em “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action”, uma palestra apresentada num congresso da *Modern Language Association* de 1997, Audre Lorde diz:

Each of us is here now because in one way or another we share a commitment to language and to the power of language,

¹⁶ V. meu artigo “Toni Morrison and Edwidge Danticat”, 2017.

and to the reclaiming of that language which has been made to work against us. In the transformation of silence into language and action, it is vitally necessary for each and one of us to establish or examine her function in that transformation and to recognize her role as vital within that transformation. (43)

Ntozake Shange já parecia estar a responder a este apelo de Lorde quando, em 1975, levou a um palco nova-iorquino o seu poema dramático (ou “choreopoem”, o neologismo com que se auto-apresenta) *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*.¹⁷ Shange reúne sete mulheres no palco, todas elas imóveis “in postures of distress”. É no momento da enunciação que cada uma delas, sucessivamente, ganha vida (“come[s] to life”). A voz de cada uma eleva-se, em comunicação com a seguinte, numa cadeia que sugere um laço comunitário de encorajamento mútuo: “sing a black girl’s song / bring her out / to know herself” (*fcg* 2). A canção (o *blues*?) traz consigo ritmos de “carin/struggle/hard times” (*fcg* 3), sintetizando vidas sofridas, condenadas ao silenciamento: “she’s been dead so long / closed in silence so long / she doesn’t know the sound / of her own voice / her infinite beauty” (*fcg* 3). Mas não é só a sociedade racista ou a exploração que são vituperadas; um dos principais alvos são os homens negros, representados como predadores e violadores. No texto de Shange é muito mais nítido do que no texto de Morrison um cariz feminista. Cada uma das falas das sete mulheres traz uma história reveladora da interseccionalidade das opressões, sexual, racial e de classe.¹⁸ Para além disso, há

¹⁷ Doravante, as referências à obra de Shange serão parentéticas com as iniciais *fcg* e o n.º de página.

¹⁸ Para o entendimento do conceito de interseccionalidade, veja-se The Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement” (1978).Web; ou Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”; e Trina Grillo, “Anti-Essentialism and Intersectionality: Tools to

uma forte dinâmica de solidariedade entre as mulheres, de mútuo incentivo, de “sisterhood”. A música anima os corpos e as mulheres dançam em ritmos cada vez mais vigorosos, num movimento de corpos sexualizados e erotizados que não escondem nem reprimem o desejo, libertando gradualmente a dor que lhes encheu os olhos de lágrimas: “rise, sally, rise, wipe your weepin eyes / and put your hand in your hips / an let your backbone slip / o, shake it to the east / o, shake it to the west” (*fcg* 4), “we gotta dance to keep from cryin” (v15), até que “alla my niggah temper came outta control / . . . & i talked english loud” (*fcg* 12). O texto de Shange é um incentivo à auto-estima, à capacitação e à emancipação das mulheres da sua tripla opressão, como se cada uma delas examinasse a sua função naquela transformação e reconhecesse o seu papel como vital dentro dessa transformação.

Tal como o *jazz* no texto de Morrison, os ritmos dos *blues* e os movimentos da dança em Shange denotam uma sexualidade pujante que o puritanismo da sociedade americana considera imoral e até pecaminosa. Expressões artísticas das mais originais na cultura americana, a música e a dança da tradição afro-americana acompanham os negros desde a escravatura e testemunham toda a criatividade e espiritualidade que lhes foi negada, mas também uma desinibida sensualidade, que foi o único aspeto que a perceção dominante registou para a traduzir por bestialidade. Tanto o texto de Morrison como o de Shange desconstruem os binarismos inscritos na cultura ocidental e que subjazem aos estereótipos. Wild, em *Jazz*, permanece esquiva e não domesticável, mas representa o retorno de Beloved, que a própria mãe vitimou para a proteger de um destino pior. Como o próprio nome indica, esta é, afinal, a filha muito amada. Representação de um passado indizível para Sethe,

Dismantle the Master’s House.” Eds. Elisabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger. *Theorising Feminisms* (New York. OUP, 2006), respetivamente 159-173 e 30-40.

Beloved é o fantasma encarnado, capaz também de “rememorar” fragmentos de um passado coletivo que remonta a África, à “Middle Passage” e à escravatura.

No texto de Shange, também a voz de uma das mulheres ecoa o sentido de pertença a um passado ancestral, em que não há separação ou conflito entre corpo e alma, como existe nas culturas ocidentais. É o próprio movimento sensual do corpo ao som da música que liberta o espírito. O dilema está, sim, em ser mulher e negra ao mesmo tempo e, ainda assim, conseguir sobreviver.¹⁹ Shange consegue, assim, desconstruir o logocentrismo da cultura ocidental, cuja tradição judaico-cristã separou corpo e alma, mas juntou interseccionalmente as várias opressões:

. . . the music waz like smack & you knew abt that & still refused
my dance waz not enuf / & it waz all i had but bein alive & bein
a woman & bein colored is a metaphysical dilemma / i haven't
conquered yet / do you see the point my spirit is too ancient
to understand the separation of soul & gender / my love is too
delicate to have thrown back on my face. (*fcg* 48)

Em qualquer destes mundos imaginários, a música, a dança e uma sexualidade assumida são emancipatórias. Em qualquer das escritas, o vernáculo, o calão e as sonoridades da oralidade de um *Black English* impõem-se à gramática padrão do Inglês e à gramática social dos códigos morais da classe média branca, trazendo ao de cima o “africanismo” de identidades silenciadas. Em Morrison, essa marca (ou “trace”) da africanidade é “wild”; em Shange, é “loud”;

¹⁹ A ironia com que se expressa este dilema no texto de Shange não pode deixar de nos recordar o verso de Countee Cullen “to make a poet black and bid him sing!”, no seu poema “Yet Do I Marvel” (*Color* [1925]. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1953).

em ambas é presença perturbadora, ofensiva e dissonante, numa ordem racista, classista e sexista naturalizada.

Tal como o texto de Morrison, ao privilegiar um público negro, o texto de Shange é *exclusivo* porque dedicado às jovens mulheres negras que um dia pensaram no suicídio como fuga para as suas vidas sofridas: “for colored girls who have considered suicide”. Como também exclusiva é a experiência a que se alude ao longo do poema, a de crescer como uma mulher negra, sujeita à tripla exploração da sua raça, da sua classe e do seu sexo. Mas, para estas escritoras, tornar os seus textos exclusivos (como *seus* próprios) é por certo um gesto de revolta contra uma sociedade exclusiva (como excludente), como é a sociedade americana.

O contacto com a escrita destas mulheres ajudou-me a interrogar o sentido que penso entender na teoria da “interrupção poética” tão eloquentemente enunciada por Maria Irene Ramalho Santos. Quando nela leio que “o poético precisa da interrupção do político para se fundar e assim devolver, “intacto”, o poder da linguagem” (2000: 2), pergunto-me se o político que irrompe inexoravelmente na escrita destas mulheres não a faz devolver-nos o poder de uma linguagem que nos transforma. E se não estamos também perante um tipo de escrita insurreta, “a denouncer, or *interrupter*, of the dominant culture of the nation” (Ramalho Santos 2003: 243).

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LESSONS IN TRANSNATIONALISM
AS A FRAMEWORK OF KNOWLEDGE
IN THE CRITIQUES OF JOSÉ MARTÍ,
RANDOLPH BOURNE, HERBERT BOLTON
AND WALDO FRANK*

Maria José Canelo

Resumo: Este ensaio apresenta um estudo comparativo acerca das formas como o imaginário transnacional foi abordado numa seleção de textos de José Martí, Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank e Herbert Bolton. O estudo examina em que medida estes intelectuais entenderam o transnacional como uma moldura de conhecimento alternativa e com base na qual se poderiam desenvolver interações mais igualitárias, no âmbito das Américas.

Palavras-chave: José Martí; Randolph Bourne; Herbert Bolton; Waldo Frank; Americas; transnacional; *mestizaje*; *borderlands*.

* I would like to thank Maria Irene Ramalho for having introduced me very early in my training as a researcher to what is called now, some twenty years later, the field of inter-American studies. Despite other detours, past and presumably future ones, I believe the interest for inter-American studies will always stay with me.

Abstract: This essay offers a comparative study about the ways the transnational imaginary has been tackled in a selection of writings by José Martí, Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank, and Herbert Bolton. It addresses in particular how these intellectuals envisaged the transnational as an alternative framework of knowledge for the Americas on the basis of which more equal interactions could develop.

Keywords: José Martí; Randolph Bourne; Herbert Bolton; Waldo Frank; Americas; transnational; *mestizaje*; the borderlands.

Transnationalism has of late become a popular analytical tool in literary and cultural studies. If the nation is usually posited as the classic framework which is able to encompass and foster our understanding of categories such as race, language or ethnicity according to a paradigm of unity and homogeneity, transnationalism is used as the analytical device which allows us to understand nations and their citizens through the relations they establish with other nations. Transnationalism therefore offers a different framework regarding the classical relation of antagonism and essentialism at the core of inter-national relations. Finally, in de-centering the nation, transnationalism tends to break away from ideologies of exceptionalism that ground hierarchies among nations. Heidi Shukla and Sandhya Tinsman identify transnationalism as a category that “focus[es] on shared histories of connection and interaction between the peoples across, beyond or underneath national boundaries and regions – a paradigm directly opposed to the bounded and often essentialized ‘national histories’ of discrete countries, as well as to the central organizing principle of a North-South dichotomy” (Shukla & Tinsman 2).

But why has transnationalism become a fashionable tool now? Without trying to provide an extensive revision of this question, it is important to notice that transnationalism largely emerged as the most apt answer to globalization and the expected waning of the nation state.¹ But the idea of the transnational is nothing new; it is there since the oldest empires and has been refashioned in new empires or other formations ever since. What I am particularly interested here is the way it has impacted on American Studies, given the field's central preoccupation with the definition of a national identity. Indeed, from the late 1990s on, the so-called New Americanists started to challenge the ideological foundations of American exceptionalism and called for a transnational understanding of the U.S. instead. By the same time, Chicano scholars such as Gloria Anzaldúa and José David Saldívar were questioning the rigidity of borders and claiming for their role in connecting rather than separating nations. These critical efforts gradually favored the loosening of the national bonds and the reaching out for connections outside the nation; for American studies, it meant to conceive of the U.S. as a nation in relation with, instead of isolated from, other nations. The time was ripe for what Carolyn Porter in 1994, as acting ASA President, called a "post-American" perspective and the lead was assigned to the Americas: a post-American perspective had to examine the "intricate interdependencies" that animated the Americas but tended to hide beyond national unities (Radway 10). Working further on the concept, Shelley Fisher Fishkin remarked that the transnational "requires that we see the inside and outside, domestic and foreign, national and international, as interpenetrating" (21). In other words, a transnational approach fosters comparative analyses, dispensing

¹ In American Studies, the "transnational turn" is officially established by Robert Gross's essay "The Transnational Turn: Rediscovering American Studies in a Wider World" and John Carlos Rowe's study *Post-Nationalist American Studies*, both published in 2000.

with the traditional isolation of area subjects and makes the nation “a participant in a global flow of people, ideas, texts, and products” (24). As a result, it tends to reduce the perils of parochialism and essentialism and brings the category “American”, in this case, into the same plane as any other adjective of nationality.

My point in this paper is to examine how the transnational imaginary has been tackled at other crucial moments of U.S. nation building, most notably in the work of former Americanists, or maybe we should call them the Proto-Americanists, who wrote before the establishment of American Studies as an area discipline and certainly unaware of that development. Their critiques were nevertheless interrupted by contingencies of history that urged for strong nationalist discourses instead. I am referring to José Martí, Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank, and Herbert Bolton, all of whom designed ideas of the Americas that were dialogical at core, as all of them to some extent anticipated one of the intellectual offspring of transnationalism within American Studies, inter-American Studies.

Because I believe the articulation of these critiques has been paid very little critical attention, it is my purpose here to offer a preliminary study of the ways Martí, Bourne, Frank, and Bolton built defenses of transnationalism as a framework of knowledge for the Americas. Despite their embeddedness in different historical circumstances (in a time frame that spans forty years, between 1891 and 1932), I intend to discuss comparatively their critical assessment of nationalism, colonialism, and imperialism; their focus on comparative knowledge as a condition for mutual respect and sovereignty; their conceptions of Americanness; and their elaborations of transnationalism as the alternative form of community, solidarity, and cooperation to replace the national order. My paper takes these as the key coordinates of the writings I selected for analysis.

José Martí, Nuestra America

Amongst the intellectuals under scrutiny, Martí is the only non-U.S. citizen: “Nuestra America”/“Our America”² was written in the ‘entrails of the Monster,’³ as he called the United States, during his exile as a revolutionary from the last standing Spanish colony, Cuba. Martí was clearly seeking for an alternative order to that of empire and he wrote this essay with a heart divided between the support the U.S. could give to liberate Cuba and the likely price for that interference. For Martí was well aware that the establishment of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823 at the outset of Latin American independence had grafted U.S. imperial hegemony into that very process. He also sensed that the coloniality of power,⁴ the legacy of colonialism in the newly independent nations, easily inhered also in the forms and institutions of knowledge that migrated, largely unchanged, from the colonies to the postcolonial nation-states. Indeed, the most insidious form of corrupting influence might be the epistemic, not the economic or the political. “Nuestra America” was written just a couple of years before Martí’s death as Cuba’s first martyr, at the time when the US engaged in the Spanish-

² The essay was first published as “Nuestra America”, in *La Revista Ilustrada de Nueva York*, on January 10th, 1891, in the United States. Although I use the English translation as reference text, I keep the original designation in Spanish because it refers not just to the title, but to what evolved as a concept in itself.

³ This is an expression Martí used in an unfinished letter to a friend, Manuel Mercado, dated 1895. See: <http://www.historyofcuba.com/history/marti/mercado.htm>.

⁴ We owe this later formulation to the Peruvian critic Aníbal Quijano, who picked upon the same problems of dependency Martí was already addressing a century earlier. See Quijano’s article of 2000, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” (*Neplanta: Views From the South* 1.3: 533-580), and a previous belaboring of the concept in articulation with that of ‘Americanity,’ an idea that encapsulates the distinguishing features of American colonization *vis-à-vis* the development of European capitalism, in Quijano and Wallerstein, “Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System” (*International Social Science Journal* 2 [1992]: 549-557).

-American War as its first imperial adventure, as acknowledged even by exceptionalist historians.

“Nuestra America” became extremely popular in academic circles after the emergence of the area of inter-American Studies given its project for a counter-hegemonic formation. Martí was after all facing and criticizing another form of transnationalism, the empire. But his reworking of the transnational was profoundly different; it entailed that no nation in the Americas would survive on its own or be successful in facing alone the Colossus of the North. Conversely, he proposed a new dynamics: instead of enumerating differences as in any national project, he underlined the affinities among the central and southern American republics with a view to endorse solidarity and cooperation amongst them.

“Nuestra America” avows the need for Latin America to articulate its own identities in order to be able to come to terms with the U.S. Reciprocal knowledge was a condition for fair relations and respect between the North and the South but Latin America had to assume itself as a coherent entity for a start. Martí began the article with a metaphor of uneven power, the sleepy town (Latin America) and the giant in seven-league boots (the U.S.), whose antagonism lies in opposing ideas: passivity and aggressiveness. The sleepy town in America had to be on the alert for the giant’s swift arrival and sleep with a weapon for a pillow. Yet, belligerency stops at the metaphor, for Martí (2002) means “weapons of the mind,” “trenches of ideas” which are “worth more than trenches of stone” (288). At the heart of Martí’s project lies a powerful reflection on the nature of knowledge and its role in political relations and political emancipation as well. Martí perceived very early on that no one under the coloniality of power could escape what was later theorized as the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo 2008). For Martí it was clear that while there was a correlation between governance (the laws) and knowledge (290), the Latin American nations could

not be free. Martí's critique, in its awareness of the articulation between the coloniality of power and the coloniality of knowledge, reveals typical postcolonial concerns. To acquire full sovereignty, that is, to avoid the translation of old (Spanish) colonialism into new (U.S.) imperialism, Latin American political independences had to go side by side with the creation of alternative epistemologies built from what Walter Mignolo (2008) was later to deem a new place of enunciation or "the colonial difference" (239). I take Martí's project in "Nuestra America" as the colonial difference.

At the heart of the conflict between North and South, Martí (2002) locates the uneven exchange of knowledge:

The urgent duty of our America is to show herself as she is, one in soul and intent, rapidly overcoming the crushing weight of her past. . . The disdain of the formidable neighbor who does not know her is our America's greatest danger and it is urgent. . . that her neighbor come to know her, and quickly, so that he will not disdain her. Out of ignorance, he may perhaps begin to covet her. But when he knows her, he will remove his hands from her in respect. (Martí 295)

Knowledge entails respect but he largely attributes Latin America herself the responsibility for being ignored by the United States. To Martí's mind, ignorance of a Latin American identity started as self-ignorance because for centuries the habit of thinking with the colonizer's mind had been the rule: "We were a whole fancy dress ball, in English trousers, a Parisian waistcoat, a North American overcoat, and a Spanish bullfighter's hat" (293). Latin America incarnated the identity of the other offered by colonial and imperial powers because it was ashamed to assume its own *mestizo* identity; this difference meant its originality and authenticity. Martí's paper is first of all an effort to assist Latin America in getting to know

herself in creating the colonial difference as a new place of enunciation.

Two points are fundamental in this coming of age of Latin America that will eventually lead to the stage designed in the essay “Nuestra America”: the first is to acknowledge the *mestizo* culture and the second, to beget distinct forms of knowledge. He called for local institutions, “born from the country itself” (Martí 290), both governments and universities, for he allies both to originality, creation, and emancipation. Accordingly, he named governors “Creators”, since to govern according to local knowledge was to create anew and in response to the particular needs and interests of the local realities. Martí’s view of the local did not entail nationalism, though; it aimed at forms of knowledge in harmony with “nature”, or the country’s natural elements (290). As he argued, “To know is to solve. To know the country and govern it in accordance with that knowledge is the only way of freeing it from tyranny” (291). Contrastingly, imported knowledge, be it born of colonial or imperial imposition, was “false erudition” (290).

Governors or Creators originated in the University but the latter had to redirect its orientation towards local knowledge: “How can our governors emerge from the universities when there is not a university in America that teaches the most basic elements of the art of governing, which is the analysis of all that is unique to the peoples of America” (Martí 291). Hence his argument that “[t]he European university must yield to the American university. The history of America from the Incas to the present must be taught in its smallest detail, even if the Greek Archons go untaught. Our Greece is preferable to the Greece that is not ours. . . we must be the trunk” (Martí 291). This refoundation of knowledge was the condition for Martí’s ideal of Nuestra America to come into being as a transnational cultural and political coalition.

Martí's call to arms is based on notions of solidarity but also on the idea of a common, if diverse, identity. He ponders on the traits of a Latin American identity which he understood to be opposite to the U.S. Anglo-Saxon ideal and elaborated as *mestizaje*: "Our feet upon a rosary, our heads white, and our bodies a motley of Indian and criollo we boldly entered the community of nations" (291). Those who denied their relation to the indigenous, who were ashamed of the Latin American cultural or ethnic component, were betrayers, who "disown[ed] their sick mother and le[ft] her alone in her sickbed" (289), a crime all the most reviling when they left to join the armies of North America (289). Solidarity went hand in hand with knowledge: "The trees must form ranks to block the seven-league giant! It is the hour of reckoning and of marching in unison, and we must move in lines as compact as the veins of silver that lie at the roots of the Andes" (289).

Randolph Bourne, the cosmopolitan transnation

Randolph Bourne is the only critic here who focused on a particular nation, the United States, instead of the Americas or the larger hemisphere. He nevertheless fully fits the purposes of this study since his challenge is precisely to conceive of the U.S. as a transnation. He engaged in a critique of the chief issues standing out in Martí's, Frank's, and Bolton's writings and is actually the one who went deeper into finding the political mechanisms to sustain a transnational dynamics.

Writing during the First World War,⁵ in what was in the United States a context of escalating nationalism, heightened fears of

⁵ The essay "Trans-National America" was first published in 1916, in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

both inside and incoming immigrants, and general repression of difference, Randolph Bourne addressed immigrant integration in a radical perspective, while playing with ideas of diversity that draw a bridge to Martí's concept of *mestizaje*. I assume belongingness and difference as core ideas in Bourne's critique. His views on difference are particularly insightful in the sense that not only did he radically revise the assimilationist model in place to value the contribution of the immigrant's difference, as he essentially positioned his critique as a decolonial emancipative gesture, for his implacable critique of the European traditions still in place in the U.S., from nationalism and homogeneity to aggressive international competition. To some extent, Bourne was also building a colonial difference for the U.S. (as he reimagined it) in relation to Europe, just like Martí did, in "Nuestra America."

Bourne (1977) commented on the obvious fact that, against all hailed assimilation programs fostering integration, the war led immigrants to retrieve their original memories and traditions, having a disuniting effect (248). Had Americanization failed? Certainly the melting-pot had. Bourne dug deep into the meanings of Americanization to the point when he inverted the paradigm: Americanization should be examined from the perspective of the immigrant and bearing in mind the immigrant's own contribution. He took Americanization as an active instead of passive process for this was the false premise of the assimilationist model. Assimilation techniques emptied out the immigrant community's spiritual substance, something impossible to be replaced; whatever took its place was doomed to be artificial, sterile, unable to foster a true integration. It could therefore only breed a shallow nationalism that was no real alternative to what he called "old nationalism" (255), a compound of competition, exclusion, inbreeding, pride, and self-interest amounting to "scarcely veiled belligerency" (257). Based on inherited forms of nationalism, the assimilationist scheme

could never offer immigrants a true sense of belonging in the new nation; but Bourne's hope was that the U.S. could develop a more positive form of national feeling, one able to avoid the obvious temptation of homogeneity.

Bourne's interest in asserting the transnational as an engine of knowledge lies precisely in his praise of difference, in this case, of cultures foreign to the national unit. These should be seen as enriching rather than disruptive of national unity and the U.S. society should be the one to assimilate into the immigrant's heritages. Bourne is possibly the most radical of these four intellectuals, in the sense that not only did he promote knowledge of the immigrant but he also sought to establish the immigrants' differences as the U.S. society's own difference, thus dislocating Anglo-Saxon privilege. Bourne's new projected nationalism therefore required the U.S. to revise its obsession with authenticity and assert its national identity in terms of diversity instead, in what he calls "the first international nation. . . a cosmopolitan federation of. . . foreign cultures, from whom the sting of devastating competition has been removed" (258). In relation to this point, Martí's theory of Latin American *mestizaje* comes to mind, although Bourne is considering European immigration alone.

In Bourne's view, the war had produced in the U.S. an intellectual battle amidst imported European ideas: "America has been the intellectual battleground of nations" (258) of which traditional nationalism was a case in point. Bourne's transnationalism was the product of this battleground, a form of attachment based on "a cosmopolitan federation of national colonies" (258). This design was complemented by particular forms of community including new forms of citizenship: the corresponding form of Americanness was essentially cosmopolitan: "[c]olonialism has grown into cosmopolitanism, and [the American's] motherland is of no one nation, but all who have anything life-enhancing to offer to the spirit" (258-59). Individual creativity should therefore be bolstered

instead of muffled down and the University was the ideal place to promote it given the cosmopolitan experience it enhanced: “In his colleges, [the American] is already getting, with the study of modern history and cultures . . . the privilege of a common outlook such as the people of no other nation of today in Europe can possibly secure” (258).

As in Martí’s critique, the University takes centerstage as the site where a new form of cosmopolitan knowledge could be developed. Unlike nationalism, this form of cosmopolitanism was unifying at core but relied on solidarity and cooperation, rather than competition. It was a balanced combination of bookish knowledge and social experience provided by the diverse environment of the University:

Indeed, it is not uncommon for the eager Anglo-Saxon who goes to a vivid American university today to find his true friends not among his own race but among the acclimatized German or Austrian, the acclimatized Jew, the acclimatized Scandinavian or Italian. In them he finds the cosmopolitan note. . . the clue to that international mind which will be essential to all men and women of good-will if they are ever to save this Western world of ours from suicide. (Bourne 259)

The new cosmopolitan knowledge is essentially based on difference and it also draws a bridge to Herbert Bolton’s concept of comparative study, when Bourne argues that this diverse community of students praise on one another’s differences precisely as differences: “They are more valuable and interesting to each other for being different” (259). Social exchange is fundamental as a complement to “the cold recording of facts” (260) because actual contact with difference eventually reinforces an “intellectual sympathy” that will unite instead of dividing (260) and favor cooperation towards a common goal; for Bourne, this is “the destiny of America” (260).

Bourne also resorted to new legal instruments, or citizenship forms, to match his wider ideal of the transnation and the modes of belonging it involved. He highlighted the notion of dual citizenship, practically a taboo in times of war: “Dual citizenship we may have to recognize as the rudimentary form of that international citizenship. . . Once a citizen, always a citizen, no matter how many new citizenships he may embrace” (260-61). Yet, dual citizenship was but one step in the ultimate commitment to put in place a transnational or cosmopolitan mode of belonging: “[t]he attempt to weave a wholly novel international nation out of our chaotic America will liberate and harmonize the creative power of all these peoples and give them the new spiritual citizenship, as so many individuals have already been given, of a world” (263). The fact that transnational citizenship would entail people’s creativity in particular connects Bourne’s thought to that of the other critics under analysis. Bourne’s defense of creativity as a feature of transnational citizenship resonates in Martí’s defense of the colonial difference and certainly also in Waldo Frank’s ideas on spirituality.

Herbert Bolton, a larger history

Both Waldo Frank and Herbert Bolton stand out in as far as Good Neighbor ideology is concerned and their intellectual projects can not be read outside that political and cultural framework. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal provided a very welcoming ground to hemispheric reimaginings. Herbert Bolton’s text under examination, the 1932 Address to the American Historical Association is delivered in Toronto, Canada, the first time ever the Association met outside the U.S. This was a remarkable fact, according to Bolton, who saw the dislocation as a first step towards a much needed decentralization in the production of knowledge and in the acknowledgement of

the relations binding the Americas together. And Bolton was not just an ideologue; as a professor at the University of California, he created the first course inviting a comparative view on the Americas, titled "History of the Americas", having supervised hundreds of postgraduate students on the topic.

When Herbert Bolton (1964) gave his address "The Epic of Greater America," solidarity was a powerful leitmotif in international politics in the Americas. On the verge of the Great Depression and fears of another world war looming large in the horizon, Bolton sought to demonstrate that deeper and mutual knowledge among the American nations was the key to a more serious insight into the history of the Americas. Central to Bolton's proposal was a new historiography relying on comparative analysis which he developed after his studies of the U.S. and Mexico "borderlands". The concept borderlands underscored precisely the commonalities and reciprocal exchange along territories usually seen as mutually exclusive. He saw the area between Georgia and California as the "Spanish Borderlands" and signaled cultural exchange as its particular feature. Considering that he was a disciple of Frederick Jackson Turner, Bolton completely turned his mentor's influential frontier thesis upside down, not only demonstrating parallels in the historical development of the U.S. and other American nations, but also revising the notion of the frontier as a borderland that emerged, in Bolton's theory, as a permeable area of exchange, instead of a deep divide between barbarity and civilization.

Bolton was concerned with a too provincial view of history on part of U.S. scholars that ultimately led to exceptionalist perceptions: "the 'struggle for the continent' has usually been told as though it all happened north of the Gulf of Mexico. But this is just another provincialism of ours. The southern continent was the scene of international conflicts quite as colorful and fully as significant as those in the north" (308). In this manner, there was nothing unique and exceptional in U.S. expansion westwards or in the frontier: "The

Brazilian drive toward the Andes strongly resembles the westward movement in the United States and Canada” (308). Bolton’s critique works in two complementary ways: he provides a lesson in inter-American history by exposing key episodes in the history of the Americas as parallel and interconnected events; accordingly, hemispheric historical development could only be fully grasped by means of an understanding of what Janice Radway would later term its intricate interdependencies.

Bolton set in motion a different insight of American historiography based on a new pattern of knowledge situated on a larger background, the Western hemisphere. This brought to light mutual influences and interferences that were typically neglected by the orthodox lens of national historiography: “each local history will have clearer meaning when studied in the light of the others; and that much of what has been written of each national history is but a thread out of a larger strand” (303). This model study of local history in isolation was in effect one of the legacies of a history of European disputes that defined the historical course of the Americas. But Bolton was committed to identifying the “intricate interdependencies” between the American nations. His application of this idea to the holiest of U.S. events, the foundation of the modern nation through the Revolution, which he rather shared with the whole continent provides a good example: “Then came the American Revolution. This too was by no means a local matter. It lasted half a century – from 1776 to 1826 – and it witnessed the political separation of most of America from Europe” (313); by the same token, Bolton retrieved a much forgotten historical period shared between the U.S. and Canada: “The revolt of thirteen of the thirty British colonies laid the foundations not of one but of two English speaking nations in North America. One was the United States; the other was the Dominion of Canada” (314).

Bolton therefore offered “a larger perspective” or “a larger framework” that located national histories within a wide web of

European interests and disputes. He demonstrated, for instance, how the coming to being of the modern U.S. nation was in fact a joint history involving not just England, but also Spain, France, Mexico, and Canada (obviously he bypasses the Native American nations). In his urge to craft a common history, Bolton has been reproached for turning a blind eye to the differences this egalitarian stance hides; that you can not set up a poor tiny country like, say, Honduras, side by side the hegemonic power in the Americas and take them for equals. Waldo Frank, for instance, provides quite a distinct perspective *vis-à-vis* Bolton's regarding an awareness of the impact of economic difference in inter-American relations. Bolton's comparative methodology however retains the merit of breaking with exceptionalist and essentialist readings of U.S. history, or what he called U.S. parochialism.

Waldo Frank, new world reinvented

Even before Roosevelt formally created the office of Good Neighbor Policy ambassadors to Latin America, Waldo Frank truly acted as one. He travelled widely in Central and South America, engaged actively in activities with writers and artists, and contributed to literary magazines. This relationship endured after Frank returned to the U.S. and regularly corresponded with Latin American intellectuals and promoted the publication of their work in the U.S. Besides Frank's essay under analysis, he wrote several books on his views both on the features of Latin American cultures and of the desirable relation between the U.S. and the region.⁶ Aware of the complexity of what

⁶ Titles such as *Our America* (1919), *The Rediscovery of America* (a novel, 1929) and *South of Us* (1931), the latter also known as *America Hispana* (its Spanish translation title), are very revealing about Frank's interest in Latin American matters,

he called the “America Hispana”, Frank rejected conjoining middle and southern countries of the Americas into one single whole. But he also assumed a pedagogical perspective in explaining the diversity of American nations, firstly because he articulated power inequality and economic dependency with ignorance, somewhat like Martí, but taking it one step further. Frank’s (1930) “new world” project is based on a model of organic relations between North and South America and the knowledge generated thereby. He asserted that “mutual knowledge” was a precondition for the Americas “to exchange, to co-operate, to collaborate creatively” (579).

The only common denominator in North/South relations so far was business. But business was, to Frank’s mind, the opposite of knowledge because it did not demand nor would generate “true understanding” (579). Business was based on unequal power and on economic relations whose model Frank singled out as “capitalist Powers and small debtor nations” (580) and inevitably resulted in relations of plain subjugation. This kind of commercial bonds required minimum market knowledge since they amounted to exploitation: “[a]nd exploitation gets along best with little understanding” (580). Dehumanization was the ultimate effect of this form of commerce: “To exploit your fellow man it is far safer not to see him *as a man*” (580).⁷

The “new world” would not be devoid of business, but it would be a place in which business was complemented by a mode of spiritual life. Hence his retrieval of the idea of the organic body: “Business is a necessary function in the upbuilding of a world. But it has no equipment to rule. It is the body-building, the muscle-building factor in the social organism: it is not the brain, not the nervous system,

on the one hand, as well as about his role in disseminating knowledge on Latin America and to foster closer contact to the U.S., on the other.

⁷ Italics in original.

not the spirit. . . . Unless the body have [sic] spirit, it will perish; and unless the spirit has body it remains unborn” (586).

Frank also added that there was concern in the U.S. about this kind of relationship but it tended to be misguided, for common complaints of commercial exploitation usually resulted in sheer populism, in calling to sentiment instead of building on strategies to deepen mutual knowledge (580). The other potential critical strategy on these matters was academic knowledge but it in turn created abstract knowledge that objectified Latin America: “[it] make[s] us. . . merely know *about* them” (580).⁸ Frank’s alternative proposal was for a type of knowledge that supported reciprocity and solidarity, based on a new relationship between North and South that he defined as a “sense of kinship, the experience of mutual advantage” (579). This could lead to “a living experience” capable of generating “common knowledge and common need” (580), clearly envisaging a relation of interdependence between North and South.

As regards Latin America, Frank noted that the past itself proved that ignorance could only prompt cultural immaturity, following Spain’s model of ruling over the colonies in isolation, cutting off contact amongst them (581). To compensate for this immaturity, he argued that Latin America developed what he termed a new spirituality, an organic form of expression in which its present intellectuals were very engaged:

freed from the dogmas of the Catholic Church, these young men. . . have inherited intact the tradition, the spirit, the energy which, in far different form, created Christian Europe. They believe in man, not as an economic factor, but as the creator of his destiny; . . . They believe that the holiness in man must be

⁸ Italics in original.

expressed through the harmonious interplay of individual, social, aesthetic, and political forms. (Frank 583)

This was a capacity Frank thought was lost to U.S. intellectuals but on the basis of which he inscribed his utopia for a “new world”. Latin American intellectuals, having been born in the shade of U.S. might, could not afford being indifferent to U.S. hegemony. In line with a tradition of anti-imperialist critique in which Martí surely stood out, they alone could provide the U.S. with what U.S.-bred intellectuals, numb to capitalism, remained silent about: a critique of that highlighted the evils of capitalism, including the dangers of self-damage: “They have what we need: the clear consciousness of the universal menace, which is the uncontrolled dictatorship of economic forces” (586), as well as alternatives to this economic regime: “the strong devotion to the American tradition of a true new world” (586).

Only the organic form of feeling and acting that Frank located in Latin American cultures should give back to human beings their authenticity as individuals, freeing them from their slavish condition to materialism. Frank criticized the centrality of the capitalist market in people’s lives and its leading mode, consumerism, as emptying them of spirituality and authenticity as human beings. The Latin American intelligentsia still in the making, still striving to achieve leadership of action, as he put it, were however already “mov[ing] in the ideal and will of establishing in the American hemisphere a world where man may at last be master and where he may create an order based on the needs of his own spirit, rather than on the blind forces of material production: a world that shall be new in more than name” (584). Hope, for Frank, therefore rested on what he called the “American intelligentsia,” the creators of new forms of knowledge about the Americas that would generate the conditions for a cultural rebirth. They alone could build up the vision of the “new world”

that would save the Americas from drowning in shallow capitalism. Only their critique and their cultural sustenance could instill life in the otherwise merely organic body nurtured by capitalism.

The “new world” metaphor offers a paradigm involving mutual knowledge and interdependence among diverse American nations; it is notwithstanding less exclusive than Martí’s ideal of a “Nuestra America”, for Frank allowed the U.S. in. The reason was Frank’s awareness that in what concerned spirituality, the U.S. was far from being able to rule or influence whichever nation. The U.S., to Frank’s mind, needed to gain knowledge of Latin American differences to revitalize its own culture, in line with Bourne’s view of immigrant integration. There is actually not much difference between what Frank captured in Latin American spirituality and Bourne’s sense of creativity in the immigrants’ differences.

Conclusion

In the four critiques I have briefly sketched out, the transnational was used to contest and present alternatives to U.S. hegemony in the Americas. Martí, Bourne, Bolton, and Frank all sought to make sense of diversity in terms of power relations, from racial difference to immigration, prejudice, and economic and political discrimination in unequal North/South relations. I believe these intellectuals, each of them certainly conditioned by different historical contexts but all with the colonial and imperial shades looming large in the horizon, envisioned different social, cultural, and political affiliations in relation to the national formation. They were ultimately searching for new articulations of the national-international-transnational dynamics towards a more inclusive understanding of Americanness. It is from within that reflection that the transnational emerges as a source of knowledge on the basis of which new hemispheric interactions

can begin, and that is where I see that their concepts of *mestizaje*, diaspora, the borderlands, and the transnational can reinvigorate current debates on transnationalism.

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**IN SHAPE AND STRUCTURE,
IN WARP AND WEFT:
W. C. WILLIAMS'S "A FORMAL DESIGN"**

Cristina Giorcelli

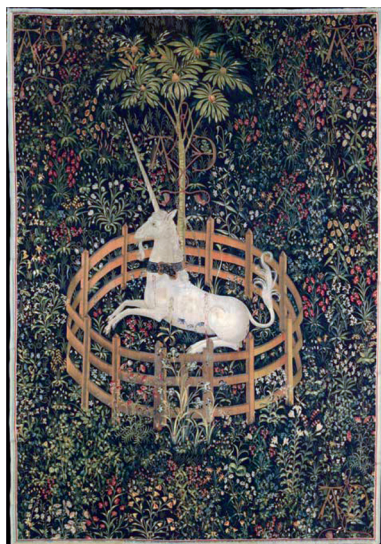
To Maria Irene, whom I succeeded as Vice-President on the EAAS Board: two female *Vices* in that honorable all-male caucus!

Resumo: Este artigo propõe uma análise do poema de William Carlos Williams, "A Formal Design", incluído em *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (1962). Uma vez que a composição se refere à última das obras de tapeçaria com o título genérico de *A Caça ao Unicórnio*, existente na coleção do Cloisters Museum (New York), investiga-se a analogia aí presente entre a configuração visual (tipográfica) e a dimensão auditiva (prosódica) do poema e a técnica de manufatura, bem como as características da textura dessa tapeçaria.

Palavras-chave: William Carlos Williams; O Unicórnio em Cativoiro.

Abstract: This essay proposes a close reading of William Carlos Williams’s poem “A Formal Design” from *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (1962). As the composition refers to the last one of the seven *Hunt of the Unicorn* tapestries in the collection of the Cloisters Museum (New York), the analogy between Williams’s visual (through typography) configuration as well as auditory (through prosody) dimension and tapestries’ manufacturing techniques as well as texture characteristics is also attempted.

Keywords: William Carlos Williams; The Unicorn in Captivity.



The Unicorn in Captivity (the last of the seven woven hangings popularly known as The Hunt of the Unicorn), end of the 15th century, Flemish or French, wool, silk, silver, and gilt (The Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

William Carlos Williams’s knowledge of works of visual art and his ability to “read” them are well known: we need only think of the many beautiful ekphrases he composed during his long poetic

career. Revealingly, Kenneth Burke once defined him “the master of the glimpse” (Burke 197) and when Williams was asked what was his most salient characteristic, he answered, “My sight” (Williams 1929: 87). In a letter to Louis Zukofsky he went so far as to maintain that “Eyes have always stood first in the poet’s equipment”¹ and in a review he wrote, “Only where the eye hits does sight occur” (Williams qtd. in Dijkstra 144). Thus, the works of Botticelli, Dürer, and Brueghel, together with those of such contemporary photographers and/or painters as Sheeler, Demuth, Hartley, Cezanne, Gris, and Picasso – to name but a few – were often precious sources of inspiration. Additionally, as Bram Dijkstra observes, “Williams believed that in matters of technique, of design, and emotional intention, the artistic goals of painters and poets were the same” (4).

In many instances, Williams attempted to give his poems a *typographic* configuration that would also render them *visually* significant. Even if he affirmed that “the poem, like every other *form* of art, is an object, an object that in itself *formally* presents its case and its meaning by the very *form* it assumes” (Williams 1951: 264, emphases mine), in his ekphrases his strategy was not to evoke their contents through their arrangement on the page, but to endow his compositions with a specific spatial – although not mimetic – organization. His aim was a linguistic *and* visual rendition² that would make his readers realize and *see* how semantics, syntax, grammar, enjambments, lineation, prosody, dashes and empty spaces may allude to – without being equivalent to – the complex relations that, in his opinion, were entailed in the structure of a particular work of art and in the dynamic tensions that hold it together. In

¹ William Carlos Williams, *Selected Letters*, 102 (July 1928) (John C. Thirlwall, ed. New York: McDowell Obolensky, 1957).

² Marjorie Perloff calls the way Williams’s poems appear on the page their “look” (*The Dance of the Intellect. Studies in the Poetry of the Pound Tradition*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 89).

other words, Williams created iconic diagrams, as John Haiman defines them: systematic arrangements “of signs, none of which necessarily resembles its referent, but whose relationships to each other mirror the relationships of their referents” (Haiman 515).

When in 1952 Williams began to conceive *Paterson V*, he started pondering not only paintings and/or photographs, but also another type of visual art: the tapestries on display at the Cloisters in New York and, in particular, the set of seven³ hangings whose theme is the hunt and capture of the unicorn. Designed and woven by Flemish or French artists and tapestry makers in the fifteenth century, “[i]n design, in beauty of coloring, and in intensity of pictorial realism,” they “form the most superb ensemble of late medieval tapestries in existence” (Rorimer 162). According to legend (in India, where it originated, but also in the Near East and in Europe, where its fame spread), the fabulous unicorn, single-horned and generally milk-white, could only be tamed by a young virgin. From the Middle Ages, it was allegorically interpreted as Jesus Christ, whereas the beautiful maiden that captured it was seen as the Virgin Mary, and its overall story read as that of the Incarnation. The unicorn thus stood for both secular and divine love. Despite the fact that the Asian origins and sophisticated European fortune of the legend ran counter to Williams’s complete dedication to the American scene and cultural patrimony (no matter how vulgar or degraded they might be), in recapitulating “the local and the mythical,” the brutal and the beautiful, the vicious and the sublime, the theme of these tapestries succeeds in uniting the earlier four Books of *Paterson*, becoming its “organizing symbol” (Martz 12 and 13). In addition, since for Williams, “The Unicorn/has no match/ . . . the artist/ has no peer,”⁴

³ The fifth one consists of two fragments.

⁴ William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, 209 (Christopher MacGowan, ed. New York: New Directions, 1992). Book V of *Paterson* came out in 1958.

the unicorn stands for “the immortal presence of art” (Martz 14). As Mariani has concisely and precisely put it, in Williams the unicorn “becomes the artist’s imagination in pursuit of the Woman,” or rather, it becomes the “pursuit of the poem in search of the virgin language, which must of necessity be whored, mauled, and finally possessed” (Mariani 701). In fact, in *Paterson V* we read: “The whore and the virgin, an identity:/through its disguises” (208). Thus, in this last Book, the theme of the language, of the American idiom to be redeemed by poetry (just as the unicorn must be tamed by the maiden), summarizes the gist of Williams’s epic and of his poetics. Furthermore, given that *Paterson V* was composed by Williams, but, due to the many insertions of letters and other people’s words, it may also be said to have been “written in part by his friends, his patients, and all the milling populace of Paterson, past and present,” this Book can be considered “a kind of *tapestry*, woven out of memories and observations” (Martz 16, emphasis mine). As has been maintained, “At a structural level, literary interlace has a counterpart in tapestries where positional patterning of threads establishes the shape and design of the fabric, whether the medium is thread in textile or words in a text” (Leyerle 5).⁵

In a poem from his last collection, *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems* (1962), Williams returns to the unicorn:

A Formal Design

This fleur-de-lis

at a fence rail

where a unicorn is

⁵ I have dealt at length on weaving techniques as metaphors with reference to the structure of a Willa Cather novel in “Writing and/as Weaving: *Shadows on the Rock* and *La dame à la licorne*” *Cather Studies* 8 (2010): 262-281.

confined it is a tapestry
deftly woven
a millefleurs 6

design the fleur-de-lis
with its yellow
petal edges

a fruiting tree formally
enough in
this climate 12

a pomegranate to which
a princely
collar round his

arching neck the beast
is lightly
tethered 18

The tapestry to which Williams refers is the final one of the set: here, after having been killed, the resurrected unicorn is loosely chained to a pomegranate tree and is seated happily serene within a circular fence. According to the Christian reading, it symbolizes the risen Christ, while the enclosure in which it is portrayed is the *hortus conclusus*, that is, the Virgin Mary. But since “the unicorn is leashed with a golden chain, symbol of marriage, to a tree bearing pomegranates, symbols of fertility, this tapestry is also to be interpreted as the consummation of marriage” (Rorimer 170). These tapestries, in effect, may have been woven to solemnize Anne of Brittany’s marriage in 1499 to Louis XII of the House of Valois-Orléans (in whose coat of arms figured the heraldic golden lily).

This poem – an “objective”⁶ presentation of the tapestry that eschews both a speaking subject and the use of metaphors or similes⁷ – deploys the triplet.⁸ Stephen Cushman claims that since the triplet recalls Dante’s *terza rima*, its rhythm is well suited to conveying meditative contents.⁹ While the short lines in this poem direct our attention both to particular words and to the relationships between them, there is no punctuation (not even at the very end) and no capital letters (except, conventionally enough, in the title and the very first word). For this reason enjambments and pauses – which, signified by the empty spaces, lend a visual tempo to the lines – acquire momentous importance. We also notice how alliterations (especially *t, d, th, f*, plus the digraph *gb*) link the words.

The poem consists of a single sentence with embedded prepositional, paratactic and appositional phrases; its apparently regular form – all the lines are left-aligned, but, as in other cases, the words “push and jostle” (Perloff 89) against it – hides complexities that are also inherent in tapestry making. I would suggest that in one case the poet uses enjambment having, possibly, (also) in mind the basic weaving technique of dovetailing.¹⁰ Whereas almost five of the six triplets dwell on flowers and on the pomegranate tree, the unicorn makes its appearance, briefly, in the first triplets (lines 3-4) and, at greater length, in the final ones (lines 14-18). The various

⁶ Williams was included in the 1931 issue of *Poetry* in which Zukofsky presented the so-called Objectivist movement. See Cristina Giorcelli and Luigi Magno, eds. *New Objectivists, Nouveaux Objectivistes, Nuovi Oggettivisti*. Napoli: Loffredo, 2013.

⁷ Except that, as we have just seen, the unicorn itself bespeaks a metaphor.

⁸ Williams here uses the triplet, but not, as with two other compositions in this collection, the staggered triadic stanza that characterizes his earlier *The Desert Music and Other Poems* (1954) and *Journey to Love* (1955).

⁹ “The poems of the middle fifties constitute an elegiac meditation on death, time, and change.” Stephen Cushman, *William Carlos Williams and the Meaning of Measure*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1985, 92.

¹⁰ This technique, together with interlocking, is used to avoid slits that weaken the fabric. Both techniques are illustrated in Margaret B. Freeman, *The Unicorn Tapestries*. New York: Dutton, 1976, 207-210.

enjambments (a device widely used by Williams), with lineation working in counterpoint to syntax, create suspension, hesitation, emphasizing the necessity to think over the poem's words.

Let us examine the poem closely, starting from the title. The adjective "formal" may refer to both the *form/shape of* the poem and the *forms/shapes* (flowers, tree, beast) *in* the poem and *in* the tapestry, that is, to the outward appearance of such *forms/shapes*. Regarding its many meanings, however, the substantive from which this adjective derives is also used to indicate "the mode in which a thing exists," the "structure," the "nature" of what it designates: thus "formal" may stand not only for what is external, but also for what is internal, for what is "essential." In addition, "formal" here may also hint at the elegance and "ceremonial" function of this work of art.¹¹ The second word of the title, "design," may again refer to the shape/s, pattern/s to be found in both the poem and the tapestry and, given the word's many meanings, it may also refer to its "purpose," its "intention" and even its symbolic significance. Therefore, since both adjective and substantive possess analogous meanings, the title makes use of tautology to reinforce its message: the outward and the inward are one and the same (like the front and the back of a tapestry).¹² Because the two words somewhat mirror each other, they can be considered to sum up what Williams, speaking of both his poetry and his love of painting, declared late in life: "as I've grown older, I've attempted to fuse the poetry and painting to make it the same thing . . . to give a *design*. A *design* in the poem and a *design* in the picture should make them more or less the same thing" (Sutton 321-322, emphases mine).

¹¹ Tapestries were portable decorations used in the castles and mansions of kings and noble families. In churches, they were displayed on special occasions. In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, rich tapestries woven with emblems, mottoes, or coats of arms were hung behind and over thrones as symbols of authority.

¹² Albeit in reverse.

The deictic “this” opens the poem and refers to the flower that, in the center foreground, stands out from all the others: the lily, the royal flower. Indeed, it is the only one that rises beyond the top of the fencing. Williams – a lover and a singer of flowers and vegetation (and a passionate gardener), who always presented them with precision and tenderness¹³ – not only starts his poem with it, but, after mentioning the other flowers that provide the background to the tapestry (“a millefleurs/design,” lines 6-7),¹⁴ he returns to it (line 7). And, to underline the importance of its shape, in line 7 he puts the “fleur-de-lis” immediately after “design.” The syntax of the first four lines, with its two subjects for the one verb,¹⁵ emphasizes what, in his mind, besides the unicorn, makes or rather “is” this “tapestry”: “this fleur-de-lis.”

In effect, Williams insists on the lily by both defining its color (line 8) and imbuing the word “edges” (line 9) with a potential dual function (substantive and verb). As a potential substantive, “edges” pertains to what precedes it, while, as a (transitive) verb, it governs what follows. Grammatically tied to both lines, it may metaphorically remind readers of the dovetailing technique of weaving that occurs when two wefts from adjacent areas are wrapped alternatively around the same warp. And linguistically, with its position at the end of the line, on the brink of a demarcation, of a turn, “edges” iconically *embodies* and *shows* its very meaning.

¹³ In *Paterson V*, Williams indirectly wrote of himself, “Flowers have always been his friends,/even in paintings and tapestries” (Williams, *Paterson*, 228).

¹⁴ In these tapestries the individual figures, birds, and animals are naturalistically rendered and the millefleurs background is made up of over a hundred distinct types of flowers, of which over eighty have been identified by botanists.

¹⁵ In a brief analysis of this poem, Caws underlines how, in its *incipit*, there is a visual and poetic echo from “This” to “lis” to “is,” together with a decrescendo in the length of the words, as well as a crescendo in their semantic importance. Mary Ann Caws, “A Double Reading by Design: Brueghel, Auden, and Williams.” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 41.3 (Spring 1983): 324.

There is a glitch, however: if the lily “edges” the railing in the tapestry – mitigating, through embellishment, its role of fencing something in – it does not “edge” the “fruiting tree.” The poem would thus be imprecise with regard to the tapestry were it not for the fact that, as the hanging is described from bottom to top following the central vertical axis – from the fleur-de-lis to the pomegranate tree – it is as if the lily were pointing *toward* the pomegranate tree that rises along this same axis. Furthermore, not only do pomegranate flowers resemble lilies, but there is also a sort of continuity of origin as both yellow lilies and pomegranate trees come from Asia (as does the unicorn legend). It is worth noting that before calling it by its name, the poet specifies that it is a tree that bears fruit, thus referring directly to the idea of fertility which underpins the making of this tapestries’ series.¹⁶

Two thirds of the way through the poem, the presentation turns back midway along the vertical axis and, given that tapestries eschew perspective, it figuratively makes a sort of loop (similar to the leash that ties the unicorn) between the lily and the pomegranate tree by pausing at the unicorn’s “collar” (line 15). Being similarly round and horizontal, the “collar” reconnects with the aforementioned “fence rail” (line 2). “Collar” and “fence” (and even the unnamed leash, evoked by the figurative loop) form the perfect ouroboros¹⁷: like a wedding ring (and, in the Christian tradition, like the Virgin as “*filia tui filii*”). In addition, since in this tapestry the unicorn’s neck is straight,¹⁸ by using the word “arching” Williams may have wished

¹⁶ Pomegranate flowers may be self-pollinating. Williams may have found an affinity with them, since, as an artist, he sang of himself as “being/half man and half/woman.” In “For Eleanor and Bill Monahan” (*The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, vol. II, 252-255).

¹⁷ In *Paterson V*, Williams mentions twice the serpent with “its tail in its mouth.” Williams, *Paterson*, 229 and 230.

¹⁸ In *Paterson V*, Williams singles out the beast’s neck and collar on three occasions: “its [of the unicorn] neck/circled by a crown!,” “he bears a collar round

to hint indirectly at the curls in the beast's beard and tail and at the curves in both the fence and the beast's collar. Finally, the last word, "tethered" (line 18) – a verb that collocates with animals – takes up more strongly the meaning of the earlier "confined" (line 4). While referring to the curved elements in the tapestry, at the end the poem makes another (this time, structural) loop by returning on the unicorn from which it started (line 3), thus reaffirming the prevailing idea of a bond (a link, a chain, a ring) willingly accepted/cherished.

There are no fewer than three adverbs of manner in the poem and one adjective that may be used, albeit rarely, as an adverb. "Deftly" (line 5) pinpoints the humble,¹⁹ skillful, and quick²⁰ way in which accomplished weavers would work on tapestries, and also condenses three of the composition's most used consonants; "formally" (line 10), besides referring to one of the two words in the title, conveys that "under normal circumstances"²¹ pomegranates do not bear fruit in "this climate" (line 12), that is, where "[t]his fleur-de-lis" (line 1) is displayed: in New York²² (symmetrically, the two demonstratives echo each other and appear at the start of their respective lines, 1 and 12); "lightly" (line 17) stresses the gentle way in which the unicorn is kept captive as, with a good grace ("cheerfully" is one of the adverb's meanings),²³ it accepts its imprisonment. The way the unicorn is tied and its general bearing are of such importance that this adverb is given almost a whole line to itself. The fact

his neck," "his regal neck/fast in a jeweled collar." Williams, *Paterson*, 209, 210, and 232.

¹⁹ This is the first meaning of "deft" in the *OD*. Individual makers of tapestries are generally anonymous.

²⁰ Relatively speaking, since each tapestry would probably have taken several years to complete. "Nimbly" is one of the meanings of "deftly."

²¹ This is the fourth meaning of "formally" in the *OD*.

²² In the U.S.A., pomegranates prosper in California.

²³ This is the third meaning of "lightly" in the *OD*.

that the adjective “princely” (line 14) looks and sounds like an adverb evinces the importance that Williams places in *viewing* and *bearing* the words of his poems before assigning them their proper grammatical function. The meaning of “princely,” emphasized by its taking up almost an entire line, is well-suited to the unicorn’s sumptuous collar.

This poem, inspired by a tapestry woven in honor of a union, is thus an indirect meditation on, and, once more, a celebration of marriage to which a few years earlier (1955) Williams had dedicated the long autobiographical lyric “Asphodel, That Greeny Flower.”

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**“POR AMOR AO POVO, POR AMOR À TERRA”:
A GEOGRAFIA DO SACRIFÍCIO
E DO DESAPOSSAMENTO
NA POESIA DE SIMON J. ORTIZ**

Fernando Gonçalves

Resumo: A escrita de muitos escritores e poetas índios, homens e mulheres – refiro-me ao contexto dos Estados Unidos da América –, responde a circunstâncias, consequência do colonialismo e do neocolonialismo, cuja origem podemos situar na disputa pela terra, implicando, assim, um conjunto de relações com lugares geograficamente bem definidos. Não é por acaso que os mitos índios da criação descrevem amiúde as origens de lugares específicos, bem como certas particularidades geográficas, enquanto elementos identitários primordiais.

Quinhentos anos de encontros e recontros entre índios e colonizadores, com o exílio forçado por tratados (nunca cumpridos), aquisições, guerras, políticas federais de educação, “removal”, “termination” e “relocation”, não foram suficientes para acabar com a determinação tenaz de certos povos para manterem as suas terras ou a elas regressarem.

O meu ensaio é uma análise da maneira como o poeta e ensaísta Pueblo Acoma Simon J. Ortiz problematiza as relações entre o lugar e a identidade (tribal e individual) e entre o exílio

e a comunidade, vincando que a relação/as relações com o(s) lugar(es) são parte integrante do sentido nativo de *self*.

Palavras-chave: terra; resistência; identidade; comunidade; *self*.

Abstract: The literary production of many Indian writers and poets – and I’m referring to the particular context of the United States – is a response to circumstances deriving from colonialism and neo-colonialism rooted in contest for land, and thus often involve relationships to geographical places. Five centuries of conflict between Natives and non-Natives have infused Indians’ relationships to land with anguish but also with resistant determination, as Indian people have resisted the shocks of displacement by purchase, treaty, war, federal education policy, “removal,” “termination,” and “relocation,” and have struggled to return to their home places.

In my essay I analyse the way Acoma Pueblo poet, story-teller, essayist and critic Simon J. Ortiz addresses the relationships between place and identity (tribal and individual) and between exile and community, underlining at the same time that the relationship(s) with places are an integral part of the native sense of self.

Keywords: land; resistance; identity; community; self.

Aborigines, *n.* [I] Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.

Ambrose Bierce, *The Devil's Dictionary*

A história dos Estados Unidos, nas palavras de Riley Fast, “conspires to make the whole continent a contested space for Native Americans and to make virtually inevitable, for contemporary Indians, an acute awareness of boundaries and divisions. . .” (Fast 4-5). Os termos *border*, *borderland* e *border writing*, particularmente utilizados nas discussões à volta da cultura chicana, podem também servir para uma análise diferenciada da poesia índia contemporânea. Gloria Anzaldúa define *borders* como algo construído “to. . . distinguish *us* from *them*. . . A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary” (Anzaldúa 3). Logo aqui podemos estabelecer diferenças fundamentais entre as terras fronteiriças (*borderlands*) na cultura chicana e nas culturas nativas. Quando Anzaldúa fala em fronteira (*border*) está essencialmente a referir-se à fronteira entre o México e os Estados Unidos, enquanto para os índios¹ deste último país existem muitas dessas fronteiras políticas. Uma reserva, aliás, dificilmente poderá ser considerada um “lugar vago e indeterminado”, mesmo considerando as constantes mudanças de fronteira que as afetaram ao longo do tempo. Mas também podemos descortinar semelhanças. A ambiva-

¹ Uso esta designação generalista para o conjunto das tribos/nações indígenas dos Estados Unidos uma vez que continua a ser o termo preferido pelos respetivos povos, juntamente com *American Indians* ou *Indigenous Nations*. A expressão *Native American* foi cunhada no seio da academia no início dos anos 70, sendo ainda hoje vulgarmente usada nos média (o *New York Times* começou a utilizá-la no início dos anos 90). Esta designação, no entanto, tem sido objeto de contestação por parte das nações indígenas. A poeta, música e activista Joy Harjo di-lo da seguinte forma: “*I don’t use the term ‘Native Americans’. The term is so academic. It is a term born in the university. We don’t call ourselves Native Americans when we are at home. There is no such thing as a Native American. We all belong to tribal nations and call ourselves by those names. Most of us still prefer ‘Indians’ for a generic term. That term has its limitations. I prefer the ‘First Nations’ used by Canadian natives, or indigenous nations...*”. João de Mancelos, “Real Power is in Compassion: An Unpublished Interview with Joy Harjo”. *BAS: British and American Studies* (Universitatii de Vest, Romania) XII (2006): 205-208. ISSN: 1124-3086.

lência e a morte nas terras fronteiriças de que fala Anzaldúa (3-4) estão presentes na afirmação de Renato Rosaldo, válida para muitos autores nativos, segundo a qual “for Chicanos, the border is as much a homeland as an alien environment” (Rosaldo 67). Basta pensar em todos os que foram desenraizados das suas terras ancestrais e transplantados para colégios internos e/ou para as cidades para perceber que também eles se encontravam em ambientes fronteiriços “estranhos”, tanto geográficos como psicológicos. É esta experiência que o poeta Tlingit Robert H. Davis evoca no seu poema “At the Door of the Native Studies Director”: “In this place years ago/they educated old language out of you,/put you in line, in uniform, on your own two feet./They pointed you in the right direction but/still you squint to that other place,/that country hidden within a country” (Davis 330-31). Por outro lado, o desenvolvimento de uma relação entre as pessoas e a terra pode transformar um lugar estranho numa casa. Joy Harjo, em “Oklahoma: The Prairie of Words”, di-lo assim: “It [Oklahoma] is a place which has come to mean home to many tribal peoples” (Harjo 43). Entretanto, para os que permaneceram nas suas terras ancestrais, ou perto delas, o ambiente físico pode não ser “estranho”, mas a terra e o povo foram/são frequentemente sujeitos a tentativas de alienação, muitas delas concretizadas, que acabam por criar efeitos culturais, políticos e psicológicos próprios de espaços fronteiriços. Um exemplo eloquente encontra-se no poema de Simon Ortiz “A New Mexico Place Name”, de que me ocuparei mais adiante.

As fronteiras e os espaços fronteiriços, sejam geográficos ou de outra natureza, são lugares que albergam conflitos. José David Saldívar refere-se à cultura de fronteira do Sudoeste como “a serious contest of codes and representations” (Saldívar 259), definição que acaba por caracterizar muita da poesia nativa contemporânea. Tanto para Anzaldúa como para Rosaldo, assim como para os autores índios contemporâneos, a fronteira e os espaços fronteiriços têm

subjacente mais do que uma realidade geopolítica. Enquanto para Anzaldúa a luta “has always been inner and is played out in the outer terrains” (Anzaldúa 87), identificando assim “the interior self as the central site of border conflict” (Fast 7), para os americanos nativos, do ponto de vista histórico, os conflitos fronteiriços começaram logo com as agressões externas da colonização. O facto de serem continuamente despossados das suas terras e o ataque contra as suas culturas tradicionais acabaram por transformar esse conflito num conflito interno para muitos. Ainda segundo Riley Fast, para os índios contemporâneos, e na poesia nativa contemporânea, “inner and outer struggles have often been simultaneous, with different aspects coming into sharper focus, depending on the context” (Fast 7).

2

No artigo introdutório ao volume temático sobre indigeneidade e imigração no Canadá, que ele próprio organiza, depois de se referir às migrações forçadas, quer seja em busca de melhores condições de vida, quer a fugir de locais de conflito, Hartmut Lutz pergunta: “What happens to specific cultures and literatures that emerged in, and are tied to, their distinct geographical settings, that are no longer accessible to be dispersed? What happens to Oral Traditions? What happens to Indigeneity?” (Lutz 9). Se virmos a terra como guardiã das estórias e da História, então o Oeste americano revela-nos como múltiplas camadas de história coexistem no espaço, formando um palimpsesto que pode ser lido por arqueólogos, e que contadores de estórias, historiadores e ficcionistas podem transformar em narrativas cronológicas (Lutz 12). Numa nota de rodapé sobre a questão do tempo histórico incluído no lugar geográfico, Hartmut Lutz remete para um artigo de sua autoria, “Race or Place? The Palimpsest of

Space in Canadian Prairie Fiction from Salverson to Cariou”, publicado em 2004, afirmando:

There, I used Keith Basso’s somewhat modified Bakhtinian term “chronotope” to express a spatially localizing “chronotopical” understanding of history as opposed to an abstractly sequentializing “chronological” one. Whereas the former seems to be shared by Aboriginal cultures – and oral traditions in general, I think – the latter is decidedly European and Cartesian. (Lutz 12)

As línguas e as tradições orais das nações aborígenes norte-americanas encontram-se de tal maneira ligadas à terra que são muitas vezes usadas como prova em tribunal nos casos de litigância pela posse da terra. O centro de todos os conflitos entre as nações índias e a sociedade colonial dominante reside precisamente nas relações que ambos estabelecem com a terra. Os nativos, bem ao contrário dos colonos, criam uma relação com a terra através de estórias. J. Edward Chamberlin conta-nos uma estória eloquente que ilustra bem o que acabo de dizer. Numa reunião entre uma comunidade índia e funcionários governamentais no noroeste da Colúmbia Britânica, os últimos reivindicaram a posse da terra a favor do governo. Os anciãos ficaram atónitos, sem perceberem muito bem o que se estava a passar. Finalmente, um deles deu voz à profunda inquietação dos presentes sob a forma de uma pergunta: “If this is your land, where are your stories?” O ancião começou por falar em Inglês, mas depois mudou para Gitksan, a língua do seu povo, e contou uma estória. Escreve Chamberlin:

All of a sudden everyone understood. . . even though the government foresters didn’t know a word of Gitksan, and neither did some of his Gitksan companions. But what they understood was more important: how stories give meaning and value to the

place we call home; how they bring us close to the world we live in by taking us into a world of words; how they hold us together and at the same time keep us apart. They also understood the importance of the Gitksan language, especially to those who do not speak it. (Chamberlin 1)

No seu artigo “Kwtlakin? What is Your Place?”, Jeannette Armstrong discute a noção de “indigeneidade”, argumentando que a literatura indígena está, de uma maneira ou de outra, intrinsecamente ligada a um lugar. Uma relação de longo prazo com uma paisagem, por exemplo, “in particular ways constructs language and therefore literature” (Armstrong 29). Armstrong vai mais longe ao afirmar que a língua emerge enquanto expressão da terra, “and that ‘indigeneity,’ therefore, generates literatures so deeply enmeshed in nature as to be the ‘metasource’ of the environmental ethic of the people” (Armstrong 31). Na língua Nsyilxcen Okanagan, de que Armstrong é falante nativa e professora, a palavra «kwtlakin» serve para fazer uma pergunta que exemplifica bem a ligação existente entre terra/língua, literatura e identidade. A pergunta “Kwtlakin, What is your place?” é bem diferente de perguntar “onde vives?” ou “de onde é que és?”. Armstrong explica: “the question seeks to “Place” you within the context of the land’s story. Our Syilx answer would not be a specific location but to give the story of the “cultural locations that identifies you. You would tell the story of your place” (Armstrong 31).

3

A ideia de que a relação dos humanos com a terra é mais do que mera “afinidade” ou estar “perto da natureza” soa estranha à maioria dos ocidentais. Mas grande parte dos americanos nativos

nasceu no seio de tradições familiares e culturais fundadas a partir desta visão primordial de identidade. Como afirma Robert Nelson, “[w]ithin the context of such traditions, the most fundamental act of spiritual vision that one can experience is the act of seeing oneself as a living part of the living place where one’s life *takes place*” (Nelson 267). O poeta Pueblo Acoma Simon Ortiz vai mais longe ao postular uma relação necessária entre escrita e lugar no contexto da vida índia: “I think for Indian writers to be able to use their talent and their beings to write they have to know some *place*. And to know some place you have to *let yourself*. It’s a choice, then, that you really have to make. . . . *Belonging somewhere is a real affirmation*” (Bruchac 215).

Esta profunda convicção acerca da necessária ligação entre a terra e a identidade humana moldou, e continua a moldar, muita da poesia americana nativa contemporânea. Um bom exemplo desta convicção e do modo como funciona na construção de uma visão é “To Insure Survival”, um breve monólogo dramático da autoria de Simon Ortiz. Um pai dirige-se à filha no momento em que esta nasce, fazendo da estrofe inicial a primeira “estória” que a criança ouve acerca da natureza do mundo em que acaba de entrar. Nestas primeiras palavras, o acontecimento que é o parto da criança é identificado com o acontecimento que é o romper da aurora nas terras altas do Novo México:

You come forth
The color of a stone cliff
At dawn,
Changing colors,
Blue to red
To all the colors of the earth. (Ortiz 48)

Nesta estrofe encontramos dois níveis de identificação: a sequência de cores por que passam tanto a terra como a criança, e a *visão* unificadora do nascer do sol que se avizinha e do parto enquanto passagem da vida de um estado mais escuro para outro mais luminoso e multicromático. É importante sublinhar que a identificação da criança com a terra neste texto depende de um ato de visão. Trata-se de um acontecimento que tem de ser *visto* antes de poder ser falado e depois ouvido. Mais adiante no poema, é dito à criança que “In five more days,/they will come,/singing, dancing,/ . . ./the stones with voices,/the plants with bells.” Trata-se de clara alusão às *katsinas*. Na tradição espiritual Acoma, como nas tradições espirituais de outros povos nativos do Sudoeste – em particular dos Hopis –, as *katsinas* são os espíritos da vida que, em ocasiões cerimoniais importantes, se deixam ver na forma e no movimento de dançarinos mascarados. Na tradição Acoma, se um recém-nascido sobrevive aos quatro primeiros dias de vida, então as *katsinas* aparecem ao romper da aurora do quinto dia para dar as boas-vindas a este novo ser humano dentro da sua família alargada. O (re)aparecimento das *katsinas* é uma promessa da continuação da vida para o Povo, da mesma maneira que o aparecimento desta criança “assegura” a sobrevivência física da identidade cultural Acoma por mais uma geração. As palavras do pai podem ser lidas como uma oração, bem como uma promessa de que a criança lá estará dentro de cinco dias para ver e ouvir as *katsinas* dançar e cantar em sua honra. As palavras e a visão nelas codificada ajudam igualmente a assegurar a sobrevivência da mesma maneira que a tradição oral sempre ajudou o Povo, através da articulação de uma visão da identidade humana com a terra e a passagem dessa visão às gerações seguintes.

O que distingue as histórias de criação/origem dos americanos nativos das de outras culturas é o facto de os acontecimentos àquelas associados se situarem em lugar particular e distinto: o nascimento de uma criança, por exemplo, é um acontecimento que pertence à

terra. Apesar de cada ser individual “emergir” do útero de uma mãe biológica, a cultura Acoma entende que cada ser corpóreo alberga espíritos que emergem de outras fontes que não-de habitar aquele corpo ao longo da sua vida, sendo que uma dessas fontes é a terra, o lugar particular onde esse ser nasceu. Assim como a vida dos indivíduos tem origem na terra, o mesmo acontece com a vida do Povo, espírito humano colectivo em devir, cuja origem remonta ao início da criação atravessando o presente. O *lugar*, no entanto, não tem implicações exclusivamente espirituais. A *paisagem* também convoca uma linguagem e uma responsabilidade específicas. Numa entrevista a David Dunaway, Ortiz explica como a paisagem do Sudoeste é fonte de inspiração para a sua escrita:

I think that literature that refers to definite place names in the landscape, certain colors, the browns, and the dryness of the land—which I use: the images of blue skies that wait, like me, for rain to come from the west, and seeing the desert or our homeland transformed when the rain does fall – those kinds of environmental influences bring about inspiration. And more than that, the sense of how we have to live in a relationship with the land. The land is severe in some respects. It’s hot, and it’s pretty cold in the winter, and people faced with these forces can only be wise to respond appropriately, and to utilize those forces of nature. I think this lends a certain kind of linguistic outlook that also has that sense of economy – breathing in only a certain way, a sense of rhythm that evokes not grandiosity as a response, but certainly taking very great care with what you do, with what you have in this sparse, arid land. (Dunaway 17)

Segundo Robin Riley Fast, “[t]he history of Indian people’s integration with ancestral landscapes and the repeated assaults on such relationships contributes to the intensity with which contemporary

Native writers refer to place” (Fast 86). Ao mesmo tempo, parece claro que o significado de *lugar* e as possíveis respostas à questão da terra variam em diferentes contextos. Muitos índios urbanos contemporâneos e comunidades pan-índias não partilham um lugar identitário, ou já esqueceram as suas origens ancestrais, não tendo, por isso, um lugar aonde regressar. Simon Ortiz, ao contrário, e enquanto poeta, identifica-se explicitamente com um lugar ou lugares e as histórias e estórias desse (s) lugar(es). “Like myself, the source of these narratives is my home. Sometimes my father tells them, sometimes my mother, sometimes even the storyteller himself tells them” (Ortiz 168). Neste poema, Ortiz estabelece uma relação profunda entre lugar e linguagem, vincando a importância primordial do lugar na tradição oral dos Pueblo Acoma de que se alimenta a sua poesia. Ortiz afirma claramente esta associação da identidade pessoal com um lugar, partilhada com outros índios, no poema “Some Indians at a Party”, construído com uma série de nomes de lugares em resposta à pergunta “Where you from?” (Ortiz 219-20).

Em “A New Mexico Place Name” e “The State’s Claim”, o lugar é objeto de conflito. “A New Mexico Place Name” (Ortiz 207-9) centra-se em Cochiti City, uma urbanização construída sobre terra sagrada terraplanada dos Pueblo Cochiti, cujos promotores são “salesmen/ from Southern California.” O cerne da questão, diz Ortiz, é “starving or eating”, reconhecendo uma base económica para o conflito doloroso no seio do povo índio. O conflito sobre o que é este “New Mexico Place” e o que deveria ser ecoa nas diferentes repetições da palavra “city” em vários contextos. Ortiz e alguns amigos visitam os trabalhos de construção “armed with a tape recorder and questions”, pedindo para serem recebidos pelo responsável. Aparece-lhes um “smiling, cool, . . . pudgy man”, com um molho de brochuras e impressos que nem todos aceitam. Depois de várias perguntas “which had no chance, realistically, of being answered”, Ortiz e os amigos, à saída da urbanização, deparam com alguns operários índios a abrir

um grande buraco. Sam, um dos amigos do poeta, tira-lhes uma fotografia a que promete dar o irónico título “Indians Building a New Way of Life”. O resultado da renomeação e do “desenvolvimento” é a progressiva redução ao silêncio dos inconformados (“we drank in silence”). Se as narrativas de Ortiz se fundam no que ele chama de “lar”, aqui, inversamente, o silenciamento das vozes nativas deriva da profanação de um lugar sagrado e da relação de um povo com ele.

Em “The State’s claim”², o próprio título estabelece uma clivagem entre o povo Acoma e os representantes da cultura económica dominante, ou seja, o governo dos Estados Unidos e os grandes interesses económicos: “American RAILROADS, ELECTRIC LINES, GAS LINES, HIGHWAYS, PHONE COMPANIES, CABLE TV.” Nas vozes de Ortiz, respetiva família e vizinhos, as secções do poema, nomeadas segundo cada um destes interesses, recontam a história da repetida invocação de direitos de passagem por parte de poderosos interesses externos, deixando implícitas e explícitas todas as consequências para o povo e para a terra. As estórias contadas pelo povo nunca deixam de denunciar a falta de credibilidade do estado, providenciando ao mesmo tempo vozes de resistência falando uma linguagem diferente na essência: directa, concreta, pessoal. Da mesma maneira que em “A New Mexico Place Name”, a profanação da terra e a rutura da relação do povo com a sua terra ancestral implicam uma rutura na linguagem e na comunicação:

The elder people at home do not understand.

.....

The questions from their mouths

And on their faces are unanswerable.

² Título completo: “The State’s claim that it seeks in no way to deprive Indians of their rightful share of water, but only to define that share, falls on deaf ears” (Ortiz 254-260).

.....

They ask, "The Americans want my land?"

You say, "Yes, my beloved Grandfather."

.....

There is silence because you can't explain
and you don't want to...

.....

You don't want that silence to grow

Deeper and deeper into you

Because that growth inward stunts you,

And that is no way to continue. (Ortiz 259-60)

Na entrevista a David Dunaway citada mais acima, Ortiz não deixa dúvidas ao afirmar que a luta é o denominador comum para os escritores do Sudoeste num território colonizado:

I mean, the Southwest is essentially still a territory, colonized territory, colonial territory, so to speak. And I know that John Nichols with his own work tries to bring this out: the idea that the land here and the lifestyle culturally that has been lived by for centuries and thousands of years must resist the more destructive changes brought by Western expansionism, including even by the railroads, by land developers, by uranium exploitation, by Los Alamos and Sandia National Laboratories and the lack of planning and purely for economic profit, affecting people's long-term lives and cultures. (Dunaway 16-17)³

³ De acordo com o relatório final (1979) da "Indian Claims Commission", criada pelo Congresso em 1946, os Estados Unidos não podem invocar qualquer esteio legal para o uso e ocupação de aproximadamente um terço do seu território. Esta comissão admitiu que, depois de mais de trinta anos de investigação exaustiva, não conseguiu descobrir "any treaty, any agreement, nor even a unilateral act of Congress" by which the country could legally assert jurisdiction over about 750 million acres of territory it had long since grown accustomed to claiming as its own 'domestic'

Perante o silêncio resultante da perda de terra e da linguagem do estado, o poeta exorta o seu auditório, em particular o seu auditório nativo, num discurso íntimo de segunda pessoa: “You want to continue”, diz,

And so you tell stories.

You tell stories about your People’s birth
and their growing.

.....

You tell the stories of their struggles. (Ortiz 260)

Ortiz conta uma dessas estórias na teia de prosa e poesia que é “Our Homeland, A National Sacrifice Area”, em *Fight Back: For the Sake of the People, For the Sake of the Land*:

Aacqumeh hanoh came to their valley from a direction spoken of as the northwest. The place they came to had been prepared for them, and the name, Aacqu, therefore means that: Which Is Prepared. When they arrived in the flat valley sheltered by red and orange cliffs, they knew they had found what had been prepared by their leaders and instructions from earlier generations of the people. (Ortiz 338)

property.” Ver Russel Barsh, “Indian Land Claims Policy in the United States,” *North Dakota Law Review* 58 (1982). Para ilustrar aquilo a que Ward Churchill chama “The Political Economy of Radioactive Colonization”, na sua obra *A Little Matter of Genocide. Holocaust and Denial in the Americas: 1492 to the Present* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997, 289), política de colonização radioactiva firmemente enraizada no Sudoeste americano desde o final dos anos 40, recomendo a leitura do texto de Simon Ortiz “Our Homeland, A National Sacrifice Area”, em *Woven Stone*, 337-363. Este último volume reúne três livros anteriores: *Going for the Rain* (1976), *A Good Journey* (1977) e *Fight Back: For the Sake of the People, For the Sake of the Land* (1980). Talvez valha a pena lembrar que Ortiz trabalhou numa fábrica da companhia mineira Kerr-McGee no início dos anos 60.

A história do nascimento, do crescimento e das lutas do povo é uma história da terra, da relação com ela e dos esforços para preservar essa relação; as estórias deste lugar, lembra Ortiz ao seu auditório, são fundamentais para a luta e para a sobrevivência. “You tell that kind of history,/and you pray and be humble. / With strength, it will continue that way” (Ortiz 260).

“A New Mexico Place Name”, “The State’s Claim” e “That’s the Place Indians Talk About” centram-se em conflitos assentes em disputas pela terra, literalmente, não estando apenas em causa a sua propriedade ou o seu uso, mas sobretudo o seu significado. Como estes poemas deixam implícito, e outros explícito, para Ortiz e para os povos tradicionais, a terra, o lugar deles, é um parente, um parceiro de uma relação de responsabilidade e reciprocidade. Para os promotores imobiliários, para as empresas e para a Marinha, a terra é uma mercadoria como outra qualquer. As evocações que Ortiz faz da terra, as suas orações a lugares sagrados, as suas respostas à história e à paisagem Acoma, estão em sintonia com o conhecimento do seu povo segundo o qual a respectiva história e identidade se fundam no seu espaço ancestral. É este conhecimento que torna possível a sobrevivência e faz com que a luta não seja apenas necessária, mas também compensadora. Mesmo acimentados, como em “Washyuma Motor Hotel” (Ortiz 97-98), os espíritos dos antepassados sobrevivem na terra, contam estórias e anedotas, “and laugh and laugh.” Este conhecimento transmite confiança à voz de Ortiz, pois ele sabe que, apesar de nomes como Church Rock e Laguna,

. . . for sure those are Indian lands
and the People who live there
are Indian People.
Hanoh stu tah ah.
We are Hanoh. People. Hanoh. People. (Ortiz 330)

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**PAINTERS AND POETS OF THE
STIEGLITZ CIRCLE – MARSDEN HARTLEY
AND HART CRANE**

Heinz Ickstadt

Resumo: Marsden Hartley e Hart Crane travaram conhecimento através de Alfred Stieglitz e da galeria 291 durante os anos iniciais da década de 1920. Voltaram a encontrar-se no México, onde ambos beneficiavam de uma bolsa que lhes permitia pintar e escrever na sua procura de uma cultura mais original e “primitiva”. Ambos tinham um fascínio ambivalente pelo “culto da morte” na cultura mexicana, com todos os rituais que lhe eram inerentes. O suicídio de Crane, que se afogou no regresso aos Estados Unidos, perturbou profundamente o pintor mais velho, ele próprio atraído pelo suicídio e, tal como Crane, homossexual, assim se passando a rever no destino do poeta. Em celebração do amigo, Crane escreveu um longo poema (“Un Recuerdo – Hermano – Hart Crane R.I.P.”) e pintou um quadro de uma beleza enigmática, “Eight Bells Folly, Memorial for Hart Crane” (1933), que ecoa o poema “Voyages” de Crane. O artigo relacionará ambos os poemas e o quadro de Hartley (ele próprio uma interpretação da poesia marítima de Crane), traçando as linhas do território simbólico da morte, amor e desejo que pintor e poeta partilhavam.

Palavras-chave: Marsden Hartley; “Un Recuerdo – Hermano – Hart Crane R.I.P.”; Hart Crane; “Voyages”.

Abstract: Marsden Hartley and Hart Crane knew each other via their acquaintance with Alfred Stieglitz and his gallery 291 during the early twenties. They met again in Mexico where both held fellowships to paint and write in search of a more original, more “primitive” culture. Both were ambiguously attracted to the “death culture” of Mexico and the rituals that were part of it. Crane’s suicide by drowning on the way back to the U.S. deeply disturbed the elder painter who had often thought of suicide himself and saw in Crane (like him a homosexual) a mirror-image of his own fate. In commemoration of him he wrote a lengthy poem (“Un Recuerdo – Hermano – Hart Crane R.I.P.”) and painted a mysteriously beautiful picture: “Eight Bells Folly, Memorial for Hart Crane” (1933) which echoes Crane’s “Voyages.” I shall discuss and interrelate both their poems and Hartley’s painting (itself an interpretation of Crane’s sea poetry), outlining a symbolic territory of death, love and desire that poet and painter shared.

Keywords: Marsden Hartley; “Un Recuerdo – Hermano – Hart Crane R.I.P.”; Hart Crane; “Voyages”.

The awareness of early American modernists of the artistic revolutions that were going on in Paris, London, or Berlin went hand in hand with their discovery of American ancestries and continuities – the perception of spirituality in the material world as expressed in the writings of the Transcendentalists as well as in the “transcendentalist” paintings of the mid – and late 19th century. By creating a “national landscape,” Thomas Cole, Frederic Church

and other members of the Hudson River School aimed at creating a national art. During the first two decades of the 20th century, Alfred Stieglitz, famous photographer and gallerist, continued that project.¹ He was the charismatic mentor of a small circle of New York artists who made it the mission of their lives “to enlighten the American public” in matters of art, introduce it to the path-breaking achievements of European modernism, and help develop an art that would be at once modernist and unmistakably American. Between 1908 and 1913, his gallery “291” was not only the first in the U.S. to exhibit paintings and sculptures by Matisse, Cézanne, and Picasso, it was also the only place at that time where the artists of an emerging American avant-garde (John Marin, Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, Georgia O’Keeffe among others) had the chance to present their works. Poets were also drawn to “291” and became part of the Stieglitz circle. The project to promote “a viable national culture” (Brennan 12) inspired William Carlos Williams to write *In the American Grain* (1925), an alternative version of America’s cultural history, and made Hart Crane compose his mythopoetic *The Bridge* (1930), a cycle of poems meant to symbolically unite America’s mythic past and its urban industrial present in the sublime image, the “unfractioned idiom,” of Brooklyn Bridge.²

Some of the painters and poets of the Stieglitz circle were friends or cooperated with each other – most famously Charles Demuth and Williams, or Williams and Charles Sheeler. Much less known is the friendship between Marsden Hartley and Hart Crane and the impact Crane had on Hartley’s later development as painter. Hartley knew

¹ In a letter of 1921 to Stieglitz, Charles Demuth wrote about this common project: “Together we will add to the American scene more than has been added since the [18]60’s and 70’s – maybe more than they added” (qtd. in Brennan 187).

² “. . . the truth is,” writes Irene Ramalho Santos, “that Brooklyn Bridge was then, and not for Crane alone, the most apt symbol of the growing American nation, a miracle of modern industry, capital, and ingenuity.” (196).

Crane from “291” and as a one-time neighbor in Brooklyn; but not only was he more than twenty years older than Crane, he had also been in Europe when Crane came to avant-garde prominence in the mid-twenties. Yet they met again in Marseilles in 1929, when *The Bridge* was still in print, and then again, in early 1932, in Mexico, when Crane spent there the last months of a Guggenheim fellowship and Hartley the first of his own. Both shared a fascination with the visionary and occult (with William Blake, Walt Whitman and mystics like Jakob Boehme). And they were both homosexuals – Crane occasionally flaunting the fact, Hartley trying to disguise it. In a self-portrait of the late thirties (“Sustained Comedy”), the painter puts on the self-deprecating mask of clown while nevertheless asserting his visionary power: the arrows that pierce his clairvoyant blue eyes may bring suffering but they also generate butterflies, symbols of immortality; the lightning stroke of intuition marks his forehead, birds nest on one of the shoulders of this modern day St. Francis/St. Sebastian, while the other sprouts a bunch of flowers. “The themes of suffering, pain, and mysticism, that were leitmotifs in Hartley’s paintings” (Brennan 160), tempt me to compare Hartley’s self-portrait with Crane’s self-revelatory poem “Possessions” – although Crane’s intensities lack the ironic self-reflexivity that marks Hartley’s work.

Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies,
Lacks all but piteous admissions to be spilt
Upon the page whose blind sun finally burns
Record of rage and partial appetites.
The pure possession, the inclusive cloud
Whose heart is fire shall come, – the white wind rase
All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays. (Crane CP: 18)³

³ The abbreviation CP will be used in subsequent references to Crane’s *Complete Poems*.

Hartley was devastated when he heard that Crane had committed suicide by jumping overboard the steamer *Orizaba* on his way back from Mexico on April 27, 1932. Hartley himself had toyed with the idea of suicide, despairing of his isolation as well as of his lack of recognition (and of money). Crane had told him that, after the failure of *The Bridge*, he had nothing more to say⁴ – a statement of resignation admitting of a promise unfulfilled that horrified Hartley who saw in Crane a younger alter-ego and thus an image of his own possible defeat. He wrote three essays on Crane, published a lengthy commemorative poem: “Un Recuerdo – Hermano – Hart Crane, R.I.P.” and painted “Eight Bells Folly” in memory of him.⁵ The essays (all of them unpublished) mainly underline their difference of character, as if Hartley wanted to assure himself that Crane’s fate could not, would never be, *his*. They also repeat – without questioning them – the pronouncements of poet-critics like Allen Tate and Yvor Winters in whose eyes Crane’s epic poem was a “magnificent failure” (cp. Weinberg 163ff). Nevertheless there is a deep sense of personal loss which is echoed in Hartley’s poem.

And should it be left like this,
dear Hart, like this,
too much fulfillment, no more promise,
given over petulantly, fevered,
you the severing, we the severed,
to wind-wash,

⁴ In fact, Crane had lost faith in his vision of America’s spiritual essence as embodied in the aesthetic and technological achievement of Brooklyn Bridge. Whatever spirituality there was had been defeated by the realities of an overwhelming materialism. In the end, the Bridge represented but “an economical approach to shorter hours, quicker lunches”; and: “I am . . . playing Don Quixote in an immorally conscious way” (Letters 261 & 260).

⁵ In her *Dictated by Life* (1995), Patricia McDonnell follows Hartley’s elegy on Crane to Robert Indiana’s elegies on Crane and Hartley, thus making the commemorative genre a means of establishing aesthetic continuity in homosexual identity.

wave-flow, wave-toss and thrash,
 beating forward, backward, to and fro,
 in the unremitting high and low
 in the never ending torment of today,
 yesterday, so redolent of geniality –
 never again to know tomorrow. . .

. . .

A beautiful dive, then floating
 on his back, waved a hand,
 and was seen, no more. . .

Gone to the end of the bridge and over
 worn with roving the bridge, bridge-rover,
 done with all the walking and the stalking,
 and all the cheap talking. (CP 119ff, 125, 127)

These excerpts barely represent the uncertainty of Hartley's verse, its wavering between the elevated and the trivial – especially with regard to rhyme and verbal choice. Yet the poem clearly tries to render rhythmically the sea-swell of Crane's post-mortem existence ("an everlasting being in not being", as Hartley had written in one of the essays). In addition, Hartley wove into the texture of his elegy images and motifs of Crane's poetry.⁶ While alive, Crane had written several sea poems, most memorably "At Melville's Tomb" and "Voyages" where the sea became a symbol for the dissolution of the self in love, just as, in the end, he made the sea the medium of his own dissolution in death.

⁶ In a footnote to his poem, Hartley wrote: "The bridge as symbol in repetition is used here because it was the end of Hart Crane's poetical effort, and he gave out more than once to us here in Mexico, the thought that he had nothing more to say" (CP 333ff.).

No wonder, then, that Hartley painted the sea, in “Eight Bells Folly,” as a portrait of Crane’s continued “being” after having suffered a sea-change. Accordingly, the painting is highly symbolic and has, as Hartley stated, “a mad look” – the madness, the folly, was Crane’s in his dying as well as in the frantic intensity of his living. In the poem, Hartley integrated elements of what had already become part of the Crane legend: eye witnesses on board the ship had seen Crane come up to the surface for a last time, “then floating/ on his back, waved a hand,/and was seen no more.” Hartley also included the shark that others asserted to have seen shortly after Crane jumped. The clipper sailing through the dark sea toward a horizon lit by the moon and the sun (or is it the golden apple of heavenly perfection?) may symbolize Crane’s (and Hartley’s) lifelong yearning for a Beyond (“still one shore beyond desire”, as Crane had written in “Ave Maria”).⁷ The number 33 on its sails marks Crane’s (and Christ’s) age when he died. The eight refers to “8 bells,” or noon, the hour of Crane’s suicide. Yet like the number 9, the 8 may also associate infinity and immortality. “. . . [A]nd around the bell,” explains Hartley in a letter to his niece, “are a lot of men’s eyes – that look up from below to see who the new lodger is to be –” (Weinberg 167).

Hartley painted several elegies in his life – the first in commemoration of his German lover Karl von Freyburg who was killed during the first weeks of WW I. His death made Hartley paint “Portrait of a German Officer” which combines an abstract cubist arrangement of the officer’s insignia and uniform with symbols of their friendship – the numbers 24 and 4 referring to Freyburg’s age at the time of his death and to his regiment respectively. “Eight

⁷ It may also refer to a “recurrent dream he had had, first in 1912, before he went to Europe. . . Each time the dream had involved a boat heading for safety, and each time, after the dream, his life had taken the direction it needed” (Ludington 1992: 235).

Bells Folly” is situated between this earlier abstract portrait and a commemoration, five years later, of two Nova Scotia fishermen whom Hartley had deeply loved and whom he now intensely mourned. They drowned in 1936, at night, during a fierce storm when they tried to get home from a fishing trip. His “Northern Seascape, Off the Banks” (1936/37) is more representational than both of his previous elegies. It also evokes in its realism and its stylization of waves, rocks, and clouds two painters Hartley greatly admired: Winslow Homer, the realist, and Albert Pinkham Ryder, the painter of the dreamlike and mysterious. The symbolism in “Northern Seascape” is thus more discreet than in “Eight Bells Folly.” The two sailing boats scudding toward the horizon may evoke the souls of the two drowned fisherman, but then they may also be just boats on a rough sea. In “Northern Seascape,” the rocks, like sharks’s teeth, are reminders of the sea’s power of death and destruction. There is a Melvillean sense of nature’s savage sublimity that informs Homer’s sea paintings as well as Thoreau’s description of Mt. Katahdin and Cape Cod.

All of Hartley’s elegies – painted or written – deal with a tragic loss in his life but in each case they also mark his overcoming despair by creative self-assertion and a new phase in his development as painter. Throughout his career, he had wavered between expressing emotional intensity through abstract expression, on the one hand, and a vehement rejection of the subjective, the annihilation of the self in the object (something he admired in Cézanne), on the other. “To have an eye with brain in it,” he wished for in 1919 (Hartley CP: 319); and in an essay of 1928 he went even further in his rejection of the emotionally expressive: “I have joined, once and for all, the ranks of the intellectual experimentalists,” possibly thinking of Picabia and Duchamp. “I can hardly bear the sound of the words “expressionism,” “emotionalism,” “personality”. . . I no longer believe in the imagination” (Hartley *On Art*: 71).

Yet in response to the deep shock caused by Crane's death, Hartley began to artistically reinvent himself. "Crane's art did not save him," observed Jonathan Weinberg. "Yet in working through an artist's death, Hartley discovered his own subject matter" (qtd. in Kornhauser 134). Another critic argues that "Eight Bells Folly" "marked the first time Hartley had overtly connected an event in his life with his art since the 'Portrait of a German Officer' in 1915" (Robertson 98). "My pictures are bound to the mystical more and more for that is what I myself am more and more. . . ," Hartley wrote in 1933. "I belong naturally to the Emerson-Thoreau tradition and I know that too well. It is my native substance" (qtd. in Cassidy 108). He now proclaims immersion in a "mysticism of nature" that fused subject and object in the act of imaginative seeing. "The power to 'see' clearly. It is what the artist has with his eye, the power to observe the rhythmic order of the universe. . . ." (qtd. in Cassidy 6)

That dichotomy in Hartley's aesthetic theory and practice finds an interesting equivalent in Hart Crane's and William Carlos Williams's diverging concepts of the visionary Eye – even though they were both equally committed to the project of creating an original American modernist culture – as is evident in Williams's *In the American Grain* as well as Crane's *The Bridge*.⁸ Crane believed that the dynamic curve of the Bridge as much as the dynamics of his own metaphoric densities were both evidence of his visionary "experience of knowledge." They were therefore incarnations – the Word made Flesh in steel, stone and language – of an invisible but all-pervasive creative energy. At the time when Hartley began

⁸ In a letter to Waldo Frank from Nov. 21, 1926, Crane had written: "Williams' American Grain is an achievement that I'd be proud of. A most important and sincere book. I am very enthusiastic – I put off reading it, you know, until I felt my own way cleared beyond chance of confusions incident to reading a book so intimate to my theme" (*O My Land* 289-290).

writing his commemorative poem, Williams published a harsh review of Crane's poetry, denouncing its failure of word and vision. "His eyes seem to me often to have been blurred by 'vision' when they should have been held hard, as hard as he could hold them, on the object." (1, 4) Whereas in Crane's eyes, the Bridge – like a Stieglitz-snapshot – was movement caught and turned into timeless presence, for Williams, timelessness was in the experiential process. In his aesthetics of immanence, presence meant constant attention toward an ever changing Now of experience that, for each new moment, had to be caught and represented anew.

Yet when Hartley met Crane in Mexico, Crane's poetic practice had taken a turn of which neither Williams nor Hartley were aware. In his last poem, "The Broken Tower" – the only poem he had written during his year in Mexico – Crane seems to revoke his earlier visionary poetics when he asks the poet to "*lift down the eye*" (CP 160, emphasis added). It is the reversal of an earlier metaphor he had used in "At Melville's Tomb": "eyes there were that *lifted altars*" (CP 33, emphasis added) where God is made to exist by the very desire for his existence. Crane was not able to test the implications of this new downward vision. But one may well speculate that it would have been close to Williams's insistence on holding the eye "hard on the object." It might also have found an echo in Hartley's paintings of the thirties and early forties which give evidence of his eye "lifted down" in a precise if condensed (essentializing) representation of things seen. What moves Hartley even closer to Williams is the fact that his reorientation of the eye coincides with his homecoming – the cosmopolitan wanderer between styles and continents not only returning to his native land (something Stieglitz had begged him to do for decades), but to his native region: Maine. No wonder that Williams, the champion of an American literature rooted in the local, praised Hartley in an unpublished review of a 1940-exhibition of his paintings, arguing

that he painted better than ever before because “the mind, the body and the spirit” had finally come together and brought about “his native completion.”⁹

Williams’s localism (nationalist, yet also universalist) – at a time when regionalists of all kinds claimed to be representative of a truly American art – may seem a far cry from Stieglitz’s idea of the artists’s involvement in the shaping of an “America still in the making.” But it was Hartley himself who believed that his homecoming was indeed a “completion” giving him place, identity, and not least the recognition he had long craved for. As he wrote in “The Return of the Native,” one of his best poems:

. . .
it is a smiling festival
when rock, juniper, and wind
are of one mind;
a seagull signs the bond
makes what was broken, whole. (CP 251)

Cassidy and others have demonstrated that this return “home” was also a retreat – a retreat from all those forces of modernity that Crane had hoped to integrate in his own mythic vision of America. It was a retreat from a commercial urban culture to the spirituality of New England, its transcendentalist “essence” – even though Hartley did not at all mind profiting commercially from his new status as Maine’s most prominent painter. It was a retreat also to what he considered the purer and simpler life of farmers and fishermen, and, not least (alas), to the racial purity of Anglo-Saxondom.

Going home to come into his own also meant to (re)take possession of what he considered *his* by right of birth and artistic

⁹ Hartley Papers, Beinecke Library.

ancestry: the landscape of New England, and the aesthetic tradition of writers and painters that had elevated its sites to national icons. “I returned to my tall timbers and my granite cliffs because in them rests the kind of integrity I believe in and from which source I draw my private strength both spiritually and esthetically” (*On Art* 199). As Frederic Church had done before him, he went up Mt. Katahdin to paint the “sacred mountain.” Climbing it was nothing less than a religious experience for him: “I know I have seen God now,” he confessed to a friend. “The occult connection that is established when one loves nature was complete – and so I felt transported to a visible fourth dimension – and since heaven is inviolably a state of mind I have been there these past ten days” (qtd. in Ludington 1998: 23).

Perhaps it is this sense of finally having found “home” that allows him – in this last phase of his life – to create (almost Crane-like) a symbolic art of secular religiosity which is nevertheless based on the concretely perceived natural object. One might even argue that Mt. Katahdin is for Hartley what Brooklyn Bridge had been for Hart Crane – except that its sublimity was inviolable since its timelessness went back to that primeval Earth before man which Thoreau, in his essay on “Mount Ktaadn,” had described in terms of beauty, terror and awe. For Hartley, painting that mountain was “to uncover the principle of conscious unity in all things,” and to witness the “living essence present everywhere” – the unity inherent in the forms of mountain and of sea, in the “wave rhythms” connecting all natural phenomena (qtd. in McGrath 187). Reduced to an archaic blackness, set against the essentialized colors of sky (blue), cloud (white), lake (blue), and autumn forest (orange), Hartley’s Mt. Katahdin (in “Blue Landscape” or “Autumn - No.2”) is primeval and invulnerable – surviving man’s savage materialist assault on that wilderness, “awful, though beautiful” (as Thoreau phrased it) that Maine’s “sacred mountain” had once embodied in the eyes of poets and

landscape painters. For Hartley it had become an “icon” of his inmost solitary self as well as an “archetypal symbol of mystic power” forever asserting a creative energy that he himself had ecstatically experienced throughout his life.

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**NEVER A LENDER NOR A BORROWER BE:
ABUNDANCE, DEBTS, AND PERSONALITY
IN AMERICAN CULTURE**

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Resumo: Desde os primeiros tempos do movimento dos estudos americanos a grande questão era estabelecer e definir o que em várias formulações era referido como a identidade americana, o carácter americano, o espírito americano ou mesmo o “eu” americano. Os estudiosos versavam diversos temas como o excecionalismo americano, a “eleição divina”, o destino manifesto, o movimento predestinado do império para Oeste, ou o determinismo geográfico. Os historiadores dos anos 50 foram até referidos como a “escola” do consenso. Ora, para se poder falar de uma identidade nacional ou de um carácter nacional é preciso partilhar ao longo da história ideais e um sentir comum, um consenso nacional – se não intelectual. Contudo, e dada a intensa demanda nos Estados Unidos por um carácter nacional, reconhecível nos precursos de vida de cada indivíduo, não deixa de ser profundamente irónico que muito do debate intelectual na década de 1950 tenha sido acerca de um livro – *The Lonely Crowd* – que se propunha explorar “the changing American character”. Neste artigo discuto a posição desta obra numa longa linha

de crítica social que lê os sinais dos tempos na mudança de padrão de comportamento dos seus contemporâneos. Esta revisão crítica pretende responder à seguinte questão: que efeitos culturais podemos observar, causados pela situação presente de déficit a todos os níveis, a uma escala de endividamento que a América nunca viveu na sua história: ao nível internacional, como um estado soberano, ao nível nacional, na sua governação, atingindo o nível individual das empresas e das famílias. Podemos identificar claros aspetos culturais a emergir desta situação?

Palavras-chave: Identidade americana; carácter nacional; escola do consenso; excecionalismo; Riesman; défice nacional; endividamento e cultura.

Abstract: In the early days of the American Studies Movement the quest was on for establishing and defining what was variously called the American identity, the American character, the American mind, or even the American Self. American Studies scholars varied on the theme of American exceptionalism, “divine election” or “chosenness,” manifest destiny and the fore-ordained westward course of empire, or geographical determinism. As for the 1950s’ historians, reference is sometimes made to them as constituting the “consensus school” in American history. It takes a shared history of like-mindedness, a national – if not notional – consensus, for there to be such a thing as one national identity, or one national character. Yet, given this fevered quest for one shared national character, it is nothing but utterly ironic that much of the intellectual debate in the United States in the 1950s was set by a book – *The Lonely Crowd* – that was out to explore “the changing American character.” The book, as

this article argues, stands in a long line of social critics who read the signs of the times in the changing behavior patterns of their contemporaries. A critical review will lead me to my ultimate question. What possible cultural reflections can we see of a current situation where all of America, at every level, internationally as a sovereign state, nationally as a government, and down from there to the level of individual businesses and families, is in deficit, on a scale of indebtedness unprecedented in its national history? Are there any clear signs of cultural characters emerging to reflect this state of affairs?

Keywords: American identity; national character; consensus school; exceptionalism; Riesman; national deficit; indebtedness and culture.

In a conversation between vice-president Dick Cheney and Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill Cheney is quoted as saying: "Reagan proved deficits don't matter." It is one telling quotation among many that show the prevailing hubris in government circles at the time, a belief of having cast off the shackles of economic reality. The hubris is still there, unabated. In a review of two books tracing back the lines of development of this hubris to the days of Nixon and Reagan, Robert G. Kaiser reminds his readers of the 2013 House of Representatives vote to raise the national debt ceiling. Failing to do so would effectively force the United States to default on its obligations to creditors. The ceiling was duly raised, but 144 Republican members said no. A number among them expressed confidence that *default wouldn't really matter* (my italics). Kaiser goes on to say: ". . . that a 144 members of the House were willing to cast a vote to default on the full faith and credit of the United

States is a sign of our times.” If deficits, nor defaults, don’t really matter anymore, what sign of our times is it? What has changed from the days that Franklin Delano Roosevelt risked the fragile economic recovery from the great depression by returning, in 1937, to the standard of his economic orthodoxy, a belief in fiscal rectitude and an aversion to debts and deficits? If that was a sign of a certain American character, what has happened to it? A massive shift in public culture must have occurred, affecting people’s views on public probity and political rectitude. The following is an attempt to trace some of the main shifts on the way to our present quandary (Suskind 334; Kaiser 56).

Debts in abundance

In the early days of what its guiding lights and eager followers called the American Studies Movement, in the United States in the 1930s and ‘40s, and spreading abroad into the early Cold War years under the United States cultural diplomacy auspices, the quest was on for establishing and defining what was variously called the American identity, the American character, the American mind, or even the American Self. Agreement was never reached, which only added to the appeal of the quest. Literary studies, the study of history, and the newly reputable social sciences were all yoked together in the hot pursuit of this elusive, if not chimeric, target. For good measure, rival stories of origin were thrown into the mix. Puritan origins were a strong contender, from Perry Miller’s *Errand into the Wilderness* to Sacvan Bercovitch’s *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. But so were stories of America’s given natural resources, of America as cornucopia, as in David Potter’s *People of Plenty*, or stories of America as an ideological blank sheet, open to be inscribed with European liberalism, to the exclusion

of its European rivals, as in Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America*. Others were working parallel veins, such as Richard Hofstadter, and Daniel Boorstin. They were all in their own way varying on the theme of American exceptionalism, exploring themes of "divine election" or "chosenness," or of manifest destiny and the fore-ordained westward course of empire, or of geographical determinism, following in the footsteps of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. As for the historians among these 1950s' writers, reference is sometimes made to them as constituting a "school," the school of the consensus historians. The word is felicitous, highlighting as it does a crucial pre-condition for the existence of something like an American Mind, or an American Self. It takes a shared history of like-mindedness, a national – if not notional – consensus, for there to be such a thing as one national identity, or one national character.

Yet, given this fevered quest for one shared national character, recognizably there in each of its individual carriers, it is nothing but utterly ironic that much of the intellectual debate in the United States in the 1950s was set by a book that was out to explore "the changing American character." I am referring of course to *The Lonely Crowd*, a book commonly linked to the name of Harvard sociologist David Riesman, but really the result of team work. Rather than bringing historical data together to buttress the case for one national identity, Riesman a.o. suggested that historically America may have known two or three modal characters, following each other in time, and each with its typical modes of behavior, cultural tastes and appetites, and individual character structure. I may remind you here of the two main character structures that Riesman recognized. Historically, he sees "inner-directed man" give way to "other-directed man." Inner-directed man is the self-reliant and self-sufficient character, redolent of the Puritan individual guided by an inner sense of righteousness and direction, an inner

compass, as Riesman metaphorically called it. Other-directed man is the successor personality type, entering the stage in the wake of radical social transformations. In a new era of greater social interdependence and much more rapid social and cultural change, parents are no longer able to equip their children for life with their own inner compass. They now need to be trained to become social animals, taking their cues on a daily basis from their peers, adapting their behavior and tastes accordingly, adopting the hue and color of the settings they find themselves in. They now orient themselves by using, not an inner compass, but what Riesman calls their inner radar. Other classic texts from the 1950s further fleshed out this type, such as William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man*, highlighting the structural setting in which increasing numbers of people spent their working lives, the bureaucratic setting of the large-scale business corporation or government organization.

Riesman, as I shall argue, is only one among many authors who set out to recognize tidal changes in dominant character types in American history as they relate to underlying social and economic changes. As people's characteristic patterns of dependence – financial dependence through indebtedness critically among them – change and as they lose such measures of autonomy as they might have grown used to seeing as rightfully theirs, character structures and larger patterns of culture are assumed to reflect these changes and to turn into their symbolic representations. Of course, as the world became increasingly bureaucratic in its patterns of organizing society and as people became enmeshed in large-scale structures controlling their lives, they no longer have the option, as Polonius, in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Act I Scene III) puts it to his son Laertes: "This above all, to thine own self be true." They have to play by the ever-changing rules of social games, that Riesman, for one, took sardonic pleasure in analyzing. But my point is, Riesman was not the only one to do this. He stands in a long line of social critics

who read the signs of the times in the changing behavior patterns of their contemporaries. I will take you on a tour d'horizon of such critical writing. Can they teach us anything on the ways in which patterns of dependence – financial dependence included – have been reflected in the modes and tones of larger cultural eras. This will then lead to my ultimate question concerning the current state of affairs in America. What possible cultural reflections can we see of a current situation where all of America, at every level, internationally as a sovereign state, nationally as a government, and down from there to the level of individual businesses and families, is in deficit, on a scale of indebtedness unprecedented in its national history? Are there any clear signs of cultural characters emerging to reflect this state of affairs?

Changes in cultural character

It would be tempting to see Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* as a nodal point, a conceptual hub, where several lines of intellectual gestation came together before it would inspire later portraits of American culture in broadly the same vein. Undoubtedly later work, like Christopher Lasch's 1979 study of *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, can be seen to echo some of Riesman's central characters, yet between the 1950s and the 1970s dramatic shifts had occurred in America's structural setting. A postwar era of explosive growth and all its unsettling impact on the population's rising expectations had, by the early 1970s, turned into its opposite, of economic stagflation and diminishing expectations of individual life chances. As Lasch puts it, every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology, which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure. The pathology that Lasch chose to use as the metaphor for the prevailing character

structure of the “Me-decade” is narcissism. It is an age that had seen the eclipse of individual achievement and of the satisfactions of its pursuit: “Today men seek the kind of approval that applauds not their actions but their personal attributes. They wish to be not so much esteemed as admired.” (59)

Lasch stands in a long line of critics of mass society. He located the pivot of modern psychic development in the rise of mass production, with its concomitant deskilling of workers, destruction of economic independence, change in relations of authority from personal to abstract, and professionalization of education, management, mental health, social welfare, and the like. The result of those epochal changes was a drastic change in the socialization of children. *Individuation* – the process of the formation of individual selves – largely consists of the gradual reduction in scale of infantile fantasies of omnipotence and helplessness, accompanied by the child’s modest but growing sense of mastery, continually measured against its human and material surroundings. Formerly, the presence of potent but fallible individuals, economically self-sufficient, with final legal and moral authority over their children’s upbringing, provided one kind of template for the growing child’s psychic development. As fathers (and increasingly mothers) become employees, with the family’s economic survival dependent on remote, abstract corporate authorities, and as caretaking parents were increasingly supervised or replaced by educational, medical, and social-welfare bureaucracies, the template changed. The child now has no human-size authority figures in the immediate environment against which to measure itself and so reduce its fantasies to human scale. As a result, it continues to alternate between fantasies of omnipotence and helplessness. This makes acceptance of limits, finitude, and death more difficult, which in turn makes commitment and perseverance of any kind – civic, artistic, sexual, parental – more difficult.

The result is narcissism, which Lasch, in the opening pages of *Culture of Narcissism*, described thus:

Having surrendered most of his technical skills to the corporation, [the contemporary American] can no longer provide for his material needs. As the family loses not only its productive functions but many of its reproductive functions as well, men and women no longer manage even to raise their children without the help of certified experts. The atrophy of older traditions of self-help has eroded everyday competence, in one area after another, and has made the individual dependent on the state, the corporation, and other bureaucracies. (Lasch 11-12)

Narcissism represents the psychological dimension of this dependence. Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience. His apparent freedom from family ties and institutional constraints does not free him to stand alone or to glory in his individuality. On the contrary, it contributes to his insecurity, which he can overcome only by seeing his “grandiose self” reflected in the attentions of others, or by attaching himself to those who radiate celebrity, power, and charisma. For the narcissist, the world is a mirror, whereas the rugged individualist saw it as an empty wilderness to be shaped to his own design. Narcissism refers to a weak, ungrounded, defensive, insecure, manipulative self – what Lasch’s next book, eponymously titled, labeled “the minimal self.”

Yet readers may be forgiven if they recognize in Lasch’s narcissistic personality the traits of Riesman’s other-directed man. Lasch vehemently denies the similarity, the family likeness. As he argues, “Americans have not really become more sociable and cooperative,

as the theorists of other-direction and conformity would like us to believe, they have merely become more adept at exploiting the conventions of interpersonal relations for their own benefit” (66). This could only be argued by someone totally missing out on the sardonic pleasure Riesman takes in analyzing precisely the one-upmanship involved in the interactions of other-directed persons, with their eye on the main chance to upstage others. Riesman’s other-directed man is more than just the incarnation of Dale Carnegie’s smooth social operator, the central character of his immensely successful 1936 “How to . . .” book, and held up as a model for all to follow on their way to success, “winning friends and influencing people.” Carnegie did catch unfailingly a cultural shift underway ever since the 1920s, a demotion of certain long-respected virtues, where character gave way to personality, self-control to self-fulfillment, industry and thrift to skill at handling people. Carnegie’s engineering of the self constructed a model of modern individualism composed entirely of serial images, disjointed, lacking any logic of inner cohesion, with no sturdy commitments or beliefs, no firm moral standards, *no authentic and rooted core of self*, (words that might have been Lasch’s, but are not).¹ In Carnegie’s view, it consisted only of a pliable personality eager to please others and advance socially and economically.

All this we may recognize in Riesman’s type of the other-directed man, or for that matter – think of “no authentic and rooted core of self” – in Lasch’s narcissist. But there is so much more that feeds into Riesman’s perspective, and into his tongue-in-cheek, picaresque pantheon of tricksters and confidence men. After all, who can forget the unforgettable personae that Riesman conjured up, like the inside-dopester (a word it took me years to probe in its depths of American colloquial resonance)? There are echoes here of the Chicago School

¹ The words are quoted from Steven Watts, *Self-Help Messiah: Dale Carnegie and Success in Modern America* (Other Press, 2014).

in Sociology, and central figures like George Herbert Mead and Herbert George Blumer and their ideas on symbolic interactionism, echoes also of seminal insights into the social construction of the self, as a process of ongoing social negotiations and interactions like so many feedback loops informing people's trajectory towards self-definition. One is also reminded of Erving Goffman, another Chicago School name and author of the classic *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. They are all examples of a special intellectual sensibility and an alertness to concepts like personality and culture seen as essentially open and in flux. Goffman in particular had an ear and an eye for the trickster element in all this, for the histrionics and theatricality in people's social strategies.

Yet another resonance that we may pick up reading Riesman is the unmistakable voice of Thorsten Veblen, odd man out in the history of American sociology and economics, yet a one-man fount of insight, critique and sardonic wit. He wrote at a time, in the late 19th, early 20th century, of rapid transformation across a wide swathe of life in America. Relative latecomer to industrialization and urbanization that America was, much like Germany in Europe in the fevered catch-up of its so-called *Gründerjahre* – the years of industrial take-off – students of society in both countries invented new concepts for analytically capturing the advent of modernization. These were the years that Alan Trachtenberg would call the age of incorporation, the years in which a business paradigm of large-scale rational organization began to dictate most people's workaday lives. Not only had the systems of production dramatically increased in scale, so had the attending systems of control and governance. Increasing numbers of people had become enmeshed in a web of bureaucracy, putting them at an ever growing remove from the actual line of production. A parallel world arose, of staff workers alongside line workers, a world of growing abstractness, losing point and purpose for those involved. This new world was explored and

analysed in Germany by leading early sociologists like Max Weber or Alfred Tönnies. Weber came up with the metaphor of the “iron cage” to capture the social experience of life in a bureaucratic setting. Tönnies introduced the pair of opposed concepts of *Gemeinschaft* versus *Gesellschaft*, words that in their English translation lose the evocative force they have in German. Early American sociology came up with a felicitous parallel, though, opposing primary to secondary social relations. In this view the rich affective resonance of primary groups, like the family, neighborhood and local community, stood opposed to the cold and formal qualities of secondary relations, connecting people merely through formalized social roles. The latter evoke the world of the office window, bank tellers, secretaries and desk workers, a world that was increasingly liquid, losing form and meaning for the self-definition of all those involved, eating away at the many-stranded bonds of civil society, eroding its social capital. In this “Great Transformation,” as Karl Polanyi memorably called it, a self-regulating market was to emerge, turning human beings and the natural environment into commodities.

Yet, as many observers at the time noted, human beings did not take this lying down. New social stages for public self-definition evolved which allowed people to explore early forms of a consumption culture with a view to setting themselves apart from others and distinguish themselves in the public eye. This is the stage that Thorsten Veblen exposed in his first published book, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. In it he lets his eyes roam across the wide array of strategies of social distinction through the ostentation of spending behavior. His sardonic wit coined phrases for the description of this behavior that survive until the present day, words such as “conspicuous consumption,” “invidious distinction,” or “marginal differentiation.” The latter term in particular survived through Freud’s reflections on the narcissism of minor differences for the exalted display of individuality. In current post-modern

analyses, the strategic point in using this form of narcissism is to achieve a superficial sense of one's own uniqueness, an *ersatz* sense of individual distinctness which is only a mask for an underlying uniformity and sameness. If Veblen is to rank as a social and cultural critic here is the reason why: he exposed the underlying vacuity of an era whose cultural parameters were set by the robber baron and the alienated office worker. If there is a dialectic at work here, it is that between the alienated many and the extortionist few who manage to get something for nothing. It is the group who, not unlike Karl Marx's expropriating capitalists, have kept their eyes on the main chance and the main prize. With characteristic sarcasm Veblen calls them the impropiators, reviving an old word from the world of canonic law to highlight the impropriety of expropriation.

So there has been incorporated in American commonsense and has grown into American practice the presumption that all the natural resources of the country must of right be held in private ownership, by those persons who have been lucky enough or shrewd enough to take them over according to the rules in such cases made and provided, or by those who have acquired title from these original impropiators. (Mitchel 372)

As one further interpretative revisit of the era reminds us, the telling metaphor for the period may be its fashionable middle-class affliction which went by the name of neurasthenia, best described as the physical symptoms of French poet Paul Verlaine's "languer monotone." Neurasthenia, as author T.J. Jackson Lears suggests in his *No Place of Grace*, was the medicalized expression, if not representation, of a more general feeling that in view of modern life having grown dry and passionless, one must somehow try to regenerate a lost intensity of feeling. But not only that. As Jackson Lears points out: "Late Victorians felt hemmed in by busyness,

clutter, propriety; they were beset by religious anxieties, and by debilitating worries about financial insecurity” (Lears 179). There was a financial dimension to the way Americans responded to the transformation of their collective life in the late 19th century. It is what drove the new games played with the commodities produced by America’s industrial machine, transforming them into signs and symbols of material success in a social arena shot through with status anxieties and feelings of economic insecurity. Whether or not individual Americans came out on top, they were all equally drawn into a new social game that before long would form an integral part of America’s nascent culture of consumption.

That cultural transformation came with its own key word, abundance. At long last the American Dream could appear to have come into its own, unlocking a veritable cornucopia, fulfilling what had in fact been age-old European fairytale dreams of a land of plenty, “un pays de Cocaïne” (which today does not sound right if translated back as a land of cocaine) or for that matter a Marxian dream of a realm of scarcity being replaced by a realm of affluence. Entering the 1920s America seemed to have led the way into this realm, even in the eyes of assorted European socialists, syndicalists and even communists. Jackson Lears made abundance the topic of a separate study, published as *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America*. Similarly, one of the seminal authors in this field, father of contemporary cultural history and cultural studies as we know them today, Warren Susman, suggested as the backdrop for this explorations of 20th-century cultural trends in America the single word abundance: “. . . struggling to articulate for myself and my students some definition of what our culture is like and how it got this way, I find that I was developing almost unconsciously a way of understanding American culture: I was coming to see America through the notion of ‘the culture of abundance’” (Susman xx). As he came

to see it, one of the fundamental conflicts of twentieth-century America is between two cultures – an older culture, often loosely labeled Puritan-republican, producer-capitalist culture, and a newly emerging culture of abundance. As those familiar with his work will remember, Susman really made his mark developing approaches to the problem of capturing signs of this cultural transformation taking place. Working in a pre-digital age, he truly morphed into a one-man logarithm, pioneering work that would later be known as data-mining, producing word clouds as if he were a cutting-edge digital historian. Word clouds? Yes, world clouds. With characteristic inquisitiveness and sensitivity to the uses of language he struck upon submerged shifts in the frequency with which words were used, unearthing words that were becoming the shibboleths of their age. Words came in packages, cohering through their contextual uses; some were on the way out, falling into disuse, others pushed forward. And Susman presented them as word clouds. Here is Susman at work: “Initial investigations to answer such questions yielded suggestions of significant transformation. Key words began to show themselves: *plenty, play, leisure, recreation, self-fulfilment, dreams, pleasure, immediate gratification, personality, public relations, publicity, celebrity*. Everywhere there was a new emphasis on buying, spending, and consuming” (xxiv). In a brilliant chapter he shows how the older culture, Puritan-republican, producer-capitalist demanded something it called “character,” which stressed moral qualities, deeply ingrained, whereas the newer culture insisted on “personality,” which emphasized being liked and admired. It is not hard to see these two key words as foreshadowing Riesman’s later social types of the inner-directed man and the other-directed man, only taken forward in time to the turn of the 19th century.

Susman and Jackson Lears both mention advertising as a critical new use of new technologies of mass communication for the new world of abundance and mass consumption to function smoothly.

Susman even mentions one of advertising's central functions lying in its actively *creating wants, inducing* consumer demand for novel products entering the market. Advertising in that sense plays a critical role in balancing supply and demand, in channeling production to meet consumption. And in fact, one of the standard accounts of the causes of the Great Depression is precisely in terms of over-production, of a failure of market mechanisms. But there is such a thing as under-consumption, of lagging demand due to stagnant purchasing power among the mass of consumers. And the remarkable thing, going over Susman's word clouds as they hang about the capitalized word ABUNDANCE, is the total absence of words connected to debt, insolvency and poverty.

There is one student of the American Dream of Abundance who has his eye out for this different set of words, which, if they form a cloud, it is surely a storm cloud. Roland Marchand, in his *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way For Modernity, 1920-1940*, in fact makes this central point that the advent of consumer culture brought with it a radical break with older virtues such as frugality, financial prudence and a general aversion to debt. All this went overboard in the 1920s. A general buy-now, pay-later attitude was advertised in its own right as the thoroughly modern way to go. As Elizabeth Cohen reminds us, all expenditure for private consumption came to be seen in the later 1930s and '40s as good citizenship, keeping the national economy going and growing (Ch. 3). But much of the spending critically hinged on financing mechanisms, through installment plans, charge cards, and other forms of deficit financing, and let individual consumers blithely run up private debts. Yet never did the debts collectively amassed in this 1920s' trial run of consumerism reach the heights they would a half century later. Nor did they set a tone of cultural life or produce a new social type as they may have much later. Christopher Lasch may have been on to something when he set out to explore a novel social character

structure in his *Age of Narcissism*, or for that matter in his *Haven in a Heartless World*, against the background of what he termed an “age of diminishing expectations.”

America’s cultural character at the end of empire

Given the immense debt overhang at every aggregate level of American society, how does this situation reflect in the writing of social commentators, historians and cultural critics? What forms of representation, what symbolic reflections, can we recognize? What sort of Colossus is America today, sole remaining superpower, a hegemon by any measure, yet deeply indebted to the main rival to its power, China? Are what we are witnessing the signs of the end of empire, of its unstoppable decline?

In one analysis of America’s status as an empire, Charles Maier makes the following interesting distinction. Asking himself the question whether America can rank as an empire among empires, and if so on what grounds compared to earlier historical cases, he distinguishes two historical stages in the American case: America as an empire of production followed by America as an empire of consumption. By the latter term Maier does not, as one may briefly expect, refer to America’s era of consumerism and the cultural forms attending it. What he evokes is not America as an empire with the full panoply of the soft power of its culture of consumerism. No, he wishes to bring out the stark contrast between America as the marvel of productive prowess that it was in the mid-20th century and the America that can no longer produce all it wishes to consume. So from being a net exporter of goods it produced, it turned into a net importer, with its trade balance duly reflecting this shift. From being a creditor nation it had turned into a debtor nation, losing independence and freedom of action in the process. Now

if there are signs of empire declining to be read in these secular trends, of an empire depending not only on borrowed money, but on borrowed time, are they beginning to dawn on the broader American population? And if so, what effect do they have on America's over-all state of mind?

It doesn't take the documentary eye of a Michael Moore to conjure up a visual America replete with the signs of decay, decadence and defeat. Forgotten veterans of America's far-away wars – far-away geographically, but more dramatically far-away from the public consciousness, repressed and pushed out of the public sphere – bring to mind Georg Gross' depictions of World War I veterans limping through Berlin streets. There is a seething anger among Americans, aimed at the impotence of presidents, of politics, aimed at the one-percent of the obscenely rich, an anger thrashing about wildly, yet unable to find meaningful expression, other than in a politics of resentment, Tea party politics, gun-toting and empty patriotic gestures. It is the anger of the self-styled militia, vindictive and utterly nihilistic. If there is a changing American character to be recognized here, we need a Richard Hofstadter to do it for us. After all, he has done it before, magisterially describing for us the paranoid style in American politics.

And yet, paranoia as a metaphor seems to cover only part of what I wish to capture. Paranoia does not stretch any farther than the lunatic fringe whose conspiratorial fantasies see the federal government in Washington, DC. as one big plot against the freedoms of individual Americans. As a metaphor it does not begin to account for statistics that show the proportion of Americans who still trust a government institution like Congress to be a meager 7% or the proportion of Americans who expect their children to be worse off than they are to be a staggering two thirds. These are signs of collective disaffection in the face of a dysfunctional political system and of a collective sense of loss of control and direction. Nor is

it only a matter of politics and a lack of citizen empowerment. It doesn't take the conspiratorial view of Hofstadter's paranoid style to see the economic system as producing ever growing income and property gaps. You don't have to be a Riesman-like inside-dopester to take seriously a view of the world of finance as driven by self-interest, geared against standards of decency and public service, a view presented in an award-winning, muck-raking documentary film like *Inside Job* (Charles H. Ferguson, 2010) It is a world of sharks, sharpers, and conmen, where banks are betting against their own customers, and where suckers are born every minute. If all this has led to a massive breakdown of social trust, it is not so much a sign of paranoia as it is of rational people who duly feel duped.

There is a number of best-selling books that have all tried to diagnose this mounting distrust, this erosion of America's social capital or of its habits of the heart, all noticing secular trends away from golden ages of civic enthusiasm and levels of engaged public debate and of trust worthy of a republic (cf. Bellah; Putnam; Fukuyama). They all notice a secular slippage away from Tocquevillean standards of a multi-stranded associative life, of an erosion of civil religion and civic participation, of a loss of social capital. They all see the downward slope of democratic vigor, yet tend to miss the aspect of a rational assessment of reality behind it. Rather than people bowling alone because they no longer join social clubs, people have chosen to withdraw from politics, have withdrawn their trust from economic institutions, and no longer believe what they are told by talking heads on their TV's. They have done this because they have knowledge of Wall Street inside jobs and related fraud, not because they have let themselves be passively "framed" by the relentless distortion of public debate that now passes for TV journalism. Outside the dysfunctional media landscape, where enlightened public debate has been bought out by private capital and the nihilistic ideology of corporate interests, many are now exploring ways to restore

“social capital,” finding ways of discussing a political agenda that no longer will get a fair hearing in the traditional halls of the republic. If the American character is morphing once again, it is not in the direction of people bowling alone, but toward the “agora,” the online marketplace of ideas and organized action, of life in cyberspace. It may not be the only crowd roaming America’s public space, a lonely crowd it certainly isn’t.

This ironically takes us back to the theme of “primary groups” as the mainstay of Tocqueville’s civil society. Ever since Polanyi’s “Great Transformation,” or Trachtenberg’s “incorporation” of America, there has been an ongoing quest for signs of primary groups surviving and kicking. If the advent of modernity meant the demise of communitarian settings and primary relationships, students of society kept spotting primary groups in the most unlikely settings. In urban life, where the early Chicago School had explored “urbanism as a way of life,” and celebrated its modernity, individualism, and cosmopolitanism, integrated community structures were found to have survived, even thrived, as Herbert Gans showed in his *Urban Villagers*. If the advent of new media, such as radio, spawned big national broadcasting corporations, this need not have been the only, pre-ordained outcome. As Lizabeth Cohen showed in her *Making a New Deal*, working-class communities in a metropolis like Chicago for a brief period managed to harness the medium to give voice to the local community rather than the impersonal corporatism that characterizes the current media landscape. If, in the world of industrial work, Taylorism and the rationalization of production meant the reduction of individual workers to mere cogs in a machine, early industrial relations research in, e.g., Elton Mayo’s classic Hawthorne studies pointed up the power of informal groups on the work floor to bend the rigidity of imposed production norms. If in politics the individual voter was seen as increasingly alienated and atomized, studies at the local level once again showed the role played

by informal groups, inspiring an interpretive paradigm, popular in the 1950s, known as pluralist elitism. Robert Dahl's *Who Governs* is the classic reference here, although David Riesman's *Lonely Crowd* memorably contributed to the new paradigm with its view of what he called "veto groups," informal groups strong enough to block political decisions they do not like, yet insufficiently strong to have things their own way. It is basically a return to classic Tocquevillean intimations about American politics as the interplay of a multiplicity of groups (cf. Gans; Cohen 1990; Roethlisberger; Dahl).

Yet, undeniably, all these examples can be seen as so many exercises in nostalgia, as studies of lost causes. If processes of incorporation, under auspices of an impersonal neo-liberalism, have now gone global, can we possibly conceive of a response along "primary group" lines to get us out of the "iron cage" of globalization? For an answer we might look at the ways in which an international commonwealth, literally a republic, a *res publica*, organizes itself around issues of human rights, the environment, and economic inequality, through the network possibilities of the World Wide Web. In areas like these, on a global scale, the social capital is being formed of a civil society that is truly trans-national.

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**THE ECOPOETICS OF MAGIC:
JOY HARJO'S UNIVERSAL
AND DREAMY PLACES**

João de Mancelos

Resumo: Joy Harjo é uma das mais proeminentes poetas ameríndias da sua geração. Neste artigo, classifico e analiso os diversos tipos de espaço que emergem na sua obra: a) lugares de comunicação com o universo; b) locais que podem apenas ser visitados em sonhos; c) lugares onfálicos. O meu objetivo é chamar à atenção para a importância espiritual e estética desses espaços, e detetar padrões e mitos reconfigurados. Incluo citações de alguns poemas e excertos de uma entrevista inédita que Harjo me concedeu em Junho de 2001.

Palavras-chave: Joy Harjo; Eco-poética; lugar; sonho; poesia ameríndia.

Abstract: Joy Harjo is one of the most prominent Native American poets of her generation. In my paper, I classify and analyze the different types of space that emerge in her poetry: a) places of communication with the universe; b) places that can only be visited in dreams; c) places of origin. My objective is to draw attention to the spiritual and

aesthetic importance of these spaces, and search for patterns and reconfigured myths. I include quotations from her poems and excerpts from an unpublished interview Harjo gave me in June 2001.

Keywords: Joy Harjo; Ecopoetics; place; dream; Native American poetry.

1. Introduction: Enough room for many spaces

Many Native Americans believe in the existence of magical spaces – “place[s] where understanding is sudden and brilliant” as Joy Harjo explains in an interview conducted by Sharyn Stever (80). The Black Hills, for instance, are recognized as sacred places to the Lakotas and the Cheyennes, and the same happens with Bear Butte to the Arapahos, or the tall rock of Bear Lodge Butt to the Arikaras (Sundstrom 164, 179, 181, 184).

In the above-mentioned spaces, the human being can easily communicate with the spirits of the ancestors, the gods and even the entire universe. Rightly so, when describing those places in her poetry, Harjo does not restrict herself to the physical dimension of the landscape, but uses her sensitivity to reveal what transcends the empirical: the *genius loci*, the guardian spirit or the special atmosphere of a place.

Analyzing the literary production of Harjo, from *She Had Some Horses* (1989) to *A Map to the Next World* (2000), I detect and classify the following types of space:

- a) Places of communication with the universe;
- b) Places that can only be visited in dreams;

- c) Places of origin;
- d) Places visited or evoked during a physical journey;
- e) Spaces of fear.

In this article, I only discuss the three first types of space. I elected those because they are frequently mentioned in Harjo's literary work and interviews; they are, up to a certain extent, coincidental; and the writer's technique and imagination are at their best when describing them. My objective is to draw attention to the spiritual and aesthetic importance of these spaces, and search for patterns and myths.

In order to do so, I analyze several of Harjo's poems, old and new. I resort to the opinion of several essayists, and to an unpublished interview Harjo granted me, in June 2001.

2. The universal places

For the American Indians, the human being is but a part of a universal unity, a concept that Harjo explains in the text "All your Enemies Will Be Vanquished":

. . . we are all heavenly bodies in a dynamic interchange with the earth, sun, other planets and virtually all life. Planets do have energy and speak to each other and interact with humans. The energy of planets can be measured and there are literally exchanges of energy between them, a conversation if you will, an exchange of consciousness. We are a community together, breathe together. (Harjo 2000: 67)

In other words, according to Harjo, we are all part of one single body, one single thought, one single kind of cosmic conscience

called “One”. This concept is not unique to the American Indians and can indeed be found in different places around the world – in Buddhism, in Celtic mythology or in Nordic legends. Nevertheless Harjo takes this idea and creates a myth of it by mentioning it so often in her poetry and interviews that it comes across to the reader as something innate in the American Indian.

Harmony with the Universe, with nature and with the spirits can be found in certain special places which are normally called vortexes, since strong flows of spiritual energy converge there binding all living and non-living things (Petit 6). In *Secrets from the Center of the World*, Harjo uses various expressions to define these places: “center of miracles” (1989: 14), “whirlpool of sand” (1989: 6), or again “vortex of circling sand” (1989: 16). As Laura Coltelli notes, all of these titles point to the idea of a magical center where the powers wind together as in the sail of a mill, but where they also unravel (6).

Vortexes are focal points – saturated with telluric and spiritual energy – that only the most sensitive people manage to detect (Molyneaux 52). Nevertheless the type of places that are associated with the sacred varies a lot from culture to culture. For the Pawnees, for example, they are the plains where according to legend the animals used to gather; for the Polynesians it is the ocean that grants the sailors an unparalleled wisdom; while for the Maori these places are mainly rocks, caves and crystals – mineral and lifeless elements (Molyneaux 32-33).

For Harjo, and other American Indian authors of the southeast (such as N. Scott Momaday), the magic places are first and foremost places of exile and are seemingly uninhabitable. They are rocks, sands, cactuses and fossilized trees that seem capable of surviving over the ages (Harjo 1989: 32). Maybe for this very reason these places please the spirits, invite reflection and allow communication between the “I” and the “whole”. A good example of these magic

spaces is found in this passage from *Secrets from the Center of the World*:

Near Round Rock is a point of balance between two red stars. Here you may enter galactic memory, disguised as whirlpool of sand, and discover you are pure event mixed with water, occurring in time and space, as sheep, a few goats, graze, keep watch nearby. (Harjo 1989: 6)

Putting it in other words, the individual shares nature as if the body were also in a rock, in the waters of a river or in the animals that gently graze.

Another example of this process can be found in “Remember”, a text marked by the anaphoric repetition of the title word (reinforcing the dangers of forgetting), and built around several enumerations of natural elements: “the sky”, “the star”, “the moon”, etc. (Harjo 1997: 40). Both rhetorical strategies grant the text a hypnotic rhythm and a structure that resemble a Native American litany or chant.

In this poem, human beings and nature interact in such an intimate way that they *change* attributes. In one aspect, the people become earth – “Remember the earth whose skin you are: red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth / brown earth, we are earth” (Harjo 1997: 40); on the other hand, the fauna and flora acquire human qualities – “Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their / tribes, their families, their histories, too” (*ibidem*).

In my opinion, this double approach between humans and the natural elements generates a partition space, an interdependence, in which understanding and communion are perfectly possible: “Remember that you are this universe and this universe is you. / Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you (*ibidem*).

For a contemporary westerner it is difficult to understand and accept such an anti-individualistic concept like that of the One. After

all, as Álvaro de Campos (one of the heteronyms of the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa) and later D.H. Lawrence ask in texts dedicated to Whitman, what could be more disgusting than the apparent dissolution of the personality, the yielding to unknown powers, the integration into a system in which the individual is but a tiny part? However, among the American Indians the ability to blend momentarily with the universe is seen as worthwhile as much for the person as for the elements of nature. Through that symbiosis an exchange of energies takes place, the physical and the spiritual, the profane and the sacred, the human and the natural, all becoming united and thus creating harmony.

For this very reason, the American Indians seek moments of epiphany, searching for space, nature and the spirits *through prayer*. As Harjo states in a poem from *In Mad Love and War*, “To pray you open your whole self / To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon (Harjo 1990: 65). Such openness brings the conscience of the “I” into harmony with the conscience of all the others, and results in a wisdom which goes beyond mere empirical knowledge, one which is provided by means of the senses (*ibidem*).

In several of the poems and reflections present in *A Map to the Next World: Poems and Tales*, Harjo makes contact with the *genius loci*, through prayer, and obtains a Joycean epiphany that is simultaneously poetic and spiritual. Her prayers require meditation, withdrawal, and take place at dawn:

Each day is a ceremonial progression in which every human takes part. We do so either consciously or unconsciously. You can prepare by setting the alarm clock and jumping into the world with anxiety, or you can still set the alarm clock and prepare for the day, by singing, by prayer, by a small acknowledgment of the day itself. . . I could see the energy as it sparkled, fed the plants, entered and left my spirit refreshed. . . Maybe the spirits of the

days live in the world above the earth we call dawn and stand reverently as the sun arrives in the appointed place in the east. (Harjo 2000: 58-59)

This long poetic prose, “Ceremony”, reminds me of Leslie Silko’s homonymous first novel, published in 1977, and highly acclaimed by most critics. The New Mexican writer describes the journey of Tayo, a Laguna Pueblo Indian, in search for his heritage, lore and origins. One of the most touching moments of the narrative occurs when Tayo listens to his people praying to the sun:

Sunrise!
We come at sunrise
to greet you.
We call you
at sunrise.
Father of the clouds
you are beautiful
at sunrise.
Sunrise!
(Silko 1986: 182)

According to the majority of the south-eastern and south-western Native American beliefs, the best moment to pray is at dawn. At that moment, humans are closer to the spirits, can easily communicate with them, and benefit from their blessings. These descend from the sky in the form of a mystical energy – similar to the one that can be found in vortexes (Zimmerman 1997: 12-13).

It is interesting to notice that the ability to be related with the entire universe is not exclusive to the human beings: even among non-rational or inanimate beings, inter-dependence and contact exist. For example, a single leaf (the individual) contains all of the

characteristics of the tree that created it and of the plant kingdom. In a Whitmanian sense, it can as well symbolize the whole of existence in its cosmic framework. In the words of Harjo: "It is possible to understand the world from studying a leaf. You can comprehend the law of aerodynamics, mathematics, poetry and biology through the complex beauty of such a perfect structure" (1996a: 57).

This idea is in line with the philosophy of Lao Tsé and Alberto Caeiro (another heteronym of Pessoa): a river is all rivers, a mountain all mountains, a human being all human beings etc. Therefore reposing in shelter or travelling throughout the world are synonymous, because the land of birth has itself the essential characteristics of all lands. In this context, the magical place of Harjo is not only the state of Oklahoma but the entire world.

3. The dreamy places

In Harjo's works there are also magical spaces that can be visited only in dreams or in trances. The belief in a dreamy place is part of the mythologies of many American Indian tribes and is reflected in several rituals (Molyneaux 1995: 35). Among the Omaha, for example, the neophytes were submitted to the so-called *nozibzho* (*sleepwalking*), which consists of a four-day fast. It was believed that adolescents would reach a point at which they would forget what was going on around them and would enter an *imaginary place*, similar to the place where the tribe had originally emerged. There they were supposed to concentrate on positive things, like hunts for example, and await a vision, which later they were to share with an elder who had had a similar epiphany.

Having reached adulthood, the shamans used to make journeys to these placeless places using hallucination stimulants, namely a substance extracted from peyote. Members of the *Native American*

Church and participants in tribal rituals still use this process to hallucinate over mythical spaces (Zimmerman 1997: 55, 100).

Harjo too in her poetry claims that she has the power to travel using a form of self-hypnosis, known in parapsychology as *astral projection*. According to Hans Holzer, there are various documented cases of people who leave their bodies late at night or in the early hours of the morning, when the level of consciousness is at its lowest. During these moments everything seems clearer than usual to them and they can visit people or places located very far away in just a few seconds. After these experiences, fascinating for some, terrifying for others – they return to sleep or they awaken, frequently exhausted because of the amount of psychic energy they have used (Holzer 26, 27, 30).

In works before *A Map to the Next World: Poems and Tales*, Harjo refers to this phenomenon, but only in this collection does she make it explicit in two philosophic poems suggestively entitled “Travelling through the Dark” and “Sleepwalkers”. In the latter, and remembering her childhood, the poet states:

Consciousness is larger than what most people accepted as reality. I didn't know any better, I hadn't gone to school yet, so I traveled freely through layers past the physical world. When everyone else slept, my spirit excited to exit my body, and I traveled up and down the neighborhood, first walking through fences to play with the neighborhood dogs, then flying to the moon and other planets, through time and space to other dramas. (Harjo 2000: 43)

The author specifies some of the destinations of these mental journeys: an African desert, an Asiatic jungle or one of the mythical places that her music tours lead to: Alaska, Equator, British Columbia, Nicaragua, etc. (Harjo 2000: 102). “Compassionate Fire”, an extensive

piece of poetic prose, is an example of the exploration of the mental world by means of intimate and emotional landscapes. In a lucid dream the narrator travels to Cambodia, witnessing the cremation of the dictator Pol Pot, former leader of the Khmer Rouge. The dreamy environment is so dense that Harjo can sense sounds and smells even when physically thousands of kilometres away in a hotel in New York:

I smelled roses in my room, the sticky ash of human fire, the ozone of the spirits. I stood there at that fire as evil burned. The land was rich with the songs of the birds who had kept singing through all the killings, through the slash of torture, the burn of betrayal. (Harjo 2000: 27)

In order to create this surrealist atmosphere, Harjo takes recourse to synaesthesia, to personification and to particularly suggestive images that appeal to the sensory organs of the reader:

I found myself at the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York City, though it was spring and the air was urgent with the perfume of fresh leaves and new flowers. I was restless that night as I tried to sleep in the hotel room, accompanied by the sounds of thousands who surrounded me in that city, souls clammering (sic) in the present, from the past and present and possible future. (Harjo 2000: 26)

Any one of these places that I have mentioned is *real*, although the author has made them surreal by having been transported to them *through the mind and dreams* long before ever having visited them physically.

Then other spaces are unreal – certain omphalic places and lost paradises that the author mentions. A good example is found in the

poetic prose “The Flood”, a text in which the narrative mode and the lyric combine to evoke an episode full of oddity but which Harjo manages to turn verisimilar thanks to the detailed description. In her youth, close to the lake where she used to fetch water, Harjo meets a water snake similar to the legendary Mizhipichew, an animal that represents the underworld, wisdom, sexuality and the dark side of the earth (Molyneaux 47). In the text the reptile appears under the form of a roaming musician with the power to bewitch the youth and later as a man swimming naked in a lake. This last vision, perturbs her so much that she flees (Harjo 1996a: 14).

The ritual of passage then occurs, symbolised by the delirium into which the girl sinks. A part of her refutes what it had seen in the lake, which symbolises wisdom and fertility and represented by the snake and the naked man (Cirlot 331). However another part of herself demands a return to the waters of the magic lake in order to join the One and to learn the language of the myth. It is this last force that wins and so it is as such that the adolescent returns, not to the real lake where she had been hours before but to a lake that exists in dreams alone:

I was taken with a fever and nothing cured it until I dreamed my fiery body dipped in the river where it fed into the lake. My father carried me as if I were a newborn, as if he were presenting me once more to the world, and when he dipped me I was quenched, pronounced healed. (Harjo 1996a: 15)

This is obviously an immersion ritual (almost a baptism), a coming of age, in which human beings and nature reunite in the space of the dream, in order to celebrate the transformation of the body and soul of the neophyte.

Any of the spaces that I have mentioned, as well as the journey to them that is made, fits in to a tradition that is not only that of the

American Indians, but that is *universal*. The Australian Aborigines believe that spirits travel through dreams and become incarnate in the people that dreamed them. The Lacotas believe that through visions one can travel to the land of supernatural beings and receive a sacred grace. In *Genesis* the dream of Jacob is described where he sees a stairway to heaven that the angels scale to reach the Lord (Molyneux 13, 34, 43).

Harjo's dreamy journeys have, nevertheless, a particularity that illustrates how the author manages to appropriate – or rather *adapt and subvert* – myths. While in the majority of civilizations dreams reveal places that merely make sense *in the context* of their mythology and their geography, Harjo has the power to travel to places beyond the USA and to witness events that are not directly related with the history of the American Indians (like the funeral of Pol Pot for example).

Nevertheless, note that the author always manages to make the link – through reflection of the events that she witnesses – to the past and present of Native Americans. In the poem “Compassionate Fire”, for instance, after the reference made to Pol Pot's funeral, Harjo compares him to Andrew Jackson, a large slave owner and American President, who removed several southern tribes by force from lands guaranteed to them by federal treaties, and who was responsible for some of the worst massacres of Native Americans. Both Pot and Jackson give rise to one of Harjo's sourest meditations upon the origins and persistence of evil in the past and in the contemporary world (Harjo 2000: 27).

4. The places of origin

Anthropologically, “places of origin” are those where the primordial creation of a tribe or of a certain area (a territory, a

kingdom, etc.) occurred. Myths and legends portray a wide range of omphallic places: the cave where Mother Earth gave birth to a tribe; the tree the ancestors used to descend from the heavenly heights; the lake where the serpent of wisdom was born and still inhabits, though hidden from the eyes of the humans, etc. (Nabokov 1992: 50).

Harjo's poetic prose "Chrystal Lake" describes a place as idyllic as surrealistic, a magic space where humans and nature interact, and where time comes to a stop. This paradise-like locale comprises an open area (a lake) and a closed space (a semi-submerged cave). I argue that both the cave and the lake have a deep anthropological — if not archetypal — meaning. In the most ancient myths, caves represented the uterus of the earth, and frequently constituted natural labyrinths where pre-historic rites of passage used to take place. On the other hand, many mythologies declare water to be the origin of all living things: in Japan, for example, the goddess Izanami and her companion Izanagi turned water into land; in Arizona, the world was created by two Hopi marine deities; in ancient Egypt, the generating goddess was Neith, lady of the ocean and of the celestial waters; in *Enuma Elish*, a parable written in 1750 b. C., the salted water (Tiamat) and the sweet water (Apsu), originated all the gods. (Husain 1997: 46-47).

In "Crystal Lake", Harjo conjugates these two powerful elements — the cave and the water — in one single place: the semi-submerged cave. It is there that a young girl will undergo a fantastic rite of passage. Harjo tells the whole episode by resorting to the so-called historical present (which many poets designate "time of the dream"), and presents the reader with more than a few surrealistic metaphors, such as "The gills bleeding this gift of air onto the gritty rocks" or "wet blanket of noon" (Harjo 1990: 33).

The place is boiling with life, echoing a prelapsarian world: "dragonflies fly between heaven and hell", "bats fly at perfect

random”, “mythical fish [swim] as long as rainbows after the coming storm” (*ibidem*). The episode occurs during Harjo’s puberty, an Eden-like stage of life, normally associated with fertility, physiological and psychological change, and awakening to adulthood. Several passages in the text point, directly or indirectly, to the teenager’s discovery of sexuality: “I was restless in adolescent heat”; “riding the sling between my newborn hips”; “the sudden turn of my body” (*ibidem*).

Time and space combine so that the youngster may have an epiphany that occurs when she listens to the mysterious voices that order: “Come home, come home” (*ibidem*). The reader is unaware of who pronounces those words: could it be the echo of a statement produced by the girl? Is it, perhaps, a request made by the ancestors that suggest the return to the American Indian traditional ways of life? Or can it be the subconscious of the narrator herself, a dissenting voice wishing to return to childhood, and denying adulthood? No matter how one interprets this passage, the *genius locus* exercises a powerful effect, physical and psychological, on the adolescent: “I don’t remember any words, but the shushing of the sun through dried grass, the nibble of the carp at the bottom of the boat, the slow melting of my body” (*ibidem*).

During a few instants, the person and the place fuse in a single consciousness that allows the girl to feel the presence and soul of several elements of nature: the fish, the sun and the cave. Metaphorically, the lake becomes not only the place of origin of the tribe but also of the girl as an adult – and as a poet capable of synchronizing her thoughts and emotions with the wonders of the earth.

5. Conclusion: Writing home

In the opening poem of *Secrets from the Center of the World*, Harjo states “My house is the red earth; it could be the center of the world. I’ve heard of New York, Paris or Tokyo called the center of the World” (Harjo 1989: 2). Among all of these spaces, where then is *Harjo’s home*? In a vortex of universal energy or in a dreamy place? In the landscapes and regions that the poet likes to evoke, somewhere in New Mexico, Arizona, Oklahoma or Alabama? Or in another place? The answer is given by the author herself in an interview with Sharyn Stever and could not be more surprising, albeit logical:

. . . my overall sense of home means something larger than any place nameable here in this land; it’s as if this land is of that larger place, a hint as to the larger story, and it makes a spiral. The poem then becomes a home, sometimes with a glimpse, an eye toward the story of origin, or a place for the human understanding of a hummingbird. (Harjo 1996b: 76)

To conclude, Harjo’s poetry is the home and her writing is made of the earth and of all the magic places where energies unite, time melts and mankind is reconciled with nature. This personal appropriation makes the space as magical as it is unique, as spiritual as it is real.

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**EDWARD SAID, V. S. NAIPAUL
AND THE CONDITION OF THE EXILE**

Jacinta Maria Matos

Resumo: O artigo centra-se na hostilidade mútua entre duas figuras de grande relevância para os Estudos Pós-coloniais – Edward Said e V. S. Naipaul – e nas perspectivas opostas que cada uma propõe sobre a condição do exílio. Interrogando-se sobre as razões dessa bem documentada hostilidade, o estudo investiga os pontos em comum entre as duas figuras, em termos de origem, antecedentes familiares e educação, traçando as respetivas trajetórias de vida para explicar como cada uma chegou a uma posição muito própria sobre o papel do intelectual no mundo pós-colonial.

Palavras-chave: Edward Said; V. S. Naipaul; exílio; Estudos Pós-coloniais.

Abstract: The essay focuses on the mutual hostility between two central figures in the field of Postcolonial Studies – Edward Said and V.S. Naipaul – and on their opposing perspectives on the condition of the exile. Interrogating the possible reasons for their well-documented hatred of each other, the essay investigates what they have in common in terms of origin,

background and education, and traces their trajectories to try and explain why each arrived at his particular position on the role of the intellectual in a postcolonial world.

Keywords: Edward Said; V. S. Naipaul; exile; Postcolonial Studies.

Allow me to start with a short piece of autobiography: when, in the mid- to late eighties, I was starting to write my PhD thesis on contemporary English travel writing (under Maria Irene's inspiring supervision), I inevitably came across V. S. Naipaul. His books on India and the Arab countries fascinated me, because they seemed to come from somebody who was working at the same time inside and outside the long and distinguished tradition of English travel writing about the Orient. They spoke both with a voice that I could easily recognize, the voice of the arrogant, prejudiced, supercilious upper-class Englishman (or, to use the correct critical term, the voice of the colonizer), and with the voice of the (ex-)colonized, who was now appropriating and redirecting that tradition to make it speak of the deterritorialized, decentred condition of the emigrant and the exile, a figure cast afloat in a postcolonial world of uncertain choices, complex allegiances and split identities.

Just as inevitably, I came across Edward Said's seminal book *Orientalism* (and then his other ground-breaking work in the field of postcolonial studies), and was equally excited by the discovery of a theoretical framework which could help me understand more fully and give a new significance to the genre I was proposing to study and analyse.

The two figures came productively together in my research around travel writing, but they also became inextricably linked

in other, more unexpected and uncomfortable ways: when I read Said's essay, "Intellectuals in the Post-colonial World" (published in *Salmagundi*, 1986), I found, to my surprise and dismay, that the critic I had learned to respect and admire had a very different view about an author who I was quickly coming to regard as one of the most interesting and enlightening voices on the postcolonial condition, that very same condition that Said was both a conscious representative of and a lucid, clear-sighted commentator on.

In that essay, where Said tries to find a new place and an alternative stance for Third World intellectuals in the highly volatile world of post- or neo-colonialism, Naipaul is portrayed as an example of those "rare – luckily. . . extremely rare – Third World intellectuals who manfully ascribed most of their present barbarities, tyrannies, and degradations to their own innately native histories, histories that were pretty bad before colonialism and that have reverted to that state after colonialism" (1986: 47). When, later in the essay, he comes to speak in more detail about Naipaul's work (in particular about the Indian and Islamic journeys that I had just read and was pondering on), his comments are even more devastating:

The most attractive and immoral move, however, has been Naipaul's, who has allowed himself quite consciously to be turned into a witness for the Western prosecution. There are others like him who specialize in the thesis of what one of them has called self-inflicted wounds, which is to say that we "non-Whites" are the cause of all our problems, not the overly maligned imperialists. (*idem* 53)

As for the actual report about life in India and the Arab countries that Naipaul's travel books provide, Said deems it "ignorant, illiterate and cliché-ridden," "full of the cheapest and the easiest of colonial mythologies about wogs and darkies, myths that even Lord Cromer

and Foster's Turtons and Burtons would have been embarrassed to trade in outside their private clubs" (*ibidem*).

Could Said have been talking about the same books that I had read? Was it possible that I had got Naipaul completely wrong, and that such an authoritative critic as Said was right? Was Naipaul a traitor to the cause of the newly-emerging nations, were his insights into the condition of an independent, postcolonial India or Indonesia valueless? Did he unquestioningly side with the centre, rejecting his origins and identity as a member of that forgotten periphery that had been silenced by colonial discourse?

I battled with these questions (one idol being toppled by another), but what bothered me in particular about passages like the ones I quoted above was their extremely aggressive, violent – even virulent – tone, and the sneaking suspicion that somehow Said had lost the fair and unbiased perspective we expect of theoretical discourse, and had allowed a personal dislike, a subjective (do I dare say the word?) prejudice to intervene and cloud his judgment of Naipaul.

A few decades later I am still troubled by the issue, and fear that I cannot give (I might as well admit it from the outset), a satisfactory answer to this question. In my PhD thesis (again to be frank to the reader) I skirted the problem by referring to Said's scathing views on Naipaul as typical of the by then pervasive critical opinion that regarded Naipaul as a thorn in the flesh of postcolonial studies, an uncomfortable, politically incorrect figure who refused to subscribe to a positive strategy of empowerment for Third World countries. Such critical views clearly had no time for less celebratory, darker visions of the newly-acquired condition of independence and of the search for a new identity that it entailed. Was I unfair to Said?

I also argued that Naipaul was a complex, many-sided figure, who *did* speak with the recognizable voice of the centre, but in so doing was setting himself up as a paradigm of the mimicry that the colonial system demanded of its subjects, thereby exposing

the internal contradictions, tensions and ruptures of imperial discourses and practices. I have since, in my continued interest in Naipaul, extended this argument, and come to regard his writing as deliberately occupying that space of interdiction which must never be crossed by either colonizer or colonized so as to perpetuate the difference between them, that “area of darkness” which Imperial education intended should be left vacant, unoccupied, a buffer zone between the colonizer and the colonized (cf. Matos 2003: 184) that was meant to guarantee the authority of the one over the other.

I did not deny that much in Naipaul is objectionable, shocking, sometimes even revolting, but it seemed to me then (it still seems to me now) that he was, with unusual and commendable honesty and frankness, admitting to a part of himself that he could not ignore and that he deliberately sets himself up for our contemplation and instruction as a by-product of colonialism. And then, of course, there were Naipaul’s other *personae* that teach us about the loss of a pristine identity and of a secure frame of reference, of a confusion and anxiety which spoke – with equal honesty and frankness – of the postcolonial’s impossible quest for simple and single origins, beginnings and self-definitions. Was I over-generous to Naipaul?

But none of this is a satisfactory way to address a question that has been at the back of my mind since then, and that I would like to explore more fully in this essay. Why is Said so harsh (possibly even unfair) in his criticism of Naipaul? Why is it that he cannot read, in Naipaul, all that I think is there? Why is Said so persistent and consistent in using derogatory and insulting epithets about Naipaul, variously calling him a “scavenger” “in the ruins and derelictions of postcolonial history” (2000: 100), “a belated Kipling” (*idem*: 115) and a shameless “postcolonial renegade” (1985: 98)?

I am not sure, as I said before, that I can answer that question fully and leave the reader with the comfort of a well thought-out, well-argued, fully convincing explanation. But what I can do – and

will try and offer for discussion and possibly for revision – is to give an account of how I have come to deal with these issues, a process which turned (not surprisingly) into an investigation of how these two figures look at their own situation in the world and give meaning to their common condition as exiles.

In so doing my primary objective is not to exculpate either for what in both appears to me to be wrong, incorrect, reductive, false or unfair. Rather than pass cursory judgment on Said and Naipaul, I would rather adopt the more positive stance of trying to understand why each arrived at their respective positions on postcolonial issues, an inquiry which, I hope, will prove rather more interesting and productive.

The starting-point of this inquiry was obvious, and begins with something that always struck me as strange and puzzling: despite their different origins, nationalities and life-stories, Said and Naipaul have so much in common, in terms of background, education, their experience of the diaspora, and eventually their status as writers and intellectuals (recognized not only in the West but in the whole world), that you would expect that these similarities would somehow give the first a good understanding of (if not actually an immediate sympathy for) the second. This, however, is very clearly not the case.

Let me start by briefly enumerating the similarities between the two figures: they were both born in the mid-1930s, in countries which were under British rule or influence (Naipaul in Trinidad, Said in Palestine), thus having a common experience of life under British colonialism. They were both educated in British schools of a type that was common throughout the empire, places where, in Said's words, local students "were all treated as if [they] should (or *really* wanted to) be English" (2000: 39; italics in the original) institutions that, according to Naipaul, demanded "a blind, driven kind of colonial studying" (*idem*: 9). In short, schools that were

intended to form colonial elites by encouraging the mimicry of the centre, while providing an idealized, unreachable model of what Englishness is and should be. (Macaulay still cast a long, dark shadow over an Empire where the sun never set).

They both belonged to minority groups, communities that were isolated – insulated – from the rest of society (Naipaul was part of the Indian community, one of many in the multi-ethnic society of the West Indies; Said's family were Palestinian Christians living in Egypt). They both speak of going to school as their first experience of displacement, of not fitting in, and of the growing awareness of a difference that neither could, at the time, fully explain or rationalize, but which created them as “outsiders” in an unfriendly, strange world. This feeling of loneliness and separateness was increased by exposure to a culture that they could not relate to, a foreign world of “meadows, castles and Kings John” (Said 2000: 39) or of “fairy tale[s]”, “far off and dateless” (Naipaul 6), a literature that spoke of a place which “was two worlds away” (*idem* 10) from their private lives and the reality around them.

But books and reading provided both with an escape to a life of the mind that helped them overcome their condition as oddities and misfits: Naipaul developed, from age 11, the dream of being a writer, “a private idea, and a curiously ennobling one, separate from school and separate from the disordered and disintegrating life of our Hindu extended family” (5); Said, in his own words, “developed the habit of mentally extending the story presented in a book, pushing the limits to include [himself]; gradually [he] realized that [he] could become the author of [his] own pleasures, particularly those that took [him] as far away as possible from the choking impingements of family and school” (2000: 33).

Books, literature – echoes of another, distant world, that became for both, as children, objects of fascination but also of anxiety, an exhilarating world of the imagination where you could reconstruct

yourself as hero, but which also kept you at arm's length, forever reminding you that you "were not quite right" (Said 2000: 19) and that you could never feel at ease in this world because "too many questions got in the way" (Naipaul 10) of understanding and belonging.

Both Naipaul and Said later travelled to this distant world of the centre, the centre of culture and power far removed from the peripheries where they were born. They went there to pursue their studies in prestigious institutions and recognized centres of academic excellence – Naipaul to Oxford, with a scholarship from the British government, Said to a private school in the U.S., and then on to Princeton and Harvard. Neither returned to their place of origin for more than brief periods of time, having settled (if settled is the right word. . .) respectively in England and the U.S. for the rest of their lives.

Another experience of up-rootedness and displacement, another chance to belong that seems to have evaded both of them. As a West Indian in England and as a Palestinian and Arab in the U.S., Naipaul and Said remained irrevocably Others in the societies they now lived in and never ceased to feel "out of place" in the West. But going back had ceased to be an option: they were also at this point incapable of returning home and picking up life where they had left off. By this time, they both had become, technically speaking, exiles.

A close study of their biographies also reveals the amazing similarities in the ways they devised to minimize or overcome the painful absence of a familiar reality: they both created a base (I prefer to call it a base rather than a home), a secure and fixed point of reference amidst the instability and flux of lives led between two cultures and identities: Naipaul has lived in a cottage in Wiltshire (in the most idyllic part of the English countryside) since 1970; Said started and ended his academic career in Columbia, having lived in

New York for over 30 years. From this base, however, they struck out in all directions, travelling all over the world on professional assignments or private visits, with a restlessness that borders on the obsessive, and which I believe ultimately dramatizes their unending search for meaningful origins and destinations, clear-cut points of departure and arrival.

And it is precisely here – in their respective quests for a home and an identity – that they part company and go their different ways, never to meet again. Naipaul went first back to Trinidad in an attempt to regain the “security” (the word is his) of the colonial world that he had left behind. It didn’t work. The Trinidad he encountered was not the pure and pristine place of origin he had imagined, but a colonial creation, a world of “mimic men”, trying to escape the margin by parodying the centre. A centre which, by this time, had been transferred from the British to the Americans, leaving Naipaul, like all ex-colonials, without the old reference point against which to define themselves.

He tried again, further afield, in the long-lost world of family origins, in India. But in India Naipaul again encounters a postcolonial world, an independent country that has moved on from the India of his ancestors, that timeless place of the emigrant’s imagination which no longer exists among the chaotic, defiled, decayed India (again, the adjectives are his) that he describes in his Indian trilogy. What he does find in India is that his condition is irredeemably that of the Other. He discovers (and I am here paraphrasing him) that he is neither English nor Indian, that he is denied the victories of both. And he is ultimately regarded by both as inescapably alien.

Ultimately Naipaul came to recognize his quest for what it really is – an impossible dream. And this recognition provides the context for his other travel narratives, namely the books he wrote about the Arab countries, where he goes to confront the same issues he dealt with in his earlier narratives: the effects of what he sees as imperial

systems of cultural, if not literal, occupation and colonization. What he seeks there and what he therefore necessarily finds, are people, like him, who are radically split within themselves and alienated from the rest of society, by-products of a colonial domination which, when it ended, did not immediately and unproblematically bring to the ex-colonial a single, pure, pristine identity with which he/she could live.

On the basis of his subsequent work on Africa and the Arab countries, Naipaul's vision is and probably will remain a fractured one, made up of pieces that never quite come together as a whole, broken fragments that belong to different, even opposed worlds, out of which he cannot create a meaningful synthesis. He feels he has no home to go back to, and the only place he claims to belong to is the world of Literature. As Homi Bhabha has put it, he works to preserve an ideal of civility by transforming "the despair of postcolonial history into an appeal for the autonomy of art" (107). The void is still there, but just about made bearable in the rarefied regions of this idealized country – Literature with a capital L – which he chose to inhabit.

And what about Edward Said, a man who once said that the only place he really feels at home in is on an airplane and is credited with the invention of "travelling" theory, attempting to go back to the Jerusalem where he was born, and finding it under Israeli occupation? Or visiting Lebanon, where the family's holiday home had been literally destroyed during the civil war? Or returning to Egypt, where the cosmopolitan expatriate community he was part of had been disbanded after the Egyptian revolution and the emergence of Nasser and Arab nationalism? In a way, Said's homelessness is much more radical and profound than Naipaul's, the course of History having been so much more punishing to the places he could have gone back to to retrieve a sense of origins and beginnings. But in other ways of course it is not.

After 1967 and the Six-day War, Said knew where he stood and where “home” was – or at least where it should be. He has referred to this historical and autobiographical moment as “*the* dislocation that subsumed all the other losses, the disappeared worlds of my youth and upbringing, the unpolitical years of my education, the assumption of disengaged teaching and scholarship at Columbia” (2000: 293; italics in the original). He phrases this experience in the language of rebirth, as the death of an old identity and the emergence of “the self beneath or obscured by ‘Edward’” (*idem*: 294), “Edward” the oddity, the misfit, the lost child and youth he had been until then. And it was clearly the commitment to a political cause that transformed him, giving direction and destination to the displacement and up-rootedness of his condition. He now had not so much a home to go back to as a home to look forward to, no matter how deferred in time its existence might be.

I would like to end by quoting a few passages from what, for me, is one of Said’s most revealing – and for the purposes of this paper, more interesting – essays, “Reflections on Exile.” I read it as exemplary of Said’s capacity to engage with a political cause without erasing or smoothing down the complexities and ambiguities of his condition as an exile and of his many-sided identity as an academic, political commentator and activist, writer of newspaper articles and even musician. In this essay, he is still grappling with the difficulties of trying to make sense of what he himself terms “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place” (173), a state whose “essential sadness can never be surmounted” (*ibidem*) and the achievements of which “are permanently undermined by the loss of something left forever” (*ibidem*). It is a daunting task, no less so because it seems, from the start, so self-defeating, a mere gloss over a “condition of terminal loss” (*ibidem*), a vain attempt to regain and reclaim, through the act of writing, all that cannot in your personal life ever be recovered.

But the main reason why I would like to recall some of the ideas he expounds in that essay is that, when I re-read it with this paper in mind, so much of it seemed to me to speak directly about – and to – Naipaul himself, and to put into words, so much better than I ever could, an explanation of (although not an excuse for) some of those aspects of Naipaul’s work that Said has elsewhere damned:

Exiles feel. . . an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology – designed to reassemble an exile’s broken history into a new whole – is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today’s world. (Said 2001: 177)

Thus Naipaul’s dark vision and his unwillingness to subscribe to triumphant ideologies; thus Naipaul the “scavenger” who writes precisely about this unbearable state and from this impossible perspective where broken lives cannot be mended.

No matter how well they may do, exiles are always eccentrics who *feel* their difference (even as they frequently exploit it) as a kind of orphanhood. . . . Clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong. (Said 2001: 182)

At this extreme the exile can make a fetish of exile, a practice that distances him or her from all connections and commitments. (*idem*: 183)

Thus Naipaul’s refusal to commit himself to a cause – to *any* cause – or to speak on behalf of the Third World; thus Naipaul the “renegade”.

And finally, Said paraphrasing Adorno: “the only home truly available now, though fragile and vulnerable, is in writing” (*idem*: 184). Thus Naipaul’s exclusive allegiance to a deterritorialized, nationless ideal of “Literature”.

I seem to have come full circle and to have brought together again these two figures, after suggesting that, despite their common backgrounds, they went their separate ways and took divergent paths in the world of postcolonialism. But in no way is this intended to effect what would necessarily be an artificial and false reconciliation between the two. Writing may be the only abode available to the exile, but in the end there is writing and writing, and Naipaul’s and Said’s are of a very different kind. I prefer, therefore, to keep the two separate, and to accept that they are in many ways at war with each other, opposite if not actually irreconcilable figures trying to map out the confused geography of whole new territories of feeling and experience.

Or, if I may borrow Said’s words from “Reflections on Exile” one last time, when he speaks of the “plurality of vision” of the exile, one of the few pleasures and privileges that the exile may claim because they productively give rise “to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions” (186), I choose to think of the two figures as Said does about his own condition, as “contrapuntal”: separate but contiguous, fiercely independent but, despite themselves, somehow interconnected, both part of the chorus of postcolonial voices but each with his own, distinct and very audible, melodic line.

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**AN INTERRUPTING POEM:
ELIZABETH BISHOP'S "CRUSOE IN ENGLAND"**

Stephen Matterson

Resumo: A intertextualidade na poesia de Elizabeth Bishop é frequentemente descurada, e as citações e alusões na sua obra têm recebido uma atenção menor do que a dispensada a poetas como Marianne Moore e Robert Lowell. Mas, à medida que as suas cartas e outras obras têm saído à estampa, começa a ser possível avaliar com mais exatidão a sua prática intertextual. De natureza muitas vezes lúdica ("Sunday at Key West", um aceno despreocupado a Wallace Stevens), as práticas alusivas operam em geral na textura profunda do poema, como em "The Fish". Quando explícitas, implicam com frequência um investimento na objetividade, entrando-se imaginativamente na consciência de um outro, como é o caso de "From Trollope's Journal", de forma a tomar uma posição política através do uso da voz desse outro. Este artigo analisa o uso da alusão em Bishop com especial ênfase num dos seus poemas tardios mais longos, "Crusoe in England", em que a intertextualidade está presente desde o início na alusão a Defoe. A autora utiliza anacronisticamente uma citação de Wordsworth e reflete sobre a herança literária e o seu próprio posicionamento no âmbito da tradição poética. A análise das intertextualidades

neste poema permite-nos repensar a sua poesia, tendo em conta o uso da persona e a estratégia de uma autobiografia por assim dizer deslocada.

Palavras-chave: Elizabeth Bishop; “Crusoe in England”; poética; alusão; intertextualidade.

Abstract: Elizabeth Bishop’s intertextual practice is often overlooked, with her borrowings and allusions receiving less attention than those her mentor Marianne Moore and her friend Robert Lowell. But as more of Bishop’s work and her letters become available, we can start to assess her intertextuality a little more certainty than before. Her borrowings and usages are often playful (“Sunday at Key West” as a lighthearted glance at Wallace Stevens), and are typically embedded deeply in the poem, as in “The Fish.” When they are explicit they often involve an investment in objectivity, an imagined entry into another consciousness, as in “From Trollope’s Journal,” a tactic allowing political statement into the poem, voiced by another. This paper considers Bishop’s allusions with a focus on one of her longer, late works, “Crusoe in England.” This poem is, naturally, intertextual from the start, borrowing from Defoe. It also includes (anachronistically) a key quotation from Wordsworth, and Bishop examines literary heritage, and her own positioning in poetic tradition. I explore her borrowings and the implications of them for a reassessment of her poetry, and consider the use of persona that the poem involves, and the strategy of deflected autobiography.

Keywords: Elizabeth Bishop; “Crusoe in England”; poetics; allusion; intertextuality.

“Well, it takes an infinite number of things coming together, forgotten, or almost forgotten, last night’s dream, experiences past and present – to make a poem.”

Bishop, letter to Jerome Mazzaro, April 27, 1978.

In sharp contrast to those of her friend and mentor Marianne Moore, Elizabeth Bishop’s literary and textual allusions are characteristically muted and often playful. For Moore, allusiveness or borrowing almost turns into a method of writing. In the 1960 *Paris Review* interview with Donald Hall, she responds to the question of her “extensive use of quotations” with disarming frankness:

I was just trying to be honorable and not to steal things. I’ve always felt that if a thing had been said in the *best* way, how can you say it better? If I wanted to say something and somebody had said it ideally, then I’d take it but give the person credit for it. That’s all there is to it. If you are charmed by an author, I think it’s a very strange and invalid imagination that doesn’t long to share it. Somebody else should read it, don’t you think? (Moore 1960: 260)

Quotation for Moore becomes an engrained element of poetic texture. To put it another way, her poems absorb the allusions and quotations gleaned from a remarkably wide range of reading, so that they do not seem intrusive, do not interrupt the poem’s flow. Bishop is considerably less allusive than Moore, and in some significant ways her allusions are less absorbed into her poems. Often the allusiveness is playful; a good example is her conflation of two of the major poems of Wallace Stevens in her “Sunday at Key West”. By using her titles to indicate her borrowings, Bishop typically makes them obvious and apparent: examples here are “The Gentleman of

Shalott”, “Twelfth Morning; or What You Will” and “From Trollope’s Journal”. In this way, allusion obtrudes in her poems rather than being absorbed. In this paper I want to explore the interruptive effects of allusion, focussing particularly on her poem “Crusoe in England” from her 1976 collection *Geography III*.

“Crusoe in England” had an extraordinarily long gestation – even for Bishop the perfectionist who spent almost 20 years on her poem “The Moose”. She first recorded the starting idea for “Crusoe in England” when she was aged 23. In a letter from Summer 1934 while she was on holiday on Cuttyhunk Island off the Massachusetts coast she wrote:

On an island you live all the time in this Robinson Crusoe atmosphere; making this do for that, and contriving and inventing. . . . A poem should be made about making things in a pinch – & how it looks sad when the emergency is over. (Millier 62)

Thirty years later in August 1964 Bishop remarked in a letter to Robert Lowell that she had been working on “a poem about Robinson Crusoe”; apparently titled “Crusoe at Home” at that time (in Travisano 552). The poem was not finished in time to be included (as intended) in her 1965 collection *Questions of Travel*; she finally sent it to Howard Moss at *The New Yorker* where it was published in 1971, six years after first promising it to him.

The poem’s long journey is fascinating in that while the original impulse of “making things in a pinch” is maintained as a strand of meaning in the poem, it turns into only one of many among the poem’s rich accumulation of meanings and experiences over time; the life experiences of Bishop between the ages of 23 and 59. This 36 years is, as it happens, even longer than the 28 years Defoe sentenced his Crusoe to life on the uninhabited island (Alexander Selkirk, the factual original of Crusoe, was on his island for 4 years – and incidentally, on an entirely different island than the one Defoe

imagined for Crusoe).¹ This is not to suggest of course either that Bishop worked at all continuously on the poem that would become “Crusoe in England”. She seems to have worked at it intermittently but intensely; in this way it becomes one of the great poems of retrospection, the poet or the poet’s character at a point of looking back over a life. The final version is comparable in this regard to poems such as Robert Frost’s “Directive” and Wallace Stevens’ “Long and Sluggish Lines”, embodying a mature retrospection unavailable to Bishop the age of 23.

While “Crusoe in England” may be read as a deeply personal poem, it is, characteristically for Bishop, oblique in its personal representation. Again this may be seen as one of the effects of the long period of composition in that the poem becomes less tied to one occasion or event, and is consequently capable of flexible incorporation of many experiences. It is interesting in this respect to consider the contrasts between “Crusoe in England” and “In the Waiting Room”, the poem which precedes it in *Geography III*. “In the Waiting Room” opens the collection and records one dramatic moment of awakening for the child, who, almost 7 years old, is confused and distraught over questions of kinship and identity prompted by pictures in a *National Geographic* magazine in the dentist’s waiting room. The event is clearly autobiographical (in spite of the change of name for the aunt whom the child was accompanying), and Bishop wrote a prose account of it at the end of her posthumously published autobiographical essay “The Country Mouse”. Bishop takes care to make “Crusoe in England” and “In the Waiting Room” complement one another. The violent interiors of the volcanoes the child finds unsettling in the magazine are

¹ Selkirk had been stranded on one of the Juan Fernandez Islands, in the Pacific off the coast of Chile. Defoe relocated this to the Caribbean and has an appropriate climate and crops.

transformed for the elderly reminiscing Crusoe a kind of trivial news item: "A new volcano has erupted,/the papers say' and he goes on to recall his island's 'fifty-two/ miserable, small volcanoes I could climb/ with a few slithery strides -/volcanoes dead as ash heaps" (Bishop 1984:162). The prebuscent child in the waiting room is stricken with horror over what her life might be; the retrospective elderly man on what his life has been.

As usual with Bishop, the autobiographical is represented obliquely, even while having a factual basis. As is well known, while Bishop admired Lowell's *Life Studies*, writing a blurb for it, she was less impressed by the use of the highly personal in the work of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. She also deplored Lowell's use of private material (including letters from his estranged wife) in his drafts of *The Dolphin* (in Travisano 706-9).² While Bishop preferred reticence in self-presentation, the personal element was important to her as an aspect of her poetry. She did though, represent it as one element only; as she remarked in regard to "Crusoe in England", "it takes an infinite number of things coming together. . . to make a poem" (Bishop 1994: 621).

While it is one of the most Protestant of English novels, *Robinson Crusoe* is also, as Robert Frost remarked, very much about self-reliance. Frost repeatedly nominated the novel (along with Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*) when asked in interviews about his favourite reading. "I never tire" he once remarked, "of being shown how the limited can make snug in the limitless" (123). The castaway improvises and makes a home on the island, and this activity is linked for Frost with the very process of creating poetry. In this respect Frost's famous comments on the making of the poem make a specific link between Bishop's views on poetry

² In this letter Bishop writes that she finds "confessional" poetry deplorable (708).

and their representations of *Robinson Crusoe*. In his essay “The Figure a Poem Makes” Frost wrote that the poem

begins in delight, it inclines to the impulse, it assumes direction with the first line laid down, it runs a course of lucky events, and ends in a clarification of life – not necessarily a great clarification, such as sects and cults are founded on, but in a momentary stay against confusion. (132)

Bishop’s attitude to Frost was ambivalent and equivocal, but notably she directly echoed this sentiment; the poem clarifies life, makes a barrier against chaos. This is one of the themes of her poem “Sestina” in which the bereaved child’s repeated self-protective drawing of the house is echoed in the demanding stanzaic form of the poem itself, as if Bishop too is drawing a house in order to keep confusion outside³ (1984: 123-4). In a 1957 letter Bishop wrote memorably of making poetry as exactly this Frostian “stay against confusion”. She described a recent period of her life

when everything and anything suddenly seemed material for poetry – or not material, seemed to *be* poetry, and all the past was illuminated in long shafts here and there, like a long-awaited-for sunrise. If only one could see everything that way all the time! It seems to me *it’s* the whole purpose of art, to the artist (not to the audience) – that rare feeling of control, illumination – life *is* all right, for the time being. (in Travisano 246)

³ It is worth recalling that the etymological origin of “stanza” is from the Italian for “room”. This is deliciously exploited by Wallace Stevens in his celebrated two-stanza poem “The Emperor of Ice-Cream”, where each stanza represents a different room, the convivial kitchen or the bedroom containing the body of the dead woman.

However, both Bishop and Frost sense that in order to have vitality the poem must give some sense of what lies beyond that room, that wall, that barrier. In “Mending Wall” Frost wrote of the need to be aware of what the wall excludes as well as what it encloses. He also wrote that every poem needs a “door”; some point of access for the reader. Almost as an aside in her essay on Marianne Moore (unpublished in Bishop’s lifetime) Bishop remarked that “Surely there is an element of mortal panic and fear underlying all works of art?” (*Collected Prose* 144). It took Bishop some time to learn how insert a door into her poems, and Thomas Travisano suggested that Lowell’s poetry encouraged her in the suggestions of the personal. As Travisano elegantly puts it, commenting on *Geography III*, Bishop “produced a compelling series of self-exploratory poems that provide readers with a window into the latent yet powerful personal element that informs all of her writing” (in Travisano XVIII). These “windows” transform our understanding of the poem, typically permitting a glimpse into what lies beyond the masterly control, indicating the struggle between potentially corrosive introspection and reticence. Publication of Bishop’s letters and several critical biographies have effectively transformed our reading of the poems by giving fuller substance and actuality to the personal elements that we momentarily sense. One good example of a “window” appears in “The Bight” from *A Cold Spring*. Like “At the Fishhouses” the poem appears to be primarily (and brilliantly) descriptive. But the brief phrase printed in small font parenthetically below the title is a window, inviting us to read the poem as a narrative of subjectivity, of interiority. The apparently laconic “On my birthday” makes “The Bight” into a different kind of narrative; a poem by someone who said she hated her birthday, a poem on a day in which we inevitably, if unwillingly, reflect on our lives, friendships, family, achievements, failures, aging (Bishop

1994: 630).⁴ Looking through the window requires us to read “The Bight” as a kind of “Dejection” ode, and to see that the poem’s opening phrase “At low tide” is figurative and not literal, is concerned with the mood of the self. When read through the window, the poem’s last lines, “All the untidy activity continues/ awful but cheerful” become a moving exhortation to stoicism, with an almost epitaph-like quality (*Collected Prose* 61).⁵

Another example of a window is important because it actually comes close to threatening the very composure of the poem. As suggested above with respect to “Sestina” Bishop’s use of demanding form is directly proportionate to the emotional demands of the subject matter – the more difficult the topic the harder the form. Another of the *Geography III* poems, the celebrated “One Art” embodies this once more. As a villanelle it could of course be seen to carry the “trace” of the villanelle form, so often preoccupied with loss and inevitability. “One Art” remorselessly and even stoically records a life’s losses; door keys, the mother’s watch, houses, cities, continents. The poem is organised as a crescendo of losses, culminating in the speaker’s contemplation of the future loss of a lover, envisioned as the ultimate catastrophe, although one which the speaker will survive through having learnt the lessons that losses teach. Except that the poem comes close at this point to breaking down, disrupting the set form. For a moment the poem wavers, a point that could be considered as a window, certainly, but is also much more than that. In the quatrain which

⁴ “I HATE birthdays, or mine, that is” she wrote on what turned out to be her last one, in 1979.

⁵ The line “awful but cheerful” is inscribed on Bishop’s tombstone in the family plot at Worcester, Massachusetts.

formally brings together a villanelle's two alternating refrains, Bishop writes:

– Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
the art of losing's not too hard to master
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

(Bishop 1984:179)

Like many composers of villanelles, Bishop slightly modulates her refrains, but nothing prepares us for the interruption of "*Write it!*" in the final line. Like "On my birthday" the phrase is parenthetical, yet somehow its potentially disruptive force seems to be increased by this rather than marginalised. In a highly composed poem attesting to the need for stoic endurance, "*Write it!*" is an indication of the effort, the emotional price that the composure costs. The composure is an act of will, and it transforms the poem utterly, opening up a vision of pain and effort otherwise suppressed by the very act of composition. "*Write it!*" exposes the artifice of the poem as well as the need for it; it provides a glimpse into the "panic and emptiness" that Bishop saw as a necessary condition for art.⁶

In this way "*Write it!*" is interruptive, performing exactly as one of our leading poetry critics has observed:

without the forceful, *interruptive* calling of attention to an
utterance, whether from
without *or* within, what we call "poetry", that it is to say the
imagined self-enclosed

⁶ The transformation of this poem over its 17 available drafts is analysed by Millier (508-12), and is also discussed by Harrison 1993. The poem's drafts are reproduced in Bishop, *Edgar Allan Poe* (233-40).

perfection of an utterance, would not exist as such. (Ramalho Santos 222, emphasis in the original)

In her villanelle's final line Bishop does forcefully call attention to the function of utterance, shattering the otherwise "self-enclosed perfection" of her poem.

Bishop's "Crusoe in England" has several interruptive moments which serve both to expose the artifice of the poem, disturbing it as performance, and to locate an intense emotional source for the narrative. Some of these interruptions are to do with Bishop's reshaping of Defoe's narrative.⁷ Indeed, the changes indicate how far Defoe's hero is not the primary subject at all, but is rather a starting point to Bishop's deflected autobiographical interrogations. In this respect the main change is in the death of Crusoe's island companion, the native Friday. In Defoe, Crusoe saves the life of a native, names him Friday, and designates himself "Master". The master-servant relation is swiftly established, with Crusoe immediately referring to "my Man *Friday*" (*Collected Prose* 207). In fact, Crusoe's treatment of Friday is a classic example of colonising the other, and is also reminiscent of Prospero's enslavement of Caliban in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. He dresses Friday in clothes that resemble his own, although Friday had apparently no need of clothing before this, and he converts him to Christianity. Having been alone on the island for 24 years, Defoe's Crusoe intensely values the human company that Friday provides. Yet he never ceases to regard him as a servant rather than a companion. When they manage to escape from the island after four years together, Friday is brought to England as a servant, and the two engage in further adventures. Friday does

⁷ Given her departures from Defoe (including having him make his own alcohol) it is clear that Bishop's Crusoe is very much her own. Peter Robinson details some of these changes in "The Bliss of What?" (127-143).

not die in *Robinson Crusoe*. In one of Defoe's sequels, *The Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* he is killed by cannibals after he and Crusoe have returned to the island.

Bishop's adaptation of the story has three major features. Firstly, Friday becomes the transformative emotional centre of Crusoe's island life, his arrival coming at Crusoe's lowest point (another "low tide"): "Just when I thought I couldn't stand it/ another minute longer, Friday came" (*Collected Prose* 164).⁸ This is notably figured in Crusoe's self-evaluation before Friday; when he contemplates there being "one kind of everything" on the island, as well as one sun "there was one of it and one of me" (*Collected Prose*: 163). Secondly, Bishop foregrounds the love between the two men and posits it in terms of equality, excluding any reference to the master-servant relation, and thirdly, she has Friday die of measles, presumably in England after their return from the island. In some regards it is striking how little Friday appears in the poem, when it is considered how his presence transforms it into so powerful a poem of bereavement and grief. There was apparently much more of Friday in the poem's earlier drafts (Kalstone 255). While Bishop's characteristic reticence and discretion concerning autobiography are evident in the poem, it still conveys a remarkable emotional intensity which comes, the reader feels, from making language for her own deepest feelings.

Friday's arrival is, again, interruptive, and it is striking how the poem's language register changes when his friendship is recalled. In the earlier sections of the poem Crusoe exhibits a sophisticated latinate multisyllabic vocabulary attuned to metaphor and simile. For instance, he describes the island's waterspouts in figurative terms; "Glass chimneys, flexible, attenuated,/sacerdotal beings of

⁸ Bishop mischievously adds a parenthetical remark, "Accounts of that have everything all wrong", echoing the poem's tenth line, "None of the books has ever got it right".

glass” (*Collected Prose* 163). The rendering of Friday is a striking reversion to childlike language with simple sentences dominated by monosyllables:

Friday was nice.
Friday was nice and we were friends.
If only he had been a woman!
I wanted to propagate my kind,
and so did he, I think, poor boy.
He'd pet the baby goats sometimes,
and race with them, or carry one around.
– Pretty to watch; he had a pretty body.
And then one day they came and took us off.

(*Collected Prose* 165-6)

The poem's emotional centre is a return to the simple, to the elemental, and the language shift registers this (Vendler 97-110; 106).⁹ It is a deeply moving moment, partly because of Bishop's rendering of Crusoe's joy at the friendship. Indeed, rather than rejoicing in the end of his exile on the island, Crusoe represents it as though he and Friday had been kidnapped. The dully monosyllabic passive line “And then one day they came and took us off” suggests no will or agency on the part of himself and Friday, as though the intention of unnamed others was the destruction of an idyll. But is moving also because it is difficult not to see another interruption here, akin to the “*Write it!*” of “*One Art*”. The lines are self-reflective, opening up for a moment to Bishop herself reflecting on her own

⁹ In this essay-review of *Geography III*, “Domestication, Domesticity and the Otherworldly”, repr. as “Elizabeth Bishop”, Helen Vendler noted this register shift, remarking on Crusoe reverting to “the most vacant and consequently the most comprehensive of words”. This is an important essay in elucidating a key strategy in Bishop's poetry, of making the threatening and the unfamiliar bearable through acts of domestication.

life, on her bereavement and on the consequences of her lesbianism. This is far more than a simple autobiographical representation, even though some critics have found it easy to create analogies between Friday and Bishop's long-time partner Lota de Macedo Soares, who had committed suicide in 1967, and Bishop's resentment at Lota's treatment from those politically opposed to her work. Bishop tried for years after Lota's death to write an elegy for her, but never accomplished it. The understated final lines of "Crusoe in England" are about never-ending grief:

– And Friday, my dear Friday, died of measles
seventeen years ago come March. (*Collected Prose* 166)

"I miss Lota more every day of my life" Bishop wrote to Lowell, and again, saying that she felt life had been emptied of meaning. It is the simplicity of the statement that makes it so poignant (in *Travisano* 648).¹⁰ Crusoe's simple language when recalling the living vibrant Friday points also to what Bishop called her "worst regret" of her life, her childlessness.¹¹ The utterance here is another glimpse into the poem's emotional depth, and in effect by interrupting the utterance of Crusoe, shows us the reasons for Crusoe as a mask. It is in this respect analogous to how Lowell had strategically structured *Life Studies*, where several poems in the collection are dramatic monologues from a variety of personae – Marie de Medici, Hart Crane, a mad African-American soldier. But these investments in imagined other voices is dropped for the book's final section, where Lowell speaks as himself, in his own voice. Retrospectively we realise that however remote the supposed speakers of those dramatic

¹⁰ Millier usefully provides some of the autobiographical contexts for "Crusoe in England" in *Elizabeth Bishop*, 446-453.

¹¹ In a letter dated October 6 1960, Bishop commented on Lowell's daughter, saying that not being a mother was her life's "worst regret". See *Words in Air*, 342.

monologues were from Lowell, they were analogues of his own self, roles adopted in order to permit self-expression in a particular way. By interrupting her own dramatic monologue, Bishop briefly allows us to see her own face behind the mask of Crusoe; indeed she commented several times on the freedom the monologue gave for self-expression: “You can say all kinds of things you couldn’t in a lyric. If you have scenery and costumes you can get away with a lot” (Conversations 26).

This interruption is actually a modulated and a more subtle repetition of an earlier one that occurs in the poem, considerably more audacious and blatant. Crusoe reflects on his painful lack of elementary knowledge, his missing books, and trying to remember things from them:

Why didn’t I know enough of something?
Greek drama or astronomy? The books
I’d read were full of blanks;
the poems – well, I tried
reciting to my iris-beds,
“They flash upon that inward eye,
which is the bliss. . .” The bliss of what?
One of the first things that I did
when I got back was to look it up. (*Collected Prose* 164)

The truncated quotation is from Wordsworth’s “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”. Wordsworth’s speaker recalls the experience of unexpectedly encountering thousands of daffodils, and the recollection brings joy into the speaker’s life:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood.
They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.¹²

It is of course the word “solitude” which Crusoe has forgotten – forgotten or repressed. It is the word he cannot speak, because his loneliness is too appalling and unwanted to bear the positive connotations that “solitude” possesses. For him there is no bliss in solitude and, unlike Wordsworth’s speaker, no joy in recollecting a time of happiness. It is an odd moment in Bishop’s poem. Firstly, of course, it is anachronistic, in that Defoe’s fictive Crusoe, appearing in a novel published in 1719 could not possibly have known Wordsworth’s poem, published in 1807.¹³ Secondly, Bishop’s Crusoe, now at home in England, can readily access the actual poem; that is, he is fully aware of the word that he withholds from us. The elision of “solitude” is blatant and deliberate, an attempt to recall his state of mind and represent it accurately.

The truncated Wordsworth quote is an interruptive moment, another point at which the mask of Crusoe slips and we see the face of the poet. But it functions as more than that. The phrase “The bliss of what” has a resonance all of its own. It of course testifies to Crusoe’s loss of bliss, unable to find pleasure or joy in his life, and now feeling an exile in England (another island) as much as he had on the other island. But it is also a phrase that describes the kind of poetry Bishop wrote. She is very much a poet of “what”, of things, of actuality, of objects, a poet who distrusts abstractions and grand narratives and favours what is there, what may be seen

¹² *The Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*. Ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 304. The poem is also known as “Daffodils” and editors typically have a comma rather than a period after ‘mood’.

¹³ With their characteristic scrupulousness the *New Yorker* editors actually queried this anachronism. See Millier, *Elizabeth Bishop*, 448.

and touched. A poet who relishes what Martin Heidegger famously called “the thingness of things” (152). While this attitude is evident in numerous poems, it is an especially prominent theme in “Questions of Travel”. For the speaker, the plenitude of an exotic actuality threaten to be too much (“There are too many waterfalls here”) or may be incomprehensible to our understanding (“some inexplicable old stonework,/inexplicable and impenetrable”) (*Collected Prose* 93). But the material objects that are encountered make real to us what are otherwise the grand abstractions. Thus the speaker may understand a locality’s history “in/the weak calligraphy of songbirds’ cages” or is invited to ponder the relation between “the crudest wooden footwear/and, careful and finicky,/the whittled fantasies of wooden cages” (*Collected Prose* 93-4). “Questions of Travel” is perhaps Bishop’s most powerful and memorable expression of a theme that appears constantly in her work: the responsibility to experience actuality for what it is rather than for what we might imagine it to be. It is this that makes us at home in reality. This an answer to one of the “questions of travel” that the poem ponders, the question “Should we have stayed at home and thought of here?” (*Collected Prose* 93) Thinking and imagining are radically different from bearing witness to actuality, to touching and seeing; it is not enough to imagine or to dream a world; our responsibility is to become immersed in its materiality. This is why “the bliss of what” has such resonance for Bishop, and it recurs in major poems such as “The Fish”, “At the Fishhouses”, “First Death in Nova Scotia”, “The Filling Station” and “The Moose”.

Expressed in this way, one can readily see the intellectual affinities between Bishop and Wallace Stevens, a poet she greatly admired. Stevens continually renegotiates the relation between the imagination and reality. In some of his greatest poems he celebrates, as the Romantics had, the imagination’s power to invest reality with meaning, to order, illuminate and enrich what is otherwise

inchoate and meaningless. But in another strain in his poetry Stevens expresses longing for an experience of actuality in which the actual is sufficient, he desires experience of the real, freed from the impositions of our human imaginative constructions, wants to feel the “affluence” of the real rather than its impoverishment; “Bare night is best. Bare earth is best. Bare, bare”.¹⁴ In another poem, he longs for an unmediated experience of the actual, “The the”.¹⁵ “The bliss of what” could be used to encompass this strain of Stevens, as it also could for a similar strain in the poetry of John Ashbery, one of Bishop’s greatest admirers. Indeed one of Ashbery’s poems from *Houseboat Days* is titled “What is Poetry”. The title is not actually a question, and, typical of Ashbery’s ludic sensibility, the poem consists of seven questions which effectively function as answers to the question the title has not asked.

In this way, “Crusoe in England” could on the face of it be readily coopted as one of Bishop’s poems that explores an attitude familiar in her writing, and a theme of domesticating the unfamiliar that has long been seen as a crucial in her work. But in many ways “Crusoe in England” is a quite untypical poem. As we have seen, “the bliss of what” is not used to allude to a poetic. Crusoe’s self-reliance is not an ideal but a pragmatic response to need. Even as Bishop’s poem flirts with the familiar American Adamic poetry tradition it falters in this area, since her Crusoe is so reluctant a namer. Moreover, the names he gives to spaces become radically unstable signifiers, as when he names one volcano both *Mont d’Espoir* and *Mount Despair*. Most significantly, “Crusoe in England” undoes Bishop’s

¹⁴ From Stevens’ “Evening Without Angels” (137). Maria Irene Ramalho Santos writes of this poem, “To enjoy evenings ‘without angels’ means, therefore, to be pleasurably comforted. . . by the repetitive naturalistic knowledge that there is no ‘secret in skulls’” (204).

¹⁵ “The Man on the Dump”. *Collected Poems* 203. A variation of “The the” appears in the closely linked poem “The Latest Freed Man”, which ends with “the chairs” (205).

more familiar trust in things, in objects. Although he may be seen as the heroic domesticator of wilderness Crusoe finds no joy in this, no real pride in the recollection of his accomplishments. The things that he made and which were crucial to his survival are now emptied of meaning and purpose. Removed from the only context in which they had significance, all the surviving impedimenta have become “uninteresting lumber”:

The knife there on the shelf – it reeked of meaning,
like a crucifix.]

It lived. How many years did I
beg it, implore it, not to break?
I knew each nick and scratch by heart,
the bluish blade, the broken tip,
the lines of wood-grain on the handle. . .
Now it won't look at me at all.
The living soul has dribbled away.
My eyes rest on it and pass on. (*Collected Prose* 166)

Crusoe is also mystified by the local museum's request that he bequeath the items to them; “How can anyone want such things?” (*Collected Prose* 166) Bishop's journey from a loving articulator of actuality to this negating question is extraordinary. It also indicates the real subject of “Crusoe in England”; the corrosive effects of grief at the loss of a beloved. It is the loss of the irreplaceable actual Friday which renders the objects meaningless, recalls them as mere objects. In this way “Crusoe in England” resembles “Father's Bedroom”, one of Lowell's poems from *Life Studies*. In this section of the sequence Lowell writes of the death of his father yet in “Father's Bedroom” he permits no emotional expression at all, providing what appears to be an enumeration of the objects left in the bedroom after the death. Yet the idea emerges that these objects are now

meaningless because of the father's absence. So while it seems to be a poem which resists anticipated emotional expression, it actually explores the effects of grief, of bereavement. While it ranges around considerably more than Lowell's poem, being one of Bishop's longest, "Crusoe in England" possesses the same emotional core, the grief deflected and not directly expressed but available throughout Crusoe's monologue.

While its characteristics are entirely typical of Bishop's style, "Crusoe in England" is somewhat exceptional in its questioning of ideas that are otherwise central to the themes of her poetry and to our understanding of it. In this respect it is both a poem with an interruption, and a poem that interrupts the course of her established work. This is one effect of the loss that the poem indirectly articulates; after all, scarcely anything is more interruptive to one's life than bereavement and the consequent grief. Another effect for Bishop may have been the loss of belief in the capacity of poetry to resolve, to provide coherence and meaning. As we saw, Bishop had once expressed a firm belief in the purpose of art to provide "that rare feeling of control, illumination", to stand against panic and emptiness (in Trivisano 246). But that belief wavers, and as she somberly remarked in an interview in 1966, "People seem to think that doing something like writing a poem makes one happier in life. It doesn't solve anything" (*Conversations* 41).

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**THE CONFESSIONS OF AN
EX- CON: ROBERT LOWELL
REMEMBERS WEST STREET, LOIS LEPKE,
AND A SKUNK IN MAINE**

George Monteiro

Resumo: As recordações da sua experiência na prisão durante a Segunda Grande Guerra (o poeta esteve preso por ser objeto de consciência e se opor à guerra) surgem no inovador volume *Life Studies*, de Robert Lowell, e enformam dois dos poemas canônicos dessa obra, “Memories of West Street and Lepke” e (de forma menos direta) “Skunk Hour”.

Palavras-chave: Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies*; a década de 1950; poesia; pacifismo.

Abstract: Robert Lowell’s memories of his experience in prison during World War II (he was incarcerated for being a conscientious objector in opposition to the war) surface in his break-through volume *Life Studies* and inform two of that volume’s canonical poems, “Memories of West Street and Lepke” and (less directly) “Skunk Hour.”

Keywords: Robert Lowell’s *Life Studies*; 1950s; poetry; pacifism.

As his readers, reviewers, and critics were quick to note, with *Life Studies* at the end of the 1950s Robert Lowell (1917-1977) had succeeded in remaking his poetic self.¹ His poems struck a new, quieter note. For a decade he had been known as the precocious writer of brilliant poems, intricate in design, difficult to decipher, and insistently taking on the larger themes. When his first important book, *Lord Weary's Castle*, appeared in 1946, the poems were called in a private journal, by his friend, the critic Alfred Kazin, a case of the “triumph of talent over confusion” (2011: 97). Now, at the end of the so-called “tranquilized” decade, *Life Studies* struck Lowell’s friends as a welcome harbinger of the demise of what Elizabeth Bishop called Lowell’s “familiar trumpet-notes” (2008: 707). It marked the end of his tendency, as he himself put it, to beat “the big drum too much” (in Trivisano 230). Indeed, in the more personal poems of *Life Studies*, Lowell had abandoned what he called the “medieval armor” of his earlier poems in favor of the quieter virtues of a “small voice” (idem 239), one that drew on the Lowell and Winslow family annals for the purpose of revealing the elusive secrets of self and selves. Preying on biography and autobiography, these subdued poems introduce the reader to a plain-speaking poet telling all in the often drone-like tone of his own “very direct and personal” voice. As Kazin wrote, speaking for many, “Lowell, redeemed by suffering from his overdeveloped early style, found his true self and his best material in the irreducible self he portrayed in *Life Studies*” (1978: 255). The breakthrough poems in *Life Studies* – those drawing on his distinct reactions to personal experience – reflect the thoughts of one whose life is at mid-point, the memories of a life gone wrong and sour. This is notably so in “Memories of West Street and Lepke” and “Skunk Hour.” In those poems Lowell draws on memories

¹ Quotations from *Life Studies* are from the edition in Works Cited, and subsequently identified by *LS* and the page number provided in parenthesis.

emanating from a burned-out brain. Lowell had been a “conscientious objector,” one who refused to report for induction to the United States Army but had reported to a federal district attorney. He was sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison. For a few days he was held in the West Street Jail and then relocated to the federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut. Although he spent the bulk of his prison time in Danbury, it is his observations and experiences in the New York jail that make up “Memories of West Street and Lepke.”

Scion of a patrician family that features poets such as James Russell Lowell and Amy Lowell, Robert Lowell meets a variety of human specimens in the “bullpen” and holding cells of the West Street Jail, which has its Hudson River view obstructed by “sooty clothesline entanglements and bleaching khaki tenements” (*LS* 80). (This “bleaching khaki” reminds us of the army “khaki” rejected by the convicted Conscientious Objector [C.O.] when, in his own grandiose way he detailed his complaint in a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. He had told off the state, had he not, as decades later, now middle-aged, he would spurn overtures from another President waging war.)

Published at the end of the decade Lowell himself characterized sadly and somewhat disdainfully as the “tranquillized” 1950s, “Memories of West Street and Lepke” works through a series of contrasts to measure the distance between those fifties years and the wartime forties. If his fifties scavenger self also picks over the trash in back-alley cans of a “hardly passionate Marlborough Street”, the poet rummages through bins of prison memory, picking out the riff-raff comprised of birds-of-a-feather thrown together in the West Street jail – pacifists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Hollywood pimps, the kingpin of Murder, Inc., and young poets who plead their consciences. They are all “fellow jailbirds.”

Now employed by a university, the older poet is required to teach but one day a week. Other days he “hogs” a whole house to

himself, putting on “pajamas fresh from the washer each morning” (LS 79). It will be recalled that Louis “Lepke” Buchalter piled towels in the laundry. In the fifties the poet “book-worms”; in the forties the head of a murder syndicate “dawdle[s]” along. The C. O. would not fight in his country’s war; but the convicted murderer decorates his cell with “two toy American flags,” pinned with a Christian’s “Easter palm.” The poet is “tranquilized”; the murderer has been “lobotomized.” Like his fellow prisoner, the C.O. is incarcerated over questions of “killing.” “Lowell was in a cell next to Lepke, you know, Murder Incorporated,” recalled another inmate, “and Lepke says to him: ‘I’m in for killing. What are you in for?’ ‘Oh, I’m in for refusing to kill.’ And Lepke burst out laughing. It was kind of ironic” (Hamilton 91).

Lowell’s poem ends with his recollection of Lepke absorbed in concentration. It is not a time for “agonizing reappraisal,” for the prospect of the electric chair has focused his “lost connections,” his lobotomized attention. It is not far-fetched to equate Lowell’s memories here with the “filth” scavenged in back alleys, but there is one telling difference. If the biographical subtext of “Memories of West Street and Lepke” is that the poet has suffered a mental breakdown, leading to shock treatments and their aftermath, that was foreshadowed in Lepke’s shock treatments and electrocution, the point is that memories, even in the so-called tranquilized fifties, are not so easily got rid of, not even when they have become the grist for poems.

Turning now to “Skunk Hour,” a poem that seems not to be directly connected to Lowell’s memories of his incarceration. Here Lowell is still looking for clues into his personality, character, and mental and spiritual condition. He localizes the time and names persons and places. He even fixes on the specifics of animal behavior in his quest for signs. Thus the skunk stands in for the poet who searches through garbage cans. But the skunk with her

column of kits is unlike Lowell in that she will not scare. What scares the poet is that his mind is that he knows his mind is not right. It is not only that things are out of joint – they are: the old woman on the hill is dotty, the first selectman, rather than being a patrician worthy to lead, is a tenant farmer on the dotty old woman's property, she buys up eye-sore property only to let it fall down (creating even worse eyesores?), the "fairy" who runs the antiques shop paints everything orange, inappropriately, and wants to marry (to better his financial situation) – but that the poet is himself out of joint.

If Christopher Marlowe's Mephistophilis in *Doctor Faustus* says "why this is hell, nor am I out of it" (II, 171), Lowell declares, in all but words, "I myself am hell." The twentieth-century poet would spy on lovers but there are no lovers there (he says). Fearing an even more grievous bout of insanity, perhaps, he dares not contemplate inviting someone (in the words of Marlowe's lyric) to "come live with me and be my love" (II, 536). More in kind he would be the maternal skunk boldly supping on cream that has soured, for that would sum up what the best of *Life Studies* is about – draining the memories of a sour life. And yet, if the night-preying skunk nosing into garbage is an image of what he has become – "I'm a skunk in the poem," as Lowell confided to Bishop (in Travisano 239) – he, too, will continue his night prowling, seeking out things that should be private, borrowing into his and other people's garbage. What is most egregious, however, is that he takes heart from the skunk that will not scare. Having discovered this vein of material – the annals of the self and family – he will continue to compose his seemingly naked personal poems, skunk that he had become by the late fifties and would continue to be to the end of his life. "So lust, thought to a radiant angel link'd," says Hamlet, "will sate itself in a celestial bed, and prey on garbage" (I, v, 55-58). Of course, Lowell's so-called confessional poems may be looked at

in another way, preferably as instances in which the traumatized poet depends on his art for insight rather than giving to pathology to explain his condition.²

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² Edmund Wilson offers a similar modern psychological interpretation, using the story in the *Iliad* of the mythological Philoctetes' wound as his starting point. See "Philoctetes" (1941).

**COM QUE RIMA ALICE EM PORTUGUÊS?
TRADUÇÕES PORTUGUESAS DE POEMAS DE
LEWIS CARROLL EM *ALICE IN WONDERLAND***

Isabel Pedro dos Santos

Resumo: Neste texto discutem-se alguns problemas específicos da tradução de poemas de *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), de Lewis Carroll, para português, tendo em conta aspetos como a forma (visual/gráfica e sonora), a dinâmica paronomástica e a componente intertextual/paródica como estratégias geradoras de *nonsense* enquanto parte integrante do “sentido” (humorístico e subversivo) do texto. Analisam-se e comparam-se diversas soluções ensaiadas em oito traduções portuguesas da obra, de 1931 a 2000.

Palavras-chave: Alice / Carroll; tradução de poesia; forma (visual e sonora); paronomásia; intertextualidade.

Abstract: This text discusses specific translation problems pertaining to poems included in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and their rendition into Portuguese. Aspects such as form (sound and visual layout), paronomasia and intertextuality/parody are considered while nonsense-generating strategies and an integral component of the

(humorous and subversive) meaning of those texts. Different translation experiments in eight Portuguese versions of *Alice*, from 1931 to 2000, are analysed and compared.

Keywords: Alice / Carroll; poetry translation; form (sound and layout); paranomasia; intertextuality.

If I had a world of my own, everything would be nonsense. Nothing would be what it is because everything would be what it isn't. And contrary-wise; what it is it wouldn't be, and what it wouldn't be, it would. You see?

(*Alice*)

Parece ser indiscutível que a poesia constitui um dos maiores desafios para tradutores. A delicada dinâmica da articulação da forma e do sentido, que é possivelmente a característica fundamental de um poema e apenas pontual e excepcionalmente encontra paralelo interlinguístico, é muitas vezes vista como uma barreira que, segundo alguns autores – e dispense-me de citar os já lugares-comuns – tornariam mesmo a poesia intraduzível.

Quando se trata de traduzir Lewis Carroll e em especial as obras *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) e *Through the Looking Glass and what Alice Found There* (1871), essa barreira e essa suposta intraduzibilidade tomam contornos muito particulares, dadas sobretudo as especificidades da construção de sentido nestes textos e, entre elas, a importância fundamental dos aspetos formais: as sonoridades e até as “visualidades”¹ dos poemas que integram *Alice*. A esses,

¹ Jacques Anis conceptualiza esse elemento poético como “Vi-Lisibilité” (V. Anis, Jacques [1983]. “Vilibilité du texte poétique.” *Langue Française* 59: 88-103); Mário Laranjeira (2003: 101-104) propõe a tradução portuguesa de “visilegibilidade”.

junta-se ainda a estratégia paronomástica e a complexa questão dos jogos intertextuais que o texto mobiliza.

De facto, os níveis fónico e gráfico destes textos contêm elementos fundamentais que contribuem tanto para o prazer primário e essencial da leitura como para a possibilidade ou a facilidade mnemónica – dois fenómenos reconhecidamente relevantes na literatura para crianças. Por outro lado, são efetivamente, apesar de um certo olhar sobre a poesia e algumas opções de tradução parecerem negá-lo, a matéria cuja organização específica gera o sentido. Em Lewis Carroll, como sabemos, trata-se de um sentido de que faz parte integrante o “não-sentido”, tradicionalmente ligado à capacidade que a poesia, a literatura – e principalmente a literatura infantil – têm de desafiar a lógica do mundo, virando-o do avesso, para que, como deseja Alice, “nada seja o que é e tudo seja o que não é”.

De um modo geral, a forma sonora do texto poético é o nível material mais imediatamente perceptível e mais geralmente ativado em qualquer texto a que chamamos poema – principalmente na sua versão basilar de texto dito e ouvido. Rimas e ritmos são o que, na perceção empírica da audibilidade do texto, a nossa história pessoal e coletiva de leitura nos ensina a identificar como poesia – a linguagem tornada música.

Por outro lado, apreendida já não pelo ouvido, mas sobretudo pelo sentido da visão, a forma gráfica, a mancha da organização textual no espaço da página, que é também uma “marca” da poesia, torna-se em geral mais preponderante e funcional na poesia visual ou na chamada poesia concreta, em que a palavra surge reificada e o texto se destaca como objeto material ou mesmo icónico, numa semântica complementar ou alternativa à gramática dos sons. Sabemos da importância do visual na literatura infantil, em que os textos são frequentemente trabalhados a nível tipográfico e acompanhados de ilustrações, em princípio tão mais abundantes e relevantes quanto mais se recua no nível etário dos leitores a que se destinam. Em

Alice, as ilustrações, das clássicas de John Tenniel às recentes de Diogo Muñoz,² são uma componente essencial da obra e da sua história editorial.

O exemplo mais óbvio do aproveitamento do elemento visual-gráfico nos poemas de *Alice* em Lewis Carroll é a cauda do rato no poema “A Mouse’s Tale”, inserido no Capítulo III de *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, “A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale”, em que o nível gráfico da visualidade de *tail* regista e recria iconicamente a base sonora da homofonia das duas palavras com que o texto joga – e que, infelizmente para a tradução portuguesa, não é transponível enquanto tal: *tale* (história, conto) e *tail* (rabo, cauda). No complexo trocadilho fono-visual deste texto, a imagem aproxima-se do “referente”, materializando na página um dos termos convocados homofonicamente – e não por acaso, a favor do *nonsense*, o mais inadequado deles, pois se visualiza a cauda quando se fala de história.

Neste caso, contudo, apesar de nas traduções portuguesas se perder a ligação original operada pela homofonia, a mancha gráfica é, em geral, preservada e a ligação paronomástica é substituída ou recuperada pela correspondência ou equivalência da estratégia homofónica que os leitores encontram no plano narrativo, uma vez que, no original, Alice está a olhar para o rabo do rato quando confunde *tale* com *tail*. Assim, apesar da intransponibilidade da identificação fonética, é em geral possível recuperar nas versões portuguesas a justificação do formato gráfico do poema.

O texto é introduzido por uma situação narrativa em que a menina pede ao Rato que conte a sua história (“history”), ao que o Rato responde “‘Mine is a long and sad tale!’”, que Alice ouve como *tail*, sendo levada a observar: “‘It is a long tail, certainly,’ said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail; ‘but why do you call it sad?’” E o texto continua na voz do narrador, introduzindo o

² Na recente Coleção ALICE (Zero a Oito / Expresso, 2010).

poema visual: “And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this: . . .” (49).

‘Fury said to a
mouse, That he
met in the
house,
“Let us
both go to
law: I will
prosecute
you. – Come,
I’ll take no
denial: We
must have a
trial: For
really this
morning I’ve
nothing
to do.
Said the
mouse to the
cur, “Such
a trial,
dear Sir,
With
no jury
or judge,
would be
wasting
our
breath.”
“I’ll be
judge, I’ll
be jury.”
Said
cunning
old Fury:
“I’ll
try the
whole
cause,
and
condemn
you
to
death.”

A maior parte das traduções portuguesas analisadas reproduz o formato gráfico do texto, reservando para o diálogo introdutório entre Alice e o Rato a chave da lógica desse formato, numa tradução praticamente literal do texto de Carroll. De um modo geral, à exclamação do Rato “A minha história é longa [ou comprida] e triste!”, Alice responde “Deve ser longa / É comprida, é. . .”, olhando para a cauda do rato / olhando, admirada, para a cauda do Rato” – e pergunta “Mas porque dizes que é triste?”. Contudo, de entre as

traduções analisadas são de destacar quatro soluções que diferem desta opção.

A primeira é a da edição Público,³ da autoria das tradutoras Maria das Mercês e Maria Isabel de Mendonça Soares, que prosifica o texto, o qual, apesar da surpreendente audibilidade de algumas ocorrências de rima, perde a sua forma poética e o trocadilho visual. Curiosamente, no entanto, esta tradução apresenta, na introdução à história do Rato, uma solução que procura recriar algum nível de equivalência ao jogo de palavras “problemático” do original “É um *conto* de cabo a *rabo* longo e triste! – disse o rato, voltando-se para Alice e suspirando” (25, destaque meu).

A segunda tradução, que opta por uma solução algo diferente e certamente criativa é a de Margarida Vale de Gato, que substitui a identificação homofónica por uma estratégia de identificação metafórica dos dois termos e, através de uma comparação explícita, reforça ainda a ligação narrativa que se mantém possível nas versões portuguesas: “Oh, é uma *história* comprida e *tortuosa como a minha cauda!*” (Relógio d’ Água, 2000, 33; Zero a Oito / Expresso, 2010, 43, destaques meus), destacada na edição de 2010 por uma forma gráfica curva, como a do poema. Note-se que, para superar o obstáculo do possível desajuste léxico-semântico da aplicação a cauda do adjetivo “sad” pelo efeito de personificação, a tradutora optou por substituí-lo por “tortuosa”, muito apropriado tanto a cauda como, metaforicamente, a história, e certamente correspondendo literalmente à perceção visual da mancha do texto. Reforça-se assim a lógica, ou a justificação, do formato tipográfico para os leitores portugueses. No entanto, a surpresa causada no texto de Carroll pela adjetivação original, marca da distorção ou do ruído existente neste momento de criatividade “in-comunicação” entre as personagens, deixa de ter exatamente o mesmo efeito de desfasamento que se percebe

³ Coleção Geração Público n. 23 (2004) [Trad. 1991].

no original – e que subsiste na maioria das traduções portuguesas, em que, como já foi dito, apesar de outras “perdas”, a transposição literal deste segmento do texto continua a resultar.

Em terceiro lugar, a edição Vega (2008), que publica a tradução de Maria de Meneses, em nota de rodapé inserida a meio da afirmação do Rato – “A minha história / é longa e triste” (e que configura a única intervenção paratextual da tradutora) –, introduz um esclarecimento muito explícito quanto ao jogo de palavras do original: “*Tale* em inglês significa *história* e pronuncia-se da mesma forma que *tail*, que significa *cauda*. Alice percebeu *cauda* em vez de *história*” (33).

A tradução da Editorial Presença, da autoria de Carlos Grifo Babo, é um caso muito significativo, tanto pela presença do tradutor no paratexto como pela sua interferência no próprio corpo do texto. Numa “Nota Introdutória com uma observação indispensável a quem vai ler este texto” (9-12), Carlos Grifo Babo explica que “. . . Carroll brincou também com o seu próprio instrumento de trabalho – a língua inglesa. Trocadilhos, significados diferentes de uma mesma palavra, expressões idiomáticas lidas literalmente, tudo utilizou para criar essa outra realidade onde a ‘pobre Alice’ se debate”. E explicita do seguinte modo a sua estratégia tradutiva:

Na presente tradução, tentou-se e, em muitos casos, conseguiu-se encontrar a correspondência em português para esses múltiplos jogos. Alguns destes, porém, teimaram em não se deixar traduzir, pelo que se tornou necessário explicá-los. E, como essa explicação é imprescindível para se compreender o texto subsequente, resolvemos introduzi-la na própria narrativa, em itálico e entre dois traços horizontais, como um aparte.

Babo justifica esta sua interferência direta como tradutor (interferência que é frequentemente feita em tom humorístico e adotando

de certa forma o “estilo” do texto de Carroll, com recurso a trocadilhos e jogos de palavras) considerando-se “autorizado” a fazê-la por uma identificação com o autor – ou mesmo com a função autoral – quando afirma: “Aliás, é o próprio Carroll quem nos dá o exemplo, pois não poucas vezes se intromete na narrativa para falar diretamente com os seus leitores, as crianças” (10). De facto, o episódio que inclui o poema do rabo do Rato nesta versão portuguesa inclui também no próprio corpo do texto (37) uma descrição do problema de tradução:

Vai haver agora uma grande confusão entre Alice e o Rato, confusão que só se explica porque esta história foi escrita em inglês.

Nessa língua, as palavras *tale* (história, conto) e *tail* (rabo, cauda) soam da mesma maneira. E daí que, quando o Rato se refere à sua história (*tale*), Alice julgue que ele está a falar da cauda (*tail*).

. . .

Entendidos estes mal-entendidos, vejamos em que deu a conversa de Alice com o Rato.

Assim, a tradução do texto propriamente dito pode seguir uma estratégia praticamente literal, como referimos também ser o caso relativamente à maior parte das versões portuguesas do trecho em causa.

Apesar de ser essa também a opção tradutiva de José Vaz Pereira e Manuel João Gomes presente no corpo do texto da edição de *Alice* de Fernando Ribeiro de Mello / Edições Afrodite (1971), produzida e publicada num período política e intelectualmente muito significativo da história portuguesa, os anos finais do Estado Novo, referimo-la pela diferença que representa. De entre os vários elementos que tornam única esta preciosa edição no meio

editorial português,⁴ cabe, no presente contexto, destacar a leitura psicanalítica da obra que é empreendida pelos tradutores e explicitada em notas manuscritas, da autoria de um deles – Manuel João Gomes –, que são integradas como paratexto entre os capítulos, elemento que dirige evidentemente a tradução a um público adulto e mais restrito.

Apesar da tradução “conservadora” do segmento em análise, destaca-se a nota introdutória referente ao capítulo, que dá conta daquela direção interpretativa e da qual consta a seguinte explicação:

O caso mais sério na escrita de todo o capítulo parece ser o poema que relata em forma de *tail*, o *tale* do rato – tipografismo disposto em várias curvas, podendo resumir todo o Cap.º na forma que tem de um falo impotente, a caminho de uma tubulação que se pretende completa e é autodestrutiva. Parece ser mais significativa esta versão que a versão original de *Alice in Underground* [sic] que tinha esta forma, aliás mais *tail* e menos *falo* e igualmente *tale*: . . . (70-71, não paginadas no texto)

Para além dos problemas de tradução levantados pelos aspetos formais dos textos (questão que retomaremos no final) e pelos trocadilhos e jogos de palavras, uma outra das complexidades dos “poemas de Alice” numa perspectiva de tradução é da ordem cultural da tradição literária e prende-se, sobretudo, com a sua natureza marcadamente intertextual.

⁴ Na reedição da tradução pela Quid Novi (2010), José Vaz Pereira insere uma nota no seu “Prefácio”, que se transcreve parcialmente: “Este Prefácio é dedicado à memória de Manuel João Gomes, meu companheiro na aventura de traduzir, no início da década de 1970, *As Aventuras de Alice no País das Maravilhas* para essa edição verdadeiramente mágica da obra que foi a das Edições Afrodite, de Fernando Ribeiro de Mello (1.ª edição em 1971, 2.ª edição em 1976, cada uma delas, e por vários motivos, um objeto raro).”

As perspectivas pós-estruturalistas propõem o conceito de intertextualidade como condição de qualquer texto, o qual resulta da absorção de outros textos. Para autores como Kristeva e Barthes, a intertextualidade é implícita e universal, assinalando radicalmente os limites dos conceitos tradicionais de subjetividade/autoria, originalidade e influência.⁵ No entanto, mesmo num sentido mais restrito, enquanto presença de traços de outros textos num determinado texto, é a dinâmica intertextual que permite, para além do próprio sentido, a mobilidade e a abertura que, por sua vez, potenciam as histórias de leitura de cada texto.

Todo o texto contém em si um certo grau de ilegibilidade. Para essa ilegibilidade contribui o não-dito, o ausente da superfície textual explícita – por exemplo, no potencial da sua intertextualidade alusiva, aquilo que implicitamente se pressupõe (ou não) como elemento de uma experiência comum, que depende de uma competência cultural e tem necessariamente uma dimensão histórica. As várias leituras de um texto, quer diacrónica quer sincronicamente, são exatamente uma função do que cada época, cada lugar, cada posição de leitura, é capaz ou não de reconstituir, ou melhor, re-conhecer ou “(re-)inventar” no âmbito do não-dito textual. Paradoxalmente, é o não-dito, mais do que o dito, que torna um texto infinitamente legível, sendo que, por outro lado, é também o que impede a sua legibilidade absoluta.

Uma das maiores dificuldades – e desafios – da tradução é exatamente a gestão dessa dinâmica, desse jogo de presenças e ausências. Em *Alice*, uma das formas intertextuais mais relevantes para a presente discussão é a recriação paródica de textos e modelos

⁵ Neste sentido, as intertextualidades vão obviamente, como mostra Julia Kristeva, muito para além do controlo criativo do texto pelo “autor”: “If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered. . .” (Kristeva 59-60).

poéticos que seriam, à época de Carroll, do conhecimento, mais ou menos próximo, do público leitor.

Em termos do nosso objeto de análise, teremos de distinguir na história – cumulativa ou singular – de 150 anos de leitura de *Alice*, numa perspectiva diacrónica e incluindo muito complexamente as suas versões intra e interlinguísticas, os diferentes graus de proximidade ou de familiaridade com os modelos textuais convocados por Carroll. Assim, a consciência intertextual do público-leitor da obra apresenta diferentes graus, desde os leitores ingleses contemporâneos do autor, que teriam um conhecimento próximo dos textos-base – nomeadamente as *nursery rhymes* e os poemas didáticos e moralizantes de autores famosos à época e das cartilhas que, inclusivamente, as crianças conheceriam de cor, podendo portanto identificar a dinâmica paródica e toda a dimensão transgressiva e cômica dos textos recriados – passando pelo público inglês atual – para o qual é a própria reescrita desses textos “clássicos” nas obras de Carroll que integrou o capital literário – até, no outro extremo do espetro, ao público leitor estrangeiro, sobretudo o atual, para quem, à exceção dos académicos e dos curiosos, os intertextos modelares serão, em princípio, desconhecidos.

No início do século XX, em 1903, esta problemática era já aflorada por Florence Milner, que, num artigo que coligia alguns dos poemas nos quais Carroll baseara as suas versões, escreveu:

Fifty years ago the child world was made glad by the appearance of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. It is a universal story and so belongs to all time. It has never gone out of fashion and never will as long as children love wonder-stories and grown-ups have young hearts.

But those who read the book when it was first published found in it a delight which the child of today misses. Fifty years ago certain poems appeared in every reader and were read over

and over again until the child was stupid indeed who did not unconsciously learn them by heart. Today. . . the old things have passed away.

All the poems in *Alice in Wonderland* are parodies upon these once familiar rhymes. Scattered lines of the poems cling to the minds of older people; they remember being once familiar with them; they recognise the metre and can sometimes repeat two or three opening lines, but the complete poem eludes them, and the author they probably never did know. The children of today do not know the verses at all, and as a parody ceases to be a parody without the original poem as a background, the trouble of gathering these originals seems worth while. (13-6)

É então quase inevitável que a maioria das traduções portuguesas, das mais antigas às mais atuais, não tenha a capacidade (e certamente também nem o objetivo, ou mesmo o interesse) de transmitir a dinâmica paródica destes textos, mesmo sendo ela responsável por grande parte dos efeitos humorísticos e transgressivos gerados pelo desajuste cômico das alusões de natureza intertextual que, numa leitura contemporânea do autor, incluiriam, por exemplo, um efeito de crítica ao moralismo vitoriano. São diferentes, portanto, os efeitos e os sentidos destes textos dependendo dos momentos históricos de leitura, que mobilizam diferentes referências textuais-culturais. Essa é, aliás, uma condição de qualquer reescrita ao produzir um novo texto para um novo público.

No entanto, subsistem em traduções portuguesas de *Alice* alguns ecos bem audíveis da paródia carrolliana e parece existir também por parte de alguns tradutores e tradutoras portuguesas a preocupação de assinalar, se não mesmo reproduzir, essa dinâmica, que é em si mesma uma dinâmica tradutiva.

De facto, têm sido ensaiadas formas diversas de lidar com o problema das intertextualidades na tradução dos textos de Lewis

Carroll aqui em estudo. Uma delas é a inclusão de notas de tradução como estratégia de explicação suplementar. Trata-se, é sabido, de uma opção difícil ou arriscada num texto de ficção que, em princípio, pretenderá até certo ponto manter a coleridgiana *suspension of disbelief*, mais relevante ainda quando se trata de literatura para crianças, em que nem sempre é benquista uma interrupção do efeito mágico da leitura.

As edições Relógio d'Água e Zero a Oito / Expresso, já referidas, seguem essa estratégia: em notas, finais na primeira e em colunas laterais na segunda – algumas das quais seguramente dirigidas a leitores adultos e a um universo de receção erudito e com interesses literários – a tradutora reconstitui as intertextualidades e explica de forma quase exaustiva a origem e o estatuto paródico de praticamente todos os poemas de ambas as obras de Carroll (já que estas edições juntam *As Aventuras de Alice no País das Maravilhas* e *Alice do Outro Lado do Espelho*), optando ainda, em alguns casos, por fornecer dados biográficos dos respetivos autores e outros elementos de interesse, e ainda apresentando traduções suas de alguns excertos dos textos parodiados. No entanto, estas informações, sobretudo na edição Relógio d'Água, não interferem necessariamente numa leitura “infantil” (ou mais informal), uma vez que o formato de nota final as afasta do corpo do texto, ao contrário da edição Zero a Oito / Expresso, em que são mais conspícuas, uma vez que se localizam, apesar de marginalmente, na página a que se referem. Assim, situam num âmbito mais alargado o público potencial desta excelente tradução, que, de facto, pode ser lida muito eficazmente por um público adulto e como um texto para crianças.

O mesmo não ocorre numa outra também já referida versão portuguesa de *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, a de Carlos Grifo Babo, da Editorial Presença. Já verificámos como o tradutor explicita e justifica as suas estratégias no paratexto introdutório e interfere conspicuamente no texto. Consciente da intencionalidade lúdica

dos jogos de palavras e também das complexidades intertextuais de Carroll, Babo adota, a este respeito, uma estratégia igualmente reconstitutiva, chegando a identificar e a traduzir no próprio corpo do texto algumas amostras dos originais parodiados. Parece haver neste tradutor o objetivo de dar a ler ao público-leitor português de 1986 o mais possível aquilo a que o público-leitor contemporâneo do original teria acesso na sua leitura. Ou seja, colocando-se na posição do autor – ou, talvez melhor, na posição de autor – o tradutor português procura (numa resistência algo anacrónica?) devolver aos seus leitores as condições originais de leitura através de uma equivalência de efeito.

Um exemplo: no Capítulo V, “Advice from a Caterpillar”, depois de se queixar da sua constante mudança de tamanho e de não conseguir lembrar-se de algumas coisas como anteriormente (“. . . I’m not myself, you see” [1981: 66]), Alice explica à Lagarta que tentou recitar o poema “How doth the little busy bee” e que as palavras lhe saíram diferentes. É o próprio texto que assim introduz, num momento narrativo em que se fala de identidade, metamorfoses e mudanças, a questão da intertextualidade e da diferença – que é de facto também uma questão de “identidade” dos textos. Assim, o poema didático setecentista de Isaac Watts, “Against Idleness and Mischief”, claramente convocado através da citação do seu primeiro verso, surge parodiado no Capítulo II, “The Pool of Tears” como “How doth the little crocodile”, lamentando-se aí já Alice de não ter usado as palavras certas. No segmento de tradução correspondente a esse episódio, o tradutor português acrescenta ao texto, neste caso sem quaisquer sinais ou marcas explícitas de interferência, uma tradução das correspondentes duas estrofes de Isaac Watts precedida pelas seguintes palavras, também elas não constantes do original de Carroll: “Ao que parece, o vento do leque do Coelho Branco, com que Alice se abanou, baralhou-lhe as ideias. Na verdade, a poesia que ela pretendia recitar era assim: . . .” (2010: 26).

Ao traduzir, no já referido Capítulo V, o episódio da Lagarta, Babo volta a manipular ativamente o texto, embora desta feita cumprindo o que declarara na introdução, ou seja, integrando a explicação “na própria narrativa, em itálico e entre dois traços horizontais, como um aparte” (*idem*: 10). A situação é a seguinte: depois da tentativa de Alice de reproduzir – para testar a sua memória e, com ela, a sua identidade – o primeiro poema, que resulta num outro poema, a Lagarta sugere-lhe que recite agora “You are old, Father William”. O título coincide com parte do primeiro verso de “The Old Man’s Comforts And How He Gained Them”, de Robert Southey (1799), sendo, de facto, uma paródia deste que Carroll coloca na voz de Alice. No final, a Lagarta comenta: “That is not said right” e Alice acrescenta: “Not *quite* right, I’m afraid. . . some of the words have got altered”, confirmando finalmente a Lagarta: “It is wrong from beginning to end” (1981: 70-71). Mais uma vez o texto sugere a existência de uma matriz por detrás dos poemas, a qual estes não respeitam, configurando uma fuga à regra, instituindo uma diferença. A isto segue-se um silêncio de vários minutos. É este silêncio que o tradutor português utiliza para pôr em ação a sua estratégia, acrescentando ao texto de Carroll: “*Aproveitando estes minutos de silêncio entre Alice e a Lagarta, vamos ver como seria realmente a poesia que a pequena devia ter recitado e não conseguiu*”, palavras a que se segue a tradução portuguesa das duas primeiras estrofes do poema de Southey. Antes de voltar ao texto original, acrescenta, porém, o tradutor:

Bastam estas duas primeiras quadras, que aqui foram traduzidas quase à letra e sem preocupações com métrica ou rima, para se ver que Alice não consegue pôr as ideias em ordem, de maneira nenhuma. Mas, atenção, o período de silêncio está a terminar e. . . (58)

É quase inevitável comparar esta postura tradutiva de interferência no texto para recuperar as respectivas condições originais de leitura com uma outra opção que, apesar de igualmente manipuladora do texto, poderíamos situar num polo oposto: refiro-me à célebre tradução para português do Brasil de Monteiro Lobato, de 1931. Como explicam Flávia Westphalen e.a. (121), a tradução-adaptação de Lobato “distancia-se das demais. . . por preocupar-se sobremaneira em agregar ao texto elementos da cultura nacional brasileira em caráter didático e até mesmo doutrinário”, explicando que o tradutor “insere elementos da cultura nacional, criando um ambiente brasileiro, com uma *Alice brasileira* que recita poemas clássicos da nossa literatura. . .” (122), num intento claro de aproximar o texto da realidade do público de chegada, ao invés de tentar reconstituir o cenário de leitura original.

Três anos após a publicação do célebre manifesto antropófago modernista de Oswald de Andrade,⁶ o tradutor brasileiro Monteiro Lobato explicita as diferenças contextuais e anuncia no prefácio a sua estratégia tradutiva assimilatória, a sua “deglutição” do original:

Hoje [“*Alice in Wonderland*”] aparece em português. Traduzir é sempre difícil. Traduzir uma obra como a de Lewis Carroll, mais que difícil, é difícilimo. Trata-se do sonho de uma menina travessa – sonho em inglês, de coisas inglesas, com as palavras, referências, citações, alusões, versos, humorismo, trocadilhos, tudo inglês, isto é, especial, feito exclusivamente para a mentalidade dos inglesinhos. . . . As crianças brasileiras vão ler a história de Alice por artes de Narizinho. Tanto insistiu esta menina por vê-la em português. . . que não houve remédio, apesar de ser, como dissemos, uma obra intraduzível. (VIII-IX)

⁶ Cf. Andrade, Oswald de, “Manifesto Antropófago” (1928).

Na tradução de Lobato, a solução do elemento intertextual que vimos analisando passa pela substituição sintética da referência aos poemas de Watts e Southey e das respectivas paródias carrollianas por uma paródia equivalente do poema de Gonçalves Dias, que é um símbolo do nacionalismo brasileiro: “Canção do Exílio” (1847). A sugestão do Bicho Cabeludo (a Lagarta) parte da confissão de Alice, que afirma não conseguir lembrar-se de muitas coisas, incluindo “[d]aquela poesia que começa assim, por exemplo: Minha terra tem palmadas. . .” (53). Ora, esta referência remete de imediato, com uma diferença, para o primeiro verso de “Canção do Exílio”, claramente identificável pelos leitores brasileiros da época.⁷ A diferença é o “erro” da substituição do original “palmeiras” pelo termo “palmadas”, que traz também de imediato um efeito humorístico de *nonsense*. De seguida, o Bicho emenda: “Palmeiras. . . Minha terra tem palmeiras onde canta o. . . Acabel!”, sendo a resposta de Alice “Onde canta o crocodilo. . .”, o que dá lugar a mais um momento de *nonsense*, ecoando ainda a substituição de “bee” por “crocodile” do original de Carroll. Há ainda que notar que na versão de Monteiro Lobato não surge de facto uma tradução/paródia do poema, o qual, diferentemente do que acontece no original, é omitido. De qualquer forma, a adaptação da cena e das referências literárias transforma-se num ato de ocupação do espaço poético, uma substituição/devoração do “original” (e vemos como é difícil falar da existência de um original em Carroll) que usurpa a sua posição dominante.

Finalmente, regressamos ao princípio. Tendo começado por apontar as questões formais da materialidade dos textos poéticos como basilares na construção do prazer da leitura (essencial na literatura

⁷ Transcreve-se a primeira estrofe de “Canção do exílio”: “Minha terra tem palmeiras, / Onde canta o Sabiá; / As aves, que aqui gorjeiam, / Não gorjeiam como lá”. É curioso verificar como a estrofe remete para uma diferença que toma a forma radical de duas “linguagens” diferentes, mesmo na simbologia do mundo natural das vozes dos pássaros.

infantil) e de sentido (como vimos, indissociável do *nonsense* nos textos de Carroll), gostaria ainda de referir que os aspetos sonoros dos poemas têm sido especialmente esquecidos ou negligenciados numa boa parte das traduções portuguesas. Padrões de som, rima e ritmo, tendem a ser entendidos como elementos secundários ou marginais naquilo que parece constituir, nalgumas versões portuguesas, uma “obsessão de sentido” incapacitante da leitura e da plena fruição do efeito global do texto. Diríamos, a este propósito que o famoso conselho da Duquesa “Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves” não deve ser tomado à letra pelos/as tradutores/as de Alice!⁸

Jean-Jacques Lecercle (2-3) defende que o *nonsense* enquanto género se estrutura com base numa contradição entre “over-structuring and destructuring, subversion and support”, ou seja, a sua condição é simultaneamente conservadora (a manutenção/hiperestruturação) e revolucionária (a subversão/deseestruturação). O aspeto conservador liga-se ao respeito por várias formas de autoridade, incluindo a do texto parodiado. Apesar de, segundo o filósofo, não constituir a característica mais evidente do género, a importância do elemento conservador torna-se clara a partir de uma análise atenta e pormenorizada dos textos em questão, verificando-se que esse elemento está intimamente articulado com o lado “revolucionário” do *nonsense* literário, que é o aspeto mais óbvio dos efeitos da intertextualidade paródica: a libertação jocosa das regras, a negação da autoridade. Ou seja, é nesta tensão entre a manutenção dos ecos do texto-matriz e a sua subversão que resulta o absurdo (o impróprio), o disparate (o que é diferente), o sem-sentido, que estimula afinal a necessidade de sentido exatamente por frustá-la.

⁸ Note-se, por curiosidade, que esta frase da personagem constitui também uma paródia do provérbio contemporâneo de Carroll “Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves”.

Em Carroll, o poema “Father William” é um bom exemplo desta dinâmica. Trata-se de um texto de elaborada regularidade formal e de apurada gramaticalidade, que ecoa com perfeição a harmonia cuidadosamente estruturada da composição-base de Southey, enquanto lhe inverte transgressivamente o intento didático e moralista. Esse desajuste é obviamente um dos elementos que geram a comicidade do texto, no qual, de um incitamento à sensatez da disciplina física e moral na juventude enquanto garante de uma velhice equilibrada e feliz passamos à celebração insana de uma vida alheia às regras físicas e sociais do que é “apropriado”. Ambos os aspetos, a cômica inversão-subversão do sentido e a minuciosa atenção à estrutura formal, podem ser brevemente ilustrados através da transcrição e análise sucinta da primeira quadra dos dois textos, que tornam claro o complexo jogo de semelhanças e diferenças nos dois níveis acima referidos:

The Old Man’s Comforts and How He Gained Them

(Robert Southey, 1799)

“You are old, father William,” the young man cried,
“The few locks which are left you are grey;
You are hale, father William, a hearty old man;
Now tell me the reason, I pray.”

You are old, Father William

(Lewis Carroll, 1865)

“You are old, father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –
Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

O verso inicial de Carroll potencia de imediato o reconhecimento do estatuto paródico do poema através de um grau mínimo de diferença relativamente ao texto de Southey: apenas a última palavra, “cried”, é substituída, por “said”. O segundo verso do texto-matriz é parafraseado no poema de *Alice*, não havendo nele nenhum caso de repetição lexical. O *nonsense* situacional instala-se no terceiro verso, que altera por completo a informação do “original” parodiado. Finalmente, no quarto verso é retomado um paralelismo parcial, que tem como efeito sustentar funcionalmente a semelhança – solicita-se a Father William uma resposta à questão colocada, introduzindo a estrutura dialógica do(s) poema(s). Apesar disso, este mesmo verso marca o desajuste (nomeadamente, ao nível semântico, entre o comportamento e a idade) que é já anunciado pela introdução adversativa do verso anterior (“And yet”) e se manifesta, na nova perspetiva, a partir dos termos em que a pergunta é reformulada.

Em termos dos padrões de som, veja-se, por exemplo, como a métrica é escrupulosamente emulada, mantendo-se em Carroll o ritmo tetrâmetro anapéstico, e a rima final é não só preservada no seu formato cruzado como ainda “hiperestruturada” na paródia, em que se apresenta completa, segundo o esquema *abab*, que substitui o *abcb* do original. Note-se ainda como essa diferença, que, ironicamente, parece querer tornar o texto “derivativo” mais “perfeito” do que o “original”, se apoia exatamente no único elemento lexical alterado no primeiro verso, conforme verificámos.

Ora, um número significativo das diferentes versões portuguesas de “Father William” nas traduções de *Alice* escolhe uma limitadora estratégia de tradução literal dos “conteúdos” que inevitavelmente produz textos desequilibrados e de resultado sonoro pouco funcional e certamente nada aprazível.

A transcrição de dois exemplos é, por si só, suficiente para ilustrar esta afirmação:

“Já está tão velho, tio Guilherme”, disse o rapazola.

“E tem a cabeça toda branca,

E ainda pode andar de pernas para o ar!

Julga que, com essa idade, isso lhe faz bem?”⁹

“Estás velho, pai Guilherme”, disse o jovem,

“E o teu cabelo está a embranquecer

Mas andas sempre de cabeça para baixo...

Achas isso certo na tua idade?”⁽¹⁰⁾

Apesar de algumas das traduções, mais e menos recentes, se mostrarem bem mais atentas a estes aspetos dos textos, apresentando soluções muito criativas e eficazes, continuam a ser reeditadas (sobretudo no ano de 2010, decerto na peugada apressada do sucesso do filme de Tim Burton) algumas traduções portuguesas cuja qualidade poética não é, de todo, satisfatória.

Diria então que, apesar das excelentes exceções, Alice nem sempre tem rimado muito bem em português!

⁹ Tradução de Maria de Meneses (2008) [Trad. 1943].

¹⁰ Tradução de Maria Filomena Duarte/MFD (2010) [Trad. 1986].

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¹¹ As traduções de *Alice* são referidas por ordem decrescente da data da respetiva 1.ª publicação.

**“SPEAKING FOR THOUSANDS”:
MARY’S ANTIN’S THE PROMISED LAND
AND DOMINANT NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY
IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY**

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Resumo: Este artigo explora a narrativa verbal e fotográfica da autobiografia de Mary Antin no contexto dos debates sobre a construção da nação e da identidade americana no início do século XX, uma época em que estas questões assumiram grande importância devido ao aumento exponencial da imigração. Embora a sua história tenha sido vista como um exemplo a emular pelas “massas” que batiam à porta da América, defende-se que este texto constitui um exemplo do que George Lipsitz designa por “contra-memória”, não só no sentido em que recupera um passado suprimido, uma história excluída da narrativa dominante da nação, mas também porque se assume como a voz de milhares de imigrantes, ilustrando milhares de vidas anónimas.

Palavras chave: Autobiografia imigrante; americanização; assimilação; restrição da imigração.

Abstract: This paper explores the verbal and the usually neglected photographic narratives of M. Antin's autobiography in the context of the debates about the construction of the nation and the definition of an American identity in the early 20th century, a time when the massive increase in immigration lent a particular urgency to these issues. Although her story was quickly co-opted as an example to be emulated by the "huddled masses" knocking at "the golden door" of America, I argue that her text can actually be seen as an example of what George Lipsitz calls "counter-memory", not only in the sense that it reclaims a suppressed past, a history excluded from the master narrative of the nation, but also in that it claims to "speak for thousands", illustrating "scores of unwritten lives".

Keywords: Immigrant autobiography; Americanization; assimilation; immigration restriction.

Mary Antin's *The Promised Land* (1912) is perhaps the most famous of the many immigrant autobiographies that were published in the early decades of the 20th century in the U.S. Other popular autobiographies were *The Making of an American* (1901), by Jacob Riis, *From Alien to Citizen*, by Edward Steiner (1914), *The Autobiography of Andrew Carnegie* (1920), and *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (1920). The interest in immigrants' tales in this period is also attested by the 75 life stories, many of them by immigrants, published by the reformist newspaper *The Independent* between 1902 and 1906. Its editor, Hamilton Holt, selected 16 of these "lifelets," as he called them, and published them in a book entitled *Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans As Told by Themselves* (see Sollors 2002: 390-91).

Unlike Carnegie or Bok, Mary Antin was indeed an “undistinguished American” when she published her autobiography, as she candidly states in the introduction: “I have not accomplished anything, I have not discovered anything. . . My life has been unusual, but by no means unique” (Antin 1912/1997: 2).¹ Nevertheless, the story of her “makeover” became an instant success and was immediately revised for schoolchildren as *At School in the Promised Land or the Story of a Little Immigrant*, and special educational editions of her book continued to be published for use in civics classes until the late 1940s (see Sollors 1997: XXXII; Holte 1988: 28).

Although *The Promised Land* was read at the time, and for many decades after, as a story of successful assimilation, more recently several critics have shown how it disrupts the typical plot of conversion of the paradigmatic narrative of Americanization (Ashley 1998; Bergland 1994; Buelens 1994; Wasson 1994). A central element of this narrative was the erasure of the immigrant’s past and the wholehearted adoption of the new mode of life in America. By recovering a personal and collective past embedded in the long history of Jewish oppression, Antin’s autobiography refutes the linear simplicity of this dominant narrative of identity. The double vision and double voice that emerge from this remembrance of things past further complicate the reading of a text that has been variously called a “spiritual autobiography” (Salz 2000: xvi), a “biomythography” (Ashley 1998), or even “a treatise on sociology, of which education is the dominant feature” (*Literary Digest* 1912, qtd. in Sollors 1997: XXXII).

What I propose to do is to explore the verbal as well as the usually neglected photographic narratives of Antin’s autobiography²

¹ The abbreviation PL will be used in subsequent references to *The Promised Land*.

² As far as I know, Betty Bergland’s “Rereading Photographs and Narratives in Ethnic Autobiography” (1994) is the only extensive essay on this aspect of Antin’s

in the context of the debates about the construction of the nation and the definition of an American identity, at a time when the massive increase in immigration and the flare-up of nativism and xenophobia lent a particular urgency to these issues. Although her story was quickly coopted as an example to be emulated by the “huddled masses” knocking at “the golden door” of America, I will argue that her text can actually be seen as an example of what George Lipsitz (2001) calls “counter-memory.” As Lipsitz states, “counter-memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience” (213). What Antin explicitly sets out to do is to “force revision” of existing representations of immigrants, and especially Jews, “by supplying new perspectives about [their] past” (*ibidem*) as well as their present. Thus, her narrative seeks, on the one hand, to reclaim a suppressed past, a history excluded from the master narrative of the nation, and on the other to give a sense of the daily striving of immigrants in America.

At the same time, Antin constructs her narrative in such a way as to conflate the “local” and the “universal.” Thus, the Antin family’s history of oppression in Russia serves as an illustration not only of the lives of Jews in Eastern Europe, but also of all the oppressed who flee tyranny and persecution. The story of the “little immigrant” who was “made over” is told by a narrator who claims to “speak for thousands,” “the humble [who] are apt to live inarticulate and die unheard” (PL 72; cf. 195). The autobiography of a thirty-year old undistinguished American is therefore fully justified:

It is because I understand my history, in its larger outlines, to be typical of many, that I consider it worth recording. My life is a concrete illustration of a multitude of statistical facts. Although

text.

I have written a genuine personal memoir, I believe that its chief interest lies in the fact that it is illustrative of scores of unwritten lives. (PL 2)

The official memory of this period of U.S. history is registered in population census statistics, records of the origins and numbers of migrants entering the country, congressional records of the debates on immigration, state surveys of immigration, besides countless studies of immigrant communities undertaken by sociologists, anthropologists and historians. The numbers are indeed staggering, and even more so when set in the context of the transatlantic migrations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries: from 1871 to World War I, 36,890 million people migrated to the Americas. The heaviest influx was in the period between 1891 and 1914: almost 26 million, of which over 16 million (16,618,000) migrated to the U.S. (Nugent 1995: 14). Another significant factor was the diversity of the migrants that settled in the U.S. Whereas South America received mostly migrants from Southern Europe, the U.S. attracted large contingents from all of Europe (Higham 1975: 15-16), although a noticeable trend was the increase in the number of migrants from southern and eastern Europe after the 1880s. Mary Antin and her family, who emigrated from the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Russia in the early 1890s, are representative of this shift in the sources of immigration to the U.S.

Foreign labor was absolutely essential to the expansion and transformation of the U.S. economy after the Civil War (Jacobson 2000: 4), but the sweeping social and cultural changes brought about by the massive influx of immigrants gave rise to a fierce debate that dominated the American scene especially from the early 1890s to the 1920s. At the center of this debate was the figure of the “foreigner” as racial Other, and thus, by implication, the definition of the “American.” Although the earliest attacks on the “new immigrants”

were essentially of a social and economic cast, towards the end of the 19th century arguments based on the “racial menace” they posed to the nation came to dominate the debate (Higham 1975: 44-45). Ideas of a superior American race, linked to the Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian races, which had developed during the course of the 19th century (Horsman 1981: 4-5; 301-2), were now increasingly used by the proponents of immigration restriction. Associating the new immigrants with primitivism, disorder, irrationality, depravity, and disease, restrictionists argued that they were constitutionally incapable of assimilation (Higham 2000: 137-8, 140), and thus their presence threatened not only the political and cultural traditions of the nation, but also its “racial purity” (Higham 1975: 46; 2000: 138). After almost three decades of intense public and congressional debate, restrictionists won the day, and the passing of the National Origins Immigration Act in 1924 significantly reduced the influx from “undesirable” countries by establishing race-based criteria for legal admission into the U.S.

Mary Antin’s autobiography explicitly acknowledges the rising tide of opposition to immigration as well as discrimination against immigrants, and she seeks from the start to serve as “mediator” (Buelens 1994: 91-3) in this “bitter sea of racial differences and misunderstandings” (Antin 1997: 2). Indeed, she makes a conscious effort to establish connections in a deeply divided world. As Werner Sollors states in his introduction to this book, “*The Promised Land* is an autobiography of twoness, of divisions, and of ways to overcome them” (1997: xxix). In the first part of the book, Antin recalls her life as a member of an oppressed minority in Russia, while the second part describes and reflects upon her life in the U.S. Russia, representing both her personal past and the historical past of the Middle Ages, means oppression, poverty, and imprisonment; in contrast, America, representing both her present and modernity, means freedom, opportunity, and abundance. Thus, Antin’s narrator

is also represented as a “time traveler” (Sollors 1997: XXX), endowed with the knowledge and wisdom of the ages, and in the end she merges with America, “the youngest of the nations [that] inherits all that went before in history,” when she triumphantly declares that she is “the youngest of America’s children,” and hers is “the whole majestic past and. . . the shining future” (PL 286).

But this is only a superficial view of her narrative. If we take into account the interplay of voices and perspectives that “speak” in *The Promised Land*, including the photographic narrative, her counter-memory reveals a much more complex picture. The photos of the first part, documenting the poverty and oppression of Jews in the Russian Pale of Settlement, actually speak of an intensely communal life. Resistance to oppression within the Pale obviously worked in favor of group solidarity and communality, and the focus of this resistance was religion, which the older narrator describes as “a fortress erected by the prisoners of the Pale, in defiance of their jailers” (PL 26). In the New World, absence of explicit political oppression and religious persecution leads to atomization and individualism, not collective striving and endeavor.

The pictures included in the second part of *The Promised Land* emphasize this aspect, and also ironically point to the poverty, not the abundance and opportunity, of the social spaces inhabited by the immigrants. In contrast to the first part, many of pictures of the New World portray unpeopled spaces. The two pictures where groups are present capture individuals joined by accident of time and place (the school and the library); the picture of the sea at the end points to solitude and emptiness, not a “social” world of collective affinities and purposes (See Bergland 1994: 56; 73-4; 79-80); the picture of the railroad tracks, symbolizing the modern technological world of America, in contradistinction to the primitive, premodern world of Russia, signifies for Antin an evasion from “the confusion of [her] house” (PL 233) and her disintegrating family.

Her fascination with the tangle of tracks and the “fiery eye of the monster engine” indicates her growing detachment from family and community. She compares herself to the engine, “swift on my rightful business, picking out my proper track from the million that cross it, pausing for no obstacles, sure of my goal” (PL 234). The voice of the older, maturer, narrator, “whose life has borne witness, whose heart is heavy with revelations it has not made,” and who speaks “for thousands” (PL 195), reflects on “this sad process of disintegration of family life,” which “may be observed in almost any immigrant family,” and sees it as “part of the process of Americanization” (PL 213).

Thus, the photographic narrative and the shifting perspectives of the older narrator and the eager immigrant girl point to a much more somber picture of America in the early 20th century than has been acknowledged. Although Antin, in trying to capture the experiences and emotions of her younger self dazzled by the freedom and opportunities of the New World, stresses an idealized view of America, the verbal and the photographic narratives also give voice to another America, the America of the slums, which are seen “as a sort of house of detention for poor aliens, where they live on probation till they can show a certificate of good citizenship” (PL 145). The story of Antin’s father, who never managed to prosper in America, and who never ceased to be an alien, represents the dark side of the American Dream: “His history is the history of thousands who come to America, with pockets empty, hands untrained to the use of tools, minds cramped by centuries of repression” (PL 144).

In contrast to her father’s story of failure to assimilate, which would only confirm the worst fears of immigration restrictionists, she presents her own story of successful Americanization. The first words of her autobiography are “I was born, I have lived, and I have been made over” (PL 1). Most of the pages that follow are dedicated to this “making over,” this transformation of a Jewish immigrant into an American, who, nevertheless, does not “disown” her “father and

mother of the flesh” or her “entire line of ancestors” (PL 1). Although her parents and ancestors have a part in the “generation” of her “second self,” the most important part is played by the public school. Whereas her friend Horace Kallen, the earliest proponent of “cultural pluralism,” saw the American public school as a negative instrument of conformity to the norm of “the contemporary American of British ancestry” (1915/1996: 75), Antin sees it as a positive and absolutely essential means of making Americans out of “foreigners”:

The public school has done its best for us foreigners, and for the country, when it has made us into good Americans. I am glad it is mine to tell how the miracle was wrought in one case. You should be glad to hear of it, you born Americans; for it is the story of the growth of your country; . . . of the recruiting of your armies of workers, thinkers, and leaders. (PL 175)

Thus, Antin’s book, by telling the “miracle” of the making of one American who “is typical of many” (PL 2), seeks to provide a refutation of the dominant racial theories of the early 20th century.

But at the same time that she seeks to rebut the concept of identity as something innate, inherited in the blood, that can’t be changed or transcended, by proving through her own example of “conversion” that it is something that is acquired and that needs to be actively constructed within communities, her inability to forget the long past of Jewish oppression reveals her internalization of the dominant racial theories of her time. Indeed, as Priscilla Wald remarks, “Antin cannot suppress ambiguous traces of an incomplete conversion” (1995: 250). I would add that this incompleteness is also an effect of the ideological power of race in this period. In this sense, it is significant that in the introduction she invokes “the Wandering Jew” in her, who “seeks forgetfulness” (3). She confesses

that she is haunted by the past, which is metaphorically seen as “a heavy garment that clings to your limbs when you would run,” and she longs for “release from the folds of my clinging past.” Writing her autobiography is a form of exorcism, essential for her “personal salvation” (PL 3).

Thus, the double consciousness and double vision that was celebrated by W.E.B. Du Bois as emancipatory, is for Antin “painful” (PL 3). What she yearns for is the simplicity of a self unencumbered by memories of oppression and discrimination, a self that is guided (and blinded) by the shining torch of Lady Liberty, represented in the Statue that stands at the entrance of the New World, and that was chosen for the cover of her book, reinterpreted by Antin’s friend Emma Lazarus as a symbol of welcome to all those who “knock at the gates” of America.

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**III. ESTUDOS COMPARADOS /
COMPARATIVE STUDIES**

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PLACE CONCEPTS AS POETIC INTERRUPTIONS

Ziva Ben-Porat

Resumo: O artigo aplica a redefinição de Maria Irene Ramalho Santos do conceito de “interrupção poética” de Fernando Pessoa, ou seja, a interferência do político/cultural na representação de uma visão poética, ao estudo do conceito de lugar e do próprio lugar. Transponho a sua ligação entre a “interrupção poética” e os usos da linguagem para a ativação cognitiva de conceitos linguísticos, eventualmente exteriores à visão original do poema, e demonstro o funcionamento do processo a partir da análise de várias traduções, explicações e interpretações de um poema modernista hebraico. Mostro também em que medida uma imagem que se destina a evocar um determinado estado de espírito e não a representar uma entidade geográfica precisa pode ser interpretada, sob o impacto cognitivo de tal interferência, como uma representação “mimética”.

Palavras-chave: Interrupção poética; conceitos e representações do lugar; representação mimética; poesia modernista hebraica.

Abstract: In this paper I apply Ramalho Santos's re-definition of Pessoa's "poetic interruption" as the interference of the political/cultural in the representation of a poetic vision to a study of place concepts and real places. I translate her linking of "poetic interruption" with use of language to cognitive activation of linguistic concepts that might be external to a poem's original vision, and demonstrate such processes by analyzing a number of translations, explications and interpretations of a modernist Hebrew poem. I show how an image designed to evoke moods rather than represent a "real" geographical entity might be interpreted, under the cognitive impact of such interference, as a "mimetic" representation.

Keywords: Poetic interruption; concepts and representations of place; mimetic representation; modernist Hebrew poetry.

To MIR, an esteemed colleague and beloved friend

In the seventh chapter of her book *Atlantic Poets* Irene Ramalho Santos presents "Poetic Interruption," which she defines as the interference of our culturally constructed world - hence "the political" - not only as a "Pessoan concept for reading the lyre" (222) but also as the generative force behind the poetical:

By bringing the political to break in upon the poet's unifying imagination, interruption is actually what accounts for the poetical. . . . the political facts of life go on interrupting the poet's vision, thus allowing for its actual poeming. In this sense of the political, . . . politics calls attention to the limits of language that

necessarily render the freedom of poetry writing problematic, thus inviting the self-conscious, artful use of language that amounts to poetic fiction. (Idem)

I translate this aspect of “poetic interruption” to cognitive activation of linguistic concepts that might be external to a poem’s original vision, by either writer or readers. By doing this I try to reunite Pessoa’s claim with that of Ramalho Santos’, consciously and sometimes intentionally misreading them both. Whereas they initially speak of a real interruption in the process of writing or reading a poem, I refer to associations triggered by linguistic usages. Whereas Ramalho Santos speaks about the liberation of culturally fettered reality by the free poetic imagination which it infiltrates, I emphasize the fetters by which language limits the freedom of imagination. By this I refer to the well-known fact that language uses us as much as we use it. I claim that an unplanned and uncontrolled activation of any cultural concept often mars – or at least contaminates – the clarity of a poem’s underlying poetic vision on the one hand and interrupts the reading of such texts on the other. An image designed to evoke moods rather than represent a “real” entity might be interpreted, under the cognitive impact of such interference, as a “mimetic” representation.

I shall illustrate my claims through a study of a well-known modernist Hebrew poem by Nathan Alterman (the most influential Hebrew-Israeli poet of the second third of the 20th century), two of its translations and three conflicting interpretations (academic articles and papers/exams of High-School students). The two place concepts associated with the reading of Alterman’s poem, my claimed poetic interruptions, are those of Jerusalem and Paris. However, the motivations for their activations are very different and exemplify the variety of potential triggers. With respect to Jerusalem it is easy to see and show in the text the net of attributes that comprise the

concept “Jerusalem” in Hebrew culture. Paris, on the other hand, is triggered by features of Modernist - Beaudelairian in particular - poetry and biographical facts concerning the poet’s stay there shortly before writing this poem.

Alterman, whose poem “Summer Night” (1934) is then the focus of this article, is generally accepted as one of the leading Israeli Modernist poets and at the same time is described and analyzed as a French Symbolist. English and American, as well as German Modernist poetry, arrived late in Israel. Although such period and poetic school identifications should act as a warning against attempts to look for mimetic representations, Paris and Jerusalem can and have been evoked, revoked or subdued by readers of the same text. Moreover, academic interpreters and translators tended to adapt an either-or policy rather than embrace the complexity of two conflicting (re)constructions of potential background or underlying localities. The mixed triggering attributes not only invoke two distinct representations but can change the cultural associations which constitute the cities’ auras. More accurately, the modern city of French symbolism can be manipulated to challenge the historically dominant conceptualization of Jerusalem as “the eternal holy [ruined] capital of Israel.”

In a number of studies and experiments, conducted during the last 25 years, I found out that this cultural concept of Jerusalem, already established in the Bible, but emerging as a poetic model of writing (and hence reading) in the Middle Ages, is still the dominant concept even in the minds of Israelis who have first-hand familiarity with the city. The concept has not changed in Israeli Hebrew speaking society in spite of the incredible political, social and economic changes that took place throughout the 20th century. The major attributes of the concept are still: the Wailing Wall, broken walls, stones, holiness, domes, spires and longings. Only pine trees and clear air have been added to the top of the

list since 1967, when Naomi Shemer composed her “Jerusalem of Gold”¹.

In more than 800 questionnaires (200 hundred in 2013), in which participants have been asked to list and then grade the cultural salience of the city’s attributes, the old city, The Temple Mount or Moslem and Christian Holy Places lag behind the ancient traditional attributes cemented after Jerusalem’s Fall in Roman times. So do all the important landmarks and institutions of the contemporary city (such as the Knesset [Parliament], the Hebrew University, the High Court of Justice or even the Teddy Football Arena). Consequently, every text - verbal or visual - presenting ruined walls, rocks, domes and spires, without any landmark or verbal instruction to contradict the traditional identification, activates the cultural concept “Jerusalem.” Such activation effects the composition but does not necessarily lead to close or similar readings of the poem in which they appear. Poetic interruption can work in various directions.

Bracketing individual personality traits and contextual factors, different interpretations can result from different conceptual nets related to active cultural memory. Place concepts represent such memory structures embodied in the language. In the following discussion I show how the early introduction of a phrase which relates a great length of time with Jewish history in general, and the destruction of Jerusalem in particular, effects the poet’s use of language and imagery to the point of leading his innocent readers (and sometimes even literary scholars) away from his poetic vision. The vision, reconstructed on the basis of the poem’s dominant characteristics, calls for an emotive – rather than logical, historical or narratological – integration of the poem’s distinct and unrelated images, but the activation of a place concept pulls in the direction of concretized imagery.

¹ See, for example, Ben-Porat 1988, 1991.

ליל קיץ

דומיה בפורקבים שורקת.
בהק השפין בעין החתולים.
לילה. כמה לילה! בשמים שקט.
כוכבים בחתולים.

זמן רחב, רחב. הלב צלצל אלפים.
טל, כמו פגישה, את הריסים הצעירי.
במגלב זהב פנס מפיל אפים
עבדים שחורים לרחב הרצירי.

רוח קיץ שקטה. עמומה. רוגשת.
על כתפי ננים שפתייה ושפכות.
רע ירקרק. תסיסת אורות נחשד.
רתיחת מקמון בקצף השחר.

והחשק לגבה, בנהימה מרעבת,
עיר אשר עיניה זהב מצפות,
מהאדה בועם, בתמרות האבן,
של המגדלים והכפות.

Literal translation by B. Hrushovsky (1965)

Silence whistles in the (wide) spaces.

Glitter of a knife in the eye of cats.

Night. How much night! In the skies: quiet.

Stars in swaddling clothes.

A wide wide time. The heart rang two thousand.
Dew, like an encounter, veiled the lashes.
With a golden whip a street-lantern throws down (prostrates)
Black slaves across the width of the platform.

A summer wind roams (floats). Muted. Agitated.
Her (the wind's) lips are poured out upon shoulders of gardens.
Greenish malice. Fermentation of lights and suspicion.
Boiling of a treasure in the black foam.

And far, toward the height, with famished growl,
A city whose eyes are plated with gold,
Evaporates in rage, in the stone billows
Of the towers and the copulas.

This literal translation is part of a project entitled “The Hebrew Poem Itself.”² The wish to present the non-Hebrew reader with the “poem itself” explains some of the features of this translation. Hrushovsky refrains from any attempt to fit the text into English syntactic patterns, to introduce any explanatory element to the string of distinct images, or to hide moments of indecision (embodied in options presented in parentheses), and contrariwise allows himself even to explain a reference (“her [the wind's]” l.10). The solution to the unavoidable loss of Alterman's prosodic genius is the inclusion of an English transliteration of the Hebrew text. The underlying justification of this complex behavior is undoubtedly grounded

² The project, initiated and edited by Stanley Burnshaw, resulted in a very successful book by that name, featuring many editions. In the most recent one (2003) only the author's name is changed: Harshav replaces Hrushovsky. For that reason I include both in the list of citations. Because the time line is relevant to my argument I keep referring to the name used in the first edition (namely, Hrushovsky).

in Hrushovsky's wish to avoid as much as possible the inevitable interpretive nature of all translations.

Translations are always interpretations in disguise. They are never presented as such because changes are justified by formal or linguistic constraints, but it is quite easy to reconstruct a translator's interpretation following her decisions or their justifications. Aiming to unveil interpretive decisions with respect to poetic interruptions, I begin with a comparison of two translations. Please note that only Friend's poetic translation (positioned on the left half of the page) is reproduced in full. Hrushovsky's is printed above. In order to juxtapose the two as clearly as possible (namely, on the same page) identical translated segments appear only once on the left of the page and are represented by hyphens (- - -) on the right side, the one which contains the literal translation.

Nathan Alterman, "Summer's Night"

(Poetic translation by Robert Friend, 1978)

(Literal translation by B. Hrushovsky, 1965)

Silence whistles in the open spaces.

Silence whistles in the (wide) spaces.

A knife in a cat's eye glows.

Glitter of a knife in the eye of cats.

Night! How much night! In the sky, stillness. - - -

In the skies: quiet.

Stars in swaddling clothes. - - -

A wide, wide time. **The heart's clock rang two thousand.** - - - The heart rang - -

Dew, like a rendez-vous, veiled the lashes.

- - - like an encounter - -

A street lamp hurls black slaves across the pavement

As its **gold** whip flashes.

With a golden whip a street-lantern

Throws down (prostrates)

Black slaves across the width of the platform.

the water related Paris concept. This, as I claimed, reveals the underlying force of the poetic interruption, the activated Jerusalem concept. Nonetheless, Hrushovsky enhances Alterman's ambiguous metaphorical formulations when he translates the upward movement of the stone (l.15) as "billows."

These translation decisions may then be explained either by the unconscious activation of the cognitive concept Jerusalem in the minds of the translators or by a deliberate attempt to enhance such activation, perceiving it as a feature of Alterman's poetic vision. However, it is clear that both translators realize and cherish the modernistic qualities of the poem and maintain them. Neither would read it as a poem about Jerusalem, Paris, or any other "real" place.

Although the poem has not been particularly popular with literary critics, it has been used by teachers of literature. As a result there are numerous readings available: some – mostly those of literary critics – perceive and accentuate a French connection, conspicuous, for example, in Friend's "rendez-vous" (l. 6). Even if the French term attracted Friend by the possibility of rhyming it with dew, activation of a Paris concept might have generated it. Other interpreters foreground Jerusalem. Still other, like Hrushovsky (particularly as an explicator and interpreter), insist on the a-localization of the images.

In his early explication of the poem, (1965), in the context of the forementioned *Introduction to Modern Hebrew Poetry*, Hrushovsky writes:

A mysterious atmosphere surrounds the speaker who waits as if lost in time and space. No other people, no specific events, yet something is happening around him in the warm summer night. The setting of the poem spreads out between two fields of light: the innocent stars far above in the quite sky (stanza 1) and

the fuming stones of a distant city evaporating in the rage of its illuminated towers and cupolas (stanza 4). Dimensions of time and of space overlap. The lone speaker feels that time is motionless and almost unreal. It is a matter of “How much night!” and of “wide wide time” – [using inappropriate adjectives in both cases results in abstraction and unrealistic effect]. (107)

If a link to the historical Jerusalem concept comes to a reader’s mind, Hrushovsky’s detailed insistence on the abstract unrealistic effect of the poem undercuts such linkage. The thrust towards abstraction is strongly evident already in Hrushovsky’s explication of the second line.

Line 2 is a typical Alterman device: creating abstract qualities by manipulating concrete elements. The cats – a traditional accessory in magical circumstances – are not individualized; they are endowed with one collective menacing eye. The “glitter of the knife” - later echoed by “greenish evil” - is at once contrasted with the “quietude” of the skies. [stanza 1]. (*Ibidem*)

Hrushovsky’s presentation of the poem combines explication and interpretation. This combination generates a complex organization of the argument. A line-by-line reading (explication) mingles with the construction of comprehensive de-localized frames (interpretation), resulting in repetitions. For example, in his treatment of l.5 (presented below), the repeated illustration of the mingling of the temporal and the spatial is practically unconnected to the ensuing analysis of the rest of l. 5. It is nevertheless functional in his effort to foreground the abstract nature of Alterman’s imagery.

Time is not old but wide. Only the heart marks the passage of time by its fateful ringing. **The number 2000, which refers to**

the span of the diaspora, is an extremely hackneyed phrase in Israel, a proverbial expression for interminable duration. Hence, for the heart, the length of time seems unreal, immeasurable. [emphasis mine]. (*Ibidem*)

This is probably the point at which Alterman's struggle with the "poetic interruption", induced by an established linguistic practice, begins. And so is Hrushovsky's. Unable to ignore the reference's triggering power, since the years of the diaspora cannot be separated from the remembrance of and longing for Jerusalem, Hrushovsky puts it down as too "hackneyed" to activate – or even be included – in the concept of Jerusalem. He presents it as just a reference to a very long time. The reason for such a strong action becomes clearer as the explication of the poem continues.

The sudden encounter (6), answering as it were the heart's expectancy (5), is introduced by an inverted simile - thus it is not explicitly embedded in the setting [or in a potential plot/story]. The erotic element [5, 10] is not individualized but becomes an element in a setting suffused with unreal imagery. (*ibidem*)

No "heart's expectancy" is mentioned in the poem. It cannot but be perceived as the offspring of the Jerusalem concept activation - the poetic interruption Hrushovsky as reader (and maybe Alterman as writer) is struggling with. The longing of the Jews in the diaspora to return to Zion – an option triggered by the "heart rang two thousand" could be fictionally related to a happy coming together which brings tears ("dew") to the eyes of the participants. Such fictionalization and grounding in reality are strongly negated as interpretive options in Hrushovsky's previous explicatory segment. He must now make special efforts to eliminate it. This he does by focusing on the inverted simile, which makes "dew" rather than the

“encounter” the subject of the phrase. It could be argued that the inversion emphasizes the reviving force of the encounter with Zion and its God or that dew is typical of warm nights in the desert. But what is important for my argument is Hrushovsky’s elaborate effort to eliminate these options.

Hrushovsky shows that the effect of timelessness, created by the image of immeasurable time

is emphasized by the predicateless sentences (2-5, 11-12) and the preponderance of nouns (almost 5 times as many as verbs and adjectives). Though the sensuous elements are present, they are generally divorced from their normal environments. Thus each introduces a realm of its own, rich with overtones, but the resulting images are vague in outline, emphasizes the diffused haziness of this summer night and the feeling of something vague, strange, ominous. (*idem*: 108)

The main insights that this explication provides, in accordance with Hrushovsky’s literal translation, with respect to our interest in Jerusalem/Paris as cognitive models potentially interfering in and affecting the interpretation of the poem, are the following:

- 1) Hrushovsky reads the text as a symbolist poem in which the main element is an abstraction – an idea of alienation and anxiety coupled with fascination, enchantment and desire; the emotional effect and the music of the text are more important than logical inferences, literal significations and reconstructed coherent representations of reality.
- 2) If a Paris mental construct is involved in the processing of the text, it is a concept of Paris embodied in a specific variant of symbolism.

- 3) Hrushovsky's awareness of the potential activation of a Jerusalem concept reveals itself in his effort to minimize the potential triggering force of Jewish elements (detailed above).
- 4) This a-localization characterizes his translation, which is much more faithful (than Friend's) to the original text. Hrushovsky keeps the original water-related words (floats, l. 9 and billows, l. 15) although he uses "platform" where "quay" might have been a better choice. And yet, his "platform" might work better than Friend's "pavement" if the aim is to rule out any activation of "Jerusalem."

Equipped with knowledge of Alterman's stay in France and the time of composition (the second half of the 1930s after a long stay in France) and with his established association with French symbolism, other scholars read into the amorphous description a representation of an actual – if fictionalized and romanticized – Paris. In a book sub-titled *Alterman's Poetry from a modernist Perspective* (1989)³, Ziva Shamir, for example, claims that

The surrealist bewitched description is nothing but a unique and uncommon way for describing a real and ordinary city late at night, when the windows that have been lit up by yellow electrical light grow dark and the buildings get covered by a dark black fog, as if disappearing in billows of hazy mists; or, just the opposite, a description of a city in the early morning hours, when windows lit up slowly by the sunshine's golden light until it wakes up [with zest and appetite] ("a famished growl") to face a new day in life.

³ I use my own translation of the sub-title in order to foreground what I called "the French connection". The Hebrew title is a quotation from one of Alterman's best known poems, and the official translation of the title, *The Vagrant Bard: Avant-Garde and Alterman's Poetic Style* is, to my mind, less revealing.

If we take off the city's mythical veil we end up with a banal routine picture of a city. (75)⁴

“The ominous effect of the glittering knife in the eye of a cat” is interpreted by Shamir as

the sense of danger experienced by a person when walking in the abandoned outskirts of the city subjected to the criminal underworld. The glitter of the knife can be associated with a real knife in the hands of a criminal or with the straightforward fact of the elongated and narrow pupil of a cat's eye. (78)

Although Shamir does not explicitly claim that the real city of the poem is indeed Paris, she suggests it by referring to the quays as the sites of commerce and loading activities by day and attractive hookers by night. She substantiates the implied identification of the city as Paris by a number of references to the poetry of Baudelaire and by quoting a possible source of direct influence – a poem by Leon Valade, a minor symbolist poet of the second half of the 19th c., entitled “Nuit de Paris.” This poem, according to Shamir, shares with Alterman's the

mixture of poetic romanticism and daily life; an arbitrary mixture of evil and tenderness, of spirituality and materialism. . . . Both poems upgrade a picture of banal city daily life to the level of magical witchcraft through the use of techniques of “making strange” and mystification; and both mention the summer's night gilded eyes (stars - explicitly mentioned in Valade's poem and lit-up windows inferred from Alterman's description). (81)

⁴ All quotations from Shamir's book are in my unauthorized translation.

Sensitive to dualities in the imagery and in the constructed argument of the poem, Shamir claims that the conflicting triggers typify the Modern broken and divided image, “in which opposites maintain their strong opposition and do not merge” (74). The opposites in her reading are the alternative options of looking at the poem either as representing a city disappearing as the dark night takes over or, conversely, a city waking up (75). She concludes by unveiling the modernist function of such dualities: “If we take off from the picture its mythical heavenly veil a banal and ordinary picture of a city emerges” (*idem*).

The marked effect of the Paris concept as the key to this reading is evident not only in the explicit grounding of Shamir’s interpretation in the symbolist tradition and her constant references to Parisian attributes (such as the Seine), but also in her treatment of contrasting or interruptive elements. She too has to marginalize and dispel the effects of the strong “Jerusalem” triggers. So she presents “the heart rang two thousand” as a verse “spoken sentimentally, sweetly and gently, like the sentimental poetry of the chansonniers” (*idem*). She explicates the stone billows of the last stanza as the spreading darkness or as morning fogs - “both are only means towards mystification of a routine city-scape at night-fall or day-break” (*idem*). Naturally, under the spell of a specific poetic interruption, she ignores the triggering potential of “domes and spires” or other “Jerusalem” attributes.

In contra-distinction to the scholarly activation of a literary conceptualization of Paris on the basis of the stylistic qualities of the text, without any triggers such as the characteristic landmarks or attributes of the city’s conceptualization and with blatant disregard for potential triggers of the concept Jerusalem, almost all “innocent” Israeli readers (mostly high-school students struggling with an unseen passage) read “Summer’s Night” as a poem about Jerusalem. Unspecified references to towers and domes, in conjunction with

stone, gold, and 2000 years, sufficed to activate the representation “Jerusalem” in their minds. This supports my claim that even people who were born in Israel and know the modern Jerusalem very well from first hand experiences carry in their heads an image that was planted there by cultural memory. From the Biblical descriptions of the glorious capital and of Jerusalem in ruins, through the Medieval poetry of longing and remembrance, followed by many poems, piyuttim (traditional religious poetry) and prayers, and culminating in many popular songs, this list of attributes, paradoxically concrete abstractions (e.g. domes and not the Golden Dome), came to dominate a concept of a city which is a locus of national identity, and consequently whose past can almost completely overshadow its present.

While the identification of Jerusalem as a possible object of the poem’s description was a common denominator in the work of many students, few exhibited an ability to work with the concept in order to achieve a more comprehensive and cohesive interpretation (beyond attributing every other element in the poem to a surrealistic modern fictional place). Those who did achieved comprehensive and consistent interpretation on the basis of the activated concept and its historical aura. Their arguments can be summarized in the following way: If the city is Jerusalem, the speaker is not inside the city, but is quite far away, in real open spaces (and not objective correlatives). Some even said⁵: the speaker is in the Judea Desert which recalls the early history of the Hebrews. The prostrated beaten slaves could then be related to our history in Egypt. The whip acquires a literal signification alongside its metaphorical usage in the description of the street-light at night. Evil’s association with water is explained by the Nile and the early Hebrew life on its banks. The wrath with

⁵ Please note that this is not a quotation of a particular paper but a collage of statements made orally by students who claimed the poem to be about Jerusalem.

which Jerusalem wakes up is in such interpretations recounted as a history of rebellion and fight for freedom.

Evidently such interpretations move even farther away from Alterman's a-localization than Shamir's Symbolist Paris. Nevertheless, all exemplify the strong effect of the poetic interruption caused by the activation of a place concept. At the same time, they exemplify the poeticizing effect of a poetic interruption: whole imaginary worlds are constructed as a result of the interference which, as Ramalho Santos formulated it, "necessitates the artful use of language that enables/allows the creation of poetic fiction."

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FROM HEART OF DARKNESS TO APOCALYPSE NOW

Maria Helena de Paiva Correia

To Maria Irene Ramalho, a great scholar, a generous colleague, and a reliable friend.

Resumo: O artigo faz uma leitura de *Heart of Darkness* em função do conceito Freudiano do “Inquietante” (aquilo que deve permanecer escondido e em segredo) e de *Apocalypse Now* em termos da noção bíblica do Apocalipse como revelação, discutindo este e outros paradoxos aparentes na adaptação de Coppola do romance de Conrad. O artigo conclui que o filme ilumina o romance e que o uso do belo em diversas formas de arte pode estar ao serviço da revelação do mal indizível.

Palavras-chave: *Heart of Darkness*; *Apocalypse Now*; o “Inquietante”.

Abstract: The article produces a reading of *Heart of Darkness* in terms of Freud’s concept of “the Uncanny” (i.e. what should remain secret and hidden) and of *Apocalypse Now* in terms

of the Bible's notion of Apocalypse as Revelation (i.e. what is brought to light). The article discusses this and other apparent paradoxes in Coppola's adaptation of Conrad's famous novel to conclude that the film illuminates the book and that diverse art forms can disclose unspeakable evil by means of outstanding beauty.

Keywords: *Heart of Darkness*; *Apocalypse Now*; "the Uncanny".

The accepted English translation of Freud's German expression *unheimlich* is uncanny (217). Yet, according to Sigmund Freud's essay, the word *heimlich* (familiar, in English) covers two different concepts: something familiar, agreeable, but also that which is concealed and kept out of sight. Further on, the author reminds us that Schelling points out that the antonymous word, *unheimlich* conveys the meaning of what should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.

The situation Marlow experiences in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is thoroughly uncanny in the sense of being frightening, unfamiliar. Far from Europe, far from his daily routine, facing an unknown environment, a dire colonial situation, confronted with the overwhelming evil epitomised by Kurtz, the narrator falls short of self-destruction and realises he has witnessed the worst a human creature is capable of enduring. He will never be the same again. Darkness is going to haunt him forever.

As a matter of fact, the Marlow who once ventured into this peculiar journey is already symbolically dead. The character who tells the story where he plays his part is someone else, a sort of survivor who vaguely hints at what he may have been before. These

hints allow us to understand his “horror”, though the word is uttered by Kurtz. The agony he experienced turned out to be both a source of a new self-consciousness and a newly created consciousness of other human beings in weird circumstances. The title conveys a powerful metaphor of the Uncanny by way of the Western Christian tradition: it is the core, the inside of a region completely devoid of either light or compassion. In other words, it is hell.

Inspired writing does convey a sense of pleasure to the reader, who feels grateful for having received such a gift. At the same time, however, he is heartbroken as he realises how far and how hard evil threatens mankind, while concurrently an ethical understanding of the narrative takes shape where a reappraisal of human values is disclosed. This astonishing breakthrough helps to keep the mysterious evil half hidden though unequivocally present everywhere. If clearly displayed, the evil might have become less fearful, prone to be explained. This way, it remains deeply ingrained, unspeakable, kept in the innermost spaces of one’s soul.

It is possible, however, to transmit a similar feeling by means of image and sound, using cinema, not the written word. Francis Ford Coppola managed to achieve such a deed with his remarkable film *Apocalypse Now*.

The film is unmistakably based on Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*; it shares Kurtz’s name and character, notwithstanding the fact that no acknowledgement to that effect was made public by the director. The scene changes from colonial Africa to the Vietnam War, a war in a country with a dreadful colonial past. The narrator is now an American, Captain Benjamin L. Willard, instead of a European civilian. The reality to be reckoned with is still the Uncanny. The Western Christian tradition is maintained, though another title is used. A descent into hell can be witnessed, while a reappraisal of human values takes place. It is a “Revelation”.

The *Apocalypse* in the Gospel according to St. John is also known as *The Book of Revelation* in the English tradition of Bible translation¹. This other name – Revelation – has the advantage of retaining the etymological meaning of the word Apocalypse. In this sense, what in Conrad was recognised as an irretrievable darkness appears in the film as something suddenly brought into full light. Moreover, it comes to light “Now,” not once upon a time, that is, not out of time, or somewhere in the past in an unidentified place. “Now” is the Vietnam wartime where American soldiers are killing and being killed. The antithesis is striking.

How to deal with what seems to have a similarity of purpose but two apparently antithetical titles? In the first case, as I have suggested, there is *The Inner Darkness*; in the second, *Revelation Now*. Is this to be explained by the change from writing to image and sound? Is it the result of a loss of mystery on behalf of spectacle? The answer is no. There is spectacle, yes, in the use of some breath-taking images which are pervasive in modern war pictures. But many scenes convey the effect of a growing darkness, particularly dense when we catch a glimpse of Kurtz and his environment. Colours give way to an ever-present dark green forest, mirrored

¹ See Dictionary.com Unabridged. Based on the Random House Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2015.

a·poc·a·lypse

noun

1. (*initial capital letter*) revelation (def. 4).
2. any of a class of Jewish or Christian writings that appeared from about 200 b.c. to a.d. 350 and were assumed to make revelations of the ultimate divine purpose.
3. a prophetic revelation, especially concerning a cataclysm in which the forces of good permanently triumph over the forces of evil.
4. any revelation or prophecy.
5. any universal or widespread destruction or disaster: *the apocalypse of nuclear war*.

Origin:

1125-75; Middle English < Late Latin *apocalypsis* < Greek *apokálypsis* revelation, equivalent to *apokalýp (tein)* to uncover, reveal (*apo-* apo- + *kalyptein* to cover, conceal) + *-sis* -sis.

by the river, where men in green camouflage uniforms, carrying dark guns, look like shadows. Francis Ford Coppola's original 1979 theatrical release ended with a fading out to black and no credits. Later on the director elected a different ending which turned out to be misunderstood by the audience. Therefore, he chose to put credits on a black screen. As far as *Apocalypse Now: Redux* is concerned, the credits are presented on a black background while ambient music and jungle sounds are heard. Conrad's heart of darkness is definitely there.

Let's take notice, however, of another unforgettable sequence of scenes in the picture. Helicopters fly among flames while the powerful sound of Richard Wagner's *Ride of the Valkyries* leads to an operatic effect. The helicopters, as well as the flames they seem to ride, convey the meaning of violent warfare. The music recalls *The Valkyrie*, the second opera in the Wagnerian tetralogy, *The Nibelung's Ring*, where flashes of lighting herald in mythic women warriors, and fire surrounds the protagonist Brünnhilde. The word valkyrie literally means "chooser of the slain"². Images and sound produce a peculiar revelation of warfare where modernity, as shown by means of the reel news, is present through helicopters flying among flames in the Vietnam War, while the same helicopters turn into mythic valkyries riding among flames in order to choose the slain. The representation of death is thus reinforced, but the scene can also be enjoyed as a culturally constructed image of beauty. The music and the connections this particular piece of music carry with it make all the difference. These unforgettable scenes of Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* prevail as a modern, fiery revelation

² See Dictionary.com Unabridged. Based on the Random House Dictionary, © Random House, Inc. 2015.

Origin: Old Norse valkyrja, chooser of the slain (cognate with Old English wæl-cyrie witch), equivalent to val (r) the slain in battle, slaughter (cognate with Old English wæl) + kyrja chooser (cognate with Old English cyrie); akin to choose.

of the Uncanny. War is uncanny and so are the valkyries, though helicopters *stricto sensu* are not. The scenes themselves are uncanny, unspeakable and full of mystery. Death and destruction are the worst evil, the heart of darkness. Darkness may, nevertheless, be conveyed by means of light, at least metaphorically, just as evil may be presented by means of revelation leading to the disclosure of its evidence.

Revelation Now, the expression I am using to express the meaning of the title of Francis Ford Coppola's renowned movie forces the audience to acknowledge that war is the utmost evil, an uncanny experience. It has nothing, or at least very little to do with glory, honour, duty. It lets loose the heart of darkness, not only in one man, Kurtz, but in humankind. Suffering, fear, destruction and death surface everywhere. The overwhelming light that images display does not rely exclusively on image and fire, but on the symbolic construction of image, music and allusion. They carry mystery as well as mastery. Evil is present, though its deepest roots remain half hidden, as in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The audience is aware of the unsaid. These weird helicopters spread an unspeakable evil, far more terrifying than the usual violence in war films.

The mystery is not entirely revealed. The Revelation the audience is invited to share is that human beings cannot avoid the lasting effects caused by original sin, resulting from primordial Evil. Both the slain and the survivors are defeated. The horror is happening now, far away, in Asia; it is happening to the director's countrymen under conscription. It is also happening to their enemy, and to many civilians. The moral purpose of the film consists in this multiple Revelation.

The expression I chose to convey the meaning of Conrad's title was The Inner Darkness. As a title, *Heart of Darkness* particularly suits a book in which the action takes place in colonial Africa, an

uncanny place where, in Conrad's day, white human beings were considered to be the standard-bearers of civilization in the face of savage black people who engaged in witchcraft.³ The white reader was nevertheless made aware that either savagery could be taken as a sort of infection prone to contaminate colonisers or that, far away, somewhere in Africa, an unequal war was being fought, where even civilised white human beings could easily be transformed into evil creatures whose heart turned darker than the skin of the colonised blacks they allegedly intended to civilise.

It is understandable that, for the contemporary reader, far from the place where historic events were then occurring, the first interpretation would prevail. Time makes us particularly aware of the second interpretation, since History revealed the true face of colonialism, and regrettably, Horror and the Uncanny keep haunting Africa in our own day. I believe that the latter interpretation is most probably the one that Conrad had in mind. Anyhow, he was able to make the audience acknowledge the horror of the darkest side of a human soul that happened to belong to a white man. He succeeded in making this revelation in an age where colonialism could not yet be condemned as an evil in itself, at least by its promoters.

When one puts side by side Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, the film illuminates the book and further revelations dramatically emerge. The revelation of how the uncanny can display what should have remained hidden, by means of simultaneously keeping its secrecy and unfolding its labyrinthine complexity; and last but not least, the revelation of

³ Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski (1857-1924), a.k.a Joseph Conrad published *Heart of Darkness* in 1899. He was appointed captain of a steamer on the Congo River in 1890. *Heart of Darkness* is based on the author's experiences in the Congo. Joseph Conrad always considered himself a Pole, though he was born a Russian citizen. He knew from personal experience what colonialism and immigration meant.

how diverse art forms can disclose unspeakable evil by means of outstanding beauty.

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TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF “MENTAL TRANSLATIONS”

João Duarte

Resumo: É propósito deste artigo examinar criticamente aquela que, na área da tradução pós-colonial, se tornou na posição dominante no que diz respeito à natureza da narrativa africana redigida na língua do ex-colonizador, aqui designada por escrita intercultural. De acordo com a teoria atual, estas narrativas não são senão traduções de oratura em literatura, ou seja, elementos específicos de uma cultura oral nativa literalmente “traduzidos” para a língua e cultura europeias em que a narrativa foi escrita (cf. Paul Bandia, *Translation as Reparation*, 2008).

Pretende-se demonstrar: 1) que tal posição faz parte de uma tendência mais geral nas humanidades para usar o conceito de tradução metaforicamente, isto é, tradução que não implica transferências entre línguas nem textos de partida, e 2) que essa tendência é criticável tanto do ponto de vista lógico como do político, segundo argumentação apresentada. Sublinha-se em particular que um dos riscos envolvidos na noção de tradução sem original pode ser o de acabarmos por nos confrontar com uma cultura global monolíngue e daí ser cada vez mais difícil apercebermo-nos da alteridade

do Outro (cf. Harish Trivedi, “Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation”, 2005).

Palavras-chave: tradução; escrita intercultural; estudos pós-coloniais; literatura africana; tradução enquanto metáfora.

Abstract: In this paper I address critically what has become the mainstream view in the field of postcolonial translation regarding the nature of the African Europhone novel, which is described as intercultural writing. As the current theory goes, African Europhone novels are basically translations of orature into literature, i.e., specific elements of a native oral culture are literally “translated” into the European culture and language in which the novel is written (cf. Paul Bandia, *Translation as Reparation*, 2008).

This position is shown to be part of a wider tendency in the humanities to use the concept of translation metaphorically, that is to say, translation that does not involve language transfers from source texts. I claim that this move is disputable on logical and political grounds and will line up a few arguments that may help to discern what is damagingly at stake in the notion of translation without originals, in particular the risk of ending up with a monolingual global culture that makes it increasingly hard to experience otherness (cf. Harish Trivedi, “Translating culture vs. cultural translation”, 2005).

Keywords: translation; intercultural writing; postcolonial studies; African literature; translation as metaphor.

In the academic field of postcolonial translation a new concept has recently cropped up: it is called intercultural writing as translation and aims at describing the African novels written in the former colonizers' languages as the outcome of a process of transposition of orature into literature, that is, specific elements of a native oral culture expressed in their language are supposedly translated into the European language in which the novel is written. As Paul Bandia, the most thorough advocate of this position, puts it in his *Translation as Reparation*, the result is a "hybrid text, a sort of creolized translation," "a blend of orality and writing, of African and European language cultures" (2008: 159), of which there is no shortage of examples, from the works of the Anglophone Chinua Achebe, to the Francophone Ahmadou Kourouma or the Lusophone Luandino Vieira, among others.

For Bandia this concept lays the foundation of a postcolonial theory geared specifically to African literature, to literary works produced within polylingual cultures that are on the whole alien to the dominant monolingual cultures of the West and therefore, in their hybridized shape, can be seen as resistant to the dominant colonial languages (2008: 3, 136). Now, this is certainly an attractive theory, both from an aesthetic and from a political point of view; however, its persuasive power rests wholly on the premise that it is sensibly acceptable to conflate a *metaphorical* conception of translation with translation proper. In other words, nothing distinguishes translation without originals from, to use Lawrence Venuti's definition, translation as "a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation" (17).

In what follows, firstly I will claim, that intercultural writing as translation is part of a much wider current tendency to figuratively apply the notion of translation to all sorts of movements, crossings

and dislocations, including of people – let us recall Salmon Rushdie’s famous assertion “we are translated men.” (17) –; secondly, I will argue that this view, in addition to posing logical and political problems, is crucially silent about the concrete challenges translators face in coping with cultural difference.

It is a known fact that translation has been extensively appropriated by a host of discourses and disciplines which, in the attempt to sort out their own theoretical problems, resort to what both Gayatri Spivak (238) and Homi Bhabha (188) have called a ‘catachrestic’ use of the concept-turned-metaphor. In philosophy, ethnography, cultural and literary studies, interart studies, sociology, and, most relevant to the argument I am unfolding here, postcolonial studies, translation has become, rather than an object of scrutiny, a piece of the metalanguage employed to account for all kinds of social and cultural processes involving transfers, shifts, exchanges, and negotiations. Translation has indeed become a kind of catchword, or rather a password that gives right of entry to – as Anthony Pym wryly puts it – “a way of talking about the world” (148).

It comes as no surprise then that, in addition to its function in academic conversation, the scope and scale of the theoretical uses the translation metaphor can be put to have never ceased to increase. All in all, they end up constructing a holistic view of culture as *total translation*, a position taken up most thoroughly by Peeter Torop, a disciple of the Tartu school of semiotics building on Roman Jakobson’s famous 1959 essay “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation”. Predictably, the discourses whose purpose is to provide knowledge about cultural processes and products are likewise subject to a translation turn, as recently illustrated by a special issue of the journal *Translation Studies*, which explicitly sets out to remap the “humanities as a kind of ‘translation studies’” (Bachmann-Medick 12). But by far the most successful development of the culture-as-translation position is what Shirley Ann Jordan called “the fuzzy and

contested concept” of cultural translation (96), which has become the stock-in-trade of much postcolonial criticism and theory (Duarte 2008).

As is well known, the concept originates in Talal Asad’s essay “The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology”, in which it is defined as “the tendency to read the *implicit* in alien cultures” (160). The implicit here refers to the meanings of an oral culture constructed by the anthropologist for the sake of a Western, mostly academic readership and which are not necessarily those of the native population itself. In this sense, cultural translation, while exposing the anthropologist’s illusion of objectivity and transparency, brings out the massive inequality of languages and cultures grounding until very recently the ethnographic project.

Most influential in circulating the concept particularly in postcolonial studies has been Homi Bhabha’s essay “How Newness Enters the World” (303-37); here cultural translation accounts for the negotiating processes that take place in the Third Space of migrant communities, by means of which new products emerge expressive neither of the source nor of the host cultures values, but rather of something “in-between” (Duarte 2005).

But from the point of view of translation theory, the story goes back to Samia Mehrez’s essay “Translation And the Postcolonial Experience: The Francophone North African Text”, of 1992, in which she looks at Francophone literature from North Africa in terms of hybrid and “métissé” texts constructed by the intertwining of the ex-colonizer’s language and the writer’s own native language. While these bilingual texts are located, culturally and linguistically, in a space in-between, they challenge mainstream binary conceptions of translation, therefore questioning the very notion of foreignness ready to be translated and, she points out, demanding from the readers an experience akin to translating (Mehrez 121-22). Building on this essay, Maria Tymoczko goes one step further, claiming that

translation might be used as a figure for postcolonial writing, that is, postcolonial texts are themselves translations while being at the same time translations of themselves (1999; 2000). The argument is predicated on a series of analogies between the postcolonial writer and the translator, which leads her to the following line of reasoning:

The culture or tradition of a post-colonial writer acts as a metatext which is rewritten. . . in the act of literary creation. The task of the interlingual translator has much in common with the task of the post-colonial writer; where one has a text, however, the other has the metatext of culture itself. (1999: 21; see also Bandia 2003; 2006)

Postcolonial authors themselves may have been the first to invite such a figurative gesture. The Nigerian writer Gabriel Okara, for instance, is often quoted in a 1963 statement to substantiate the view that writing is translation:

As a writer who believes in the utilization of African ideas, African philosophy and African folklore and imagery to the fullest extent possible, I am of the opinion the only way to use them effectively is to translate them almost literally from the African language native to the writer into whatever European language he is using as medium of expression. (qtd. in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 1986: 8)

The African scholar Moradewan Adejunmobi, in turn, proposes a three-tiered typology of *all* African literature, namely compositional translations, authorized translations and complex translations, of which only the second category encompasses translation in the proper sense of the term. The theoretical scene is thus set for

the kind of sweeping generalizations such as the following one put forward by Leo Tak-Hung Chan: “all texts can ultimately be considered translations, regardless of whether they have undergone the process of verbal transfer that we usually call ‘translation’” (69).

This and similar claims by authors and scholars alike helped to fashion the theory of double translation to describe what goes on in the transfer of African literature written in European languages to another European language. To sum up: at the first stage the creative writer engages in intermedial translation, that is, he/she “translates” elements of his/her oral language and culture, such as proverbs, folktales, myths, songs and other native lore, into writing (sometimes a non-standard variety of the colonizer’s language). The second stage involves interlingual translation, or translation in its literal sense (see Gyasi 83). This is what Paul Bandia calls intercultural translation, which, he claims, amounts to “re-translating a translated text” (2008: 162).

Now, whether we are dealing with total translation, cultural translation, or writing as translation – and regardless of what the creative practices of authors may be –, I believe the contemporary widespread use of the translation trope is disputable on logical and political grounds. Firstly, there is little sense in saying that an interlingual translator has in common with a postcolonial writer the fact that the former transfers a text while the latter transfers the metatext of culture. If we are willing to leave aside wordplay, what remains is that rendering a source text into a target text involves not only languages but crucially cultures, as translation studies has been arguing for the last three decades. Thus, whether we are coping with translation proper or postcolonial texts, the so-called metatext of culture is always present in their respective processes. Furthermore, since there is no translation which is not at the same time translation *of culture*, as theory and scholarship

have been showing for a long time, the phrase “cultural translation” must be seen at best as redundant: how could one conceive of “non-cultural” translation?

Secondly, when everything becomes translation the concept loses its explanatory power, particularly as it is taken for granted that everybody agrees on its meaning; in other words, that for some stroke of luck or mysterious reason translation is wholly non-problematic and therefore up for grabs. The danger then lies, as Terry Eagleton pointed out as regards the category of culture, in “expanding the term to the point of meaninglessness” (131). Or, similarly, according to Andrew Chesterman, “the concept [of translation] itself becomes so broad that its original sense risks being diluted into nothing” (103).

Thirdly, and most cogently, in “Translating culture vs. cultural translation” the Indian scholar Harish Trivedi takes issue with Homi Bhaba’s concept of cultural translation, as well as with Salman Rushdie’s, Hanif Kureishi’s and Jhumpa Lahiri’s “abuse” of the term translation, arguing that, when what is at stake is translation that does not involve two languages, then what we are left with is simply non-translation. To put it differently, when everything is translation, nothing gets translated, and Trivedi concludes ominously that “we shall sooner or later end up with a wholly . . . monocultural, monolithic world” in which, “[r]ather than help us encounter and experience other cultures, translation would have been assimilated in just one monolingual global culture” (2005: 259).

Fourthly: translation that does not involve two languages. Indeed, what turns translation into a figure is precisely the absence of the original, as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o candidly admits:

I would say that my novels – *The River Between*, *Weep not Child* – are mental translations. What happens in that process is that there is an original text which should have been there but which

is lost. But when you have a true translation, you do actually have two texts. (2003: 7)

In the culture-as-translation stance, in all its guises, then, one translates mentally, without any previous text to be replaced with another written in a different language on the strength of the translator's interpretation and conception of equivalence.

Of course nothing is inherently wrong in using metaphors as concepts; Western culture has been doing this since Antiquity, and in the case of original *vs.* translation it may be viewed as a practical way of deconstructing the classic polarity. There are, however, implications one should be aware of. Given that, according to Susan Bassnett, "Translation. . . is a primary method of imposing meaning while concealing the power relations that lie behind the production of that meaning" (136), then, when "translation" is carried out in the absence of an original, the act of concealment is understandably raised to a higher level. Nothing can be said about the strategies employed by the translator in rendering what is specific in the target culture – in fact, agency and its accountability are effectively elided – and in what ways they respond to target-culture norms and ideologies; no knowledge can be acquired as to why texts are selected for translation and manipulated, and how translation re-enacts the unequal relations between cultures: central *vs.* peripheral, strong *vs.* weak, or dominating *vs.* dominated. In sum, ethics and politics are totally played down in the translation metaphor.

Regarding the Europhone African novel, finally, one is at pains to discern why authors should be seen as translating rather than appropriating or drawing on native languages and modes of expression, as Chinua Achebe did for West African Pidgin in some of his novels and Luandino Vieira did in his work for the mixture of Portuguese and Kimbundu spoken by the slum-dwellers of the

Luanda region of Angola. Furthermore, one is also hard put to recognize what in this respect distinguishes the African novel from the tradition of western novel, whose aesthetics, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, rely entirely on an artistic appropriation of the many languages and discourses existing in society. Bakhtin called it heteroglossia or polyphony; he never dreamt of calling novels “translations”, let alone mental translations.

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**DA ESTIRPE DE SÍSIFO E MNEMOSINE
NOTAS SOBRE O POEMA “O TRADUTOR”,
DE ARMANDO SILVA CARVALHO**

Maria António Hörster

Resumo: O artigo insere-se numa investigação em curso sobre figuras de tradutores/as e imagens da tradução na literatura portuguesa, seja no domínio da ficção narrativa, da lírica ou da diarística. O texto constitui no essencial uma tentativa de análise do poema “O Tradutor”, de Armando Silva Carvalho, em que assomam as grandes questões da tradução. Contra o pano de fundo de uma sociedade sem memória histórica, o tradutor que aqui se apresenta prescreve-se um programa de resistência, e a defesa de um ideal humanista de resgate da língua e da memória cultural. Denso de relações intertextuais, nomeadamente com alusões a Derrida, a grandes marcos da arte ocidental ou a programas televisivos da actualidade, o poema desenrola-se no modo irónico, tão característico do escritor.

Palavras-chave: figuras de tradutores/as; imagens da tradução na literatura portuguesa; poema “O Tradutor”; Armando Silva Carvalho.

Abstract: The article is part of an on-going research project about the figure of the translator and images of translation in Portuguese literature (in fiction, poetry and diaries). In his light the text provides an analysis of the poem “O tradutor” (“The Translator”) by Armando Silva Carvalho which deals with some of the most important questions involved in the translation process. Against the background of a society without historical memory, the translator in the poem sets himself up as a force of resistance and engages in the task of rescuing language and cultural memory by means of his humanist ideals. A poem dense with intertextual relations, from Derrida to landmark works of Western art and current TV programmes, it evolves in the mode of irony so typical of its author.

Keywords: figures of translators; images of translation in Portuguese Literature; “O Tradutor” (poem); Armando Silva Carvalho.

Seguir o rasto que o ofício de traduzir e figuras de tradutores e tradutoras vão deixando na ficção portuguesa é uma investigação apaixonante, que me atrai desde há alguns anos. Trata-se, como nem poderia deixar de ser dada a natureza do tema, de um trabalho sempre incompleto, devendo o presente estudo entender-se como mais uma pequena peça de um “work in progress”. Em breve texto anterior (2011), pude reunir a primeira safra de uma pesquisa feita ao sabor de leituras de “tempos livres” – dirigidas umas; outras, fruto de felizes encontros e de (procurados) acasos.

Nesse conjunto de limitado alcance, a aguardar mais alargada investigação,¹ dava conta dos testemunhos recolhidos nos dezasseis volumes do *Diário* de Miguel Torga, em que é possível destacar uma linha evolutiva muito vincada: desde as manifestações de reserva e desconfiança em relação a traduções literárias, que encontramos nos primeiros volumes, e que podemos entender à luz da valorização romântica e presencista da originalidade, a uma emocionada exaltação da tradução, que Torga reconhece como instrumento capaz de prolongar no tempo e no espaço as obras ditas originais, numa extensão da individualidade dos autores. Ciente desta força propagadora da tradução, actividade que classifica como obra de amor, Torga acaba por render agradecido preito aos seus obreiros, os tradutores.²

Referia-se ainda nessa primeira safra uma muito instrutiva e inesperada ocorrência no romance *Bárbara Casanova* (1954?), de Maria da Graça Azambuja (1916?-1993), que nos oferece um dos mais interessantes e completos retratos do percurso de uma tradutora, na década de 1950, em Portugal. Para além disso, dava-se conta de alguns outros breves afloramentos, nomeadamente no romance *As monstruosidades vulgares* (1960), quarto volume da saga familiar de

¹ Desde já, aqui deixo o meu apelo a eventuais leitores, no sentido de ajudarem a completar este quadro com elementos de que porventura disponham. Antecipadamente lhes expresso a minha gratidão.

² No discurso que proferiu aquando de uma homenagem que lhe foi prestada pelo Goethe-Institut de Coimbra, confessava: “. . . E o pobre poeta de qualquer S. Martinho de Anta, que sonha com o seu canto a ecoar para além das fronteiras que o limitam, é nessas almas sintonizadas e mediúnicas que confia. São elas as difusoras mágicas das suas palavras, que procuram entender em todos os recônditos sentidos e preservar vivas e equivalentes na transplantação verbal. Nunca será por demais exaltado o serviço que prestam à humanidade esses obreiros de uma outra comunicação dos santos, terrena, encarnada, naturalmente oposta à sobrenatural do *Credo*. Se nos faltassem, ficariam sem respostas inimagináveis interrogações, apelos e desafios. As esfinges que interpelam sibilinamente os viandantes à entrada de todas as Tebas da existência, são monstros de carne e osso e papel e tinta. E os seus enigmas, avisos ambíguos e catárticos [sic] que, depois de fielmente decifrados e trasladados, abrem caminho à ânsia libertadora de Gregos e Troianos.” Cf. entrada de 23 de Novembro de 1990 (Torga 1999: 1693-1694).

José Régio (1901-1969) *A velha casa*, no romance *Paisagem com mulher e mar ao fundo* (1982), de Teolinda Gersão (n. 1940), em contos de Cristóvão de Aguiar (n. 1940), um deles integrado na colectânea *A descoberta da cidade e outras histórias* (1992) e outro no volume *Trasfega* (2003), no romance *O Supremo Interdito* (2000), de Urbano Tavares Rodrigues (1923-2013), e, por último, na novela de Mário Cláudio (n. 1941) *Boa Noite, Senhor Soares* (2008).³

As obras narrativas em que estes exemplos foram colhidos denotam, à exceção da novela de Mário Cláudio, que estabelece uma manifesta relação intertextual com o *Livro do Desassossego* de Fernando Pessoa, um pendor tendencialmente realista, pelo que não admira que a prática da tradução nos seja apresentada sobretudo à luz dos parâmetros sociais em que é exercida: ela prefigura-se, de uma maneira geral, como uma actividade desprestigiada, por via de regra ocasional, levada a cabo sem preparação específica, por quem tenha alguns conhecimentos de línguas, e enquanto recurso, por vezes desesperado, para suprir carências económicas. Deparam-se-nos, pontualmente, finas observações sobre a psicologia de quem traduz, mas na quase totalidade dos casos essas referências encontram-se desprovidas de qualquer reflexão teórica sobre o que está em jogo quando se transfere uma obra de uma língua/cultura para outra. A dimensão crítica e reflexiva manifesta-se, ainda que timidamente, no único exemplo de escrita diarística abordado, precisamente o *Diário* de Miguel Torga, percebendo-se da parte do escritor a experiência de autor multiplamente traduzido.⁴

³ Entretanto, foi possível já recolher outros testemunhos, tanto no âmbito da ficção narrativa como no da lírica portuguesa.

⁴ Por exemplo, em entrada do *Diário* assinalada “Coimbra, 15 de Janeiro de 1988”, escreve: “Traduzir. Trasladar a expressão. Florir o génio de uma língua no génio doutra. Fazer o milagre de dar ubiquidade a um texto, que, com força nativa, tenha voz alheia.” (Torga 1999: 1613). É interessante como – e nem podia ser doutra maneira em Torga, que sempre teve da língua uma noção de organismo vivo e autónomo – a tradução é equacionada em termos estritamente linguísticos, sem que agentes, circunstâncias condicionadoras, aspectos culturais sejam sequer considera-

É bem diferente o caso do texto que aqui se traz à consideração. Trata-se desta feita não de um texto diarístico ou narrativo, mas de um poema, expressamente intitulado “O tradutor”, que o poeta, ficcionista, crítico literário, publicitário, homem de cinema e tradutor Armando Silva Carvalho (n. 1938) inclui no seu volume de poesias *Sol a sol*, vindo a lume em 2005. Armando Silva Carvalho tem uma vasta obra publicada, mas talvez não seja muito conhecido pelo vasto público e até porventura nos meios académicos. Hugo Pinto dos Santos considerava-o, recentemente, como “um dos mais sozinhos dos poetas portugueses” (26). Como dados preliminares para melhor avaliar a diferença entre o poema “O tradutor” e a maioria dos testemunhos anteriormente recolhidos, convém ter presente que entretanto transcorreu um lapso de tempo considerável, em que a tradução cada vez mais entrou no campo de percepção e de experiência do público português. A tradução, e não só a literária, tem constituído nas últimas décadas uma faixa significativa do movimento editorial no nosso país,⁵ vindo o acto de traduzir e os seus problemas, quer sob uma perspectiva prática quer teórica, a ganhar visibilidade crescente, não só como consequência dessa realidade como também devido à existência de cursos de formação de tradutores em numerosas instituições do ensino superior no nosso país.

Outra circunstância a ter em conta para enquadramento geral do poema é o facto de, sobretudo desde a década de 70, a consciência sobre questões de linguagem, comunicação e teoria literária se

dos. Como se tudo se processasse a um nível puro e ideal das línguas. Os ainda que esparsos sinais de atenção dispensada à tradução literária, sobretudo nas primeiras décadas cobertas pelo *Diário*, terão certamente a ver com o seu estreito convívio, durante largo tempo, com Paulo Quintela, um dos grandes tradutores portugueses do século XX (Cf. Hörster 2011).

⁵ Na sua obra *A Tradução para edição: Viagem ao mundo de tradutores e editores em Portugal (1974-2009)*, de 2014, Jorge Almeida e Pinho debruça-se sobre o espaço da tradução no panorama editorial português. O núcleo do seu estudo assenta na análise e no comentário dos dados apurados num inquérito por si mesmo concebido e lançado para o efeito.

ter vindo a apurar entre nós, devendo realçar-se a importância do pensamento desconstrucionista para a teoria da tradução e, muito particularmente, o contributo por exemplo de Jacques Derrida para questões de comunicação e de identidade linguística e cultural.

Ainda no quadro dos pressupostos para a compreensão do poema torna-se imprescindível ter presente que Armando Silva Carvalho dispõe ele mesmo de ampla experiência como tradutor. De facto, para além da escrita dita original e da crítica literária, o escritor tem cultivado com grande regularidade a tradução. Desde a década de sessenta, em que efetuou trabalhos de tradução para a Editorial Ulisseia, até à atualidade, o seu nome figura como tradutor de dezenas de originais de língua francesa, inglesa, italiana, espanhola, sueca, neerlandesa, grega, japonesa. É muito grande a variedade dos géneros e temáticas em que se move, indo de textos literários – lírica, romance histórico e policial, textos dramáticos – a ensaísticos – no domínio da História, da filosofia, da religião, da política, da gestão ou da economia – à crónica jornalística e ao livro de viagens. Entre os muitos autores que traduziu, refiram-se, por exemplo, Vicente Alexandre, Samuel Beckett, Marguerite Duras, Jean Genet, Roger Garaudy, Aimé Césaire, Yasunari Kawabata, Renate Dorrestein, Nikos Kazantzaki, Cristina Campo, Carmen Martín Gaité, Rosa Montero, Maria Bellonci, David Trueba, Ingmar Bergman, Alberto Méndez.

Leia-se então o texto:

O tradutor

Lentamente traduzo a ruptura do mundo
Com o novo século.
Escrevo com os olhos ardidos
Pelas novas visões do passado.
Levanto um braço e procuro
Mais uma palavra suada.

Faço o trabalho no brilho embaciado
Da noite.
Retiro lentamente da cabeça
Incrustações de vícios
Pequenas recordações de males menores
Ácidas partículas.

Sorvo o tédio.
Agora que o silêncio é uma crosta de sangue
Nos meus ombros
Recomeço a coçar-me.
Valerá a pena? Não faço disto a festa.
Sou simples.
Sou o intermédio.

Se o meu olhar souber seguir as novas pistas
Pisarei paciente a luz dinâmica
Ouvirei o murmúrio dos ordenadores
Sentirei os sinais dos guias intérpretes
Despirei essas criaturas secas
Contíguas ao terror
E conformadas.

Sentadas nas mais recentes palavras
As multidões querem negociar
A tradução do amor nas almas desarmadas.

Mas eu não esqueço.
Faço como quem transporta diamantes
No estômago
Prata na cabeça dos dedos.

Desmontar pessoas é um ofício divino,
Vil, apaixonado.
E as pessoas amam o dextro financeiro,
A silhueta de ouro, o desnaturado.

Todas as noites apaziguam o espírito.
E eu contemplo com o pavor
Lúcido dos cegos
A risonha coroa do triunfo.

Ao longe as crianças despertam
Com o olhar turvo de cimento e espiam
Na madrugada os intraduzíveis apelos ao conhecimento.
Surgem os primeiros revérberos do sol
E eu passo a mão abstracta, ingénua, envelhecida
Pelos seus cabelos eriçados
De sono.

Os seres vivos desaparecem da superfície do texto.
E eu sonhei uma prótese da escrita
Uma conversão em minérios de sexo
Em filmes ortopédicos
Em caligrafias expostas nas paredes
Do mundo.

Mas o sonho não é proposta digna deste século
É um esboço manual da delinquência.
Um dedo singular na cúpula divina
Da nossa impossível renascença.

E por isso traduzo.

(Carvalho 23-25)

O poema não é propriamente um texto que, pródigo, se ofereça ao leitor sem nada ou pouco exigir em troca. Bem pelo contrário, quem dele se abeira procurando encontrar um trilho de sentido logo experimenta obstáculos, aparentemente intransponíveis, a uma interpretação consistente; a cada leitura renovada entreabrem-se perspectivas até então não descortinadas, associações imprevistas, que continuamente vão ampliando o seu potencial de sentido, mas também verdadeiras fraturas semânticas, que constantemente levam o leitor a retroceder, com a sensação de ter enveredado por um beco sem saída, e o obrigam a retomar o exercício hermenêutico noutra direcção.⁶ Na linha do que lhe é habitual, Armando Silva Carvalho constantemente explora o não explícito, os jogos de palavras, os princípios associativos, as alusões, os sentidos duplos, processos retóricos geradores de ambiguidades. Mas, para além destes desafios pontuais lançados ao leitor, a própria estrutura interna do texto parece oferecer resistência à construção de um percurso ideativo linear. Na verdade, mais do que apresentar uma organização ininterrupta, o poema opera por fulgurações, com fortes suspensões entre elas, processo estruturante que, admito, terá alguma coisa a ver com a experiência de Armando Silva Carvalho como homem de cinema e a sua familiaridade com técnicas de montagem.⁷ Assim, geram-se “Leerstellen” [à letra: vazios], conceito nuclear da estética da recepção, desenvolvido por Wolfgang Iser⁸ em desenvolvimento da noção

⁶ Para fazer estas observações baseio-me, como é evidente, no que foi a minha experiência pessoal de sucessivas leituras.

⁷ Sobre este capítulo da sua atividade, observa Joana Matos Frias: “A sua experiência no cinema enquanto ‘argumentista profissional’ assim como junto à mesa de montagem ajudaram-no ‘a cortar metodicamente no tempo para conseguir a síntese na escrita.’” (Frias 2011).

⁸ Wolfgang Iser está na base da “Wirkungsästhetik”, que parte da ideia fundamental de que é no contacto com o leitor que o texto desenvolve as suas potencialidades. Cf., neste sentido, *Die Appellstruktur der Texte* [A estrutura apelativa dos textos], de 1970, *Der implizite Leser* [O leitor implícito], de 1972, e a obra fundamental *Der Akt des Lesens* [O acto da leitura], de 1976. A estrutura apelativa dos textos assenta precisamente nas “Leerstellen”, que exigem a participação do leitor para intro-

de “Unbestimmtheitsstellen” [pontos de indeterminação], de Roman Ingarden. A dinâmica da leitura estimula o leitor a preencher esses vazios, de acordo com o seu horizonte pessoal de expectativas e a sua experiência de mundo. Quanto maior o coeficiente de indeterminação – e ele atinge, neste poema, um elevado grau –, maior o espaço que se abre à subjectividade das leituras.

O poema apresenta-se como revelador a vários títulos: escrito na primeira pessoa do singular, desenvolve-se como discurso de um eu lírico que nos dá testemunho do seu trabalho como tradutor. Essa atitude testemunhal informa todo o texto, reclamando para si uma posição de destaque: o primeiro e o último versos, respetivamente “Lentamente traduzo a ruptura do mundo” e “Por isso traduzo.” (sublinhados meus). funcionam como ponto de partida e como conclusão. Através da repetição da forma verbal de primeira pessoa “traduzo”, o poema adquire uma estrutura circular, ao mesmo tempo que o tema da tradução ganha em consistência.

Se tivermos em conta a dimensão biográfica, parece legítimo admitir que Armando Silva Carvalho parte da sua ampla experiência pessoal, com o que eventualmente estaríamos perante uma espécie de auto-imagem sua enquanto tradutor.⁹ Por outro lado, a primeira sugestão de leitura com que o leitor se confronta, precisamente o título, anuncia uma dimensão objectiva, uma hetero-imagem: “O tradutor” (s. m.). Desse modo, entramos de imediato no modo irónico, tão próprio de Armando Silva Carvalho: o leitor que adere ao programa do título é conduzido, afinal, a um mero caso particular, o

duzir / criar sentido em pontos de fratura ou de colisão entre segmentos textuais. De acordo com Iser, o grau de indeterminação presente nas obras literárias vem crescendo desde o séc. XVIII à atualidade, o que exige um leitor cada vez mais interveniente e preparado.

⁹ Não se pode, evidentemente, identificar de forma ingénuo o “eu lírico” com a pessoa do poeta, mas, além do já referido discurso pessoal, também a conceção de literatura e a da relação com o mundo próprias de Armando Silva Carvalho convidam a sublinhar uma implicação biográfica do autor no seu texto.

do eu lírico, enquanto, da perspectiva inversa, o eu lírico reclama valor geral e paradigmático para o seu caso pessoal.

Em afloramentos sucessivos, mais sugeridos do que dilucidados, perpassam pelo poema as pequenas e as grandes questões da tradução, como a noção do que significa e do que implica traduzir, a do quotidiano do tradutor e da sua relação com a língua, a do estatuto do tradutor por referência ao autor dito original, mas, nuclearmente, a da sua relação com os outros seres e a de uma interpretação da sociedade contemporânea, bem como, a finalizar, a do sentido ético profundo conferido a esta actividade pelo eu que aqui faz ouvir a sua voz.

“O tradutor” abre com um acorde grave, de fundo, que diríamos conter não apenas uma justificação da sua atividade de traduzir como, até, uma conceção do mundo: “Lentamente traduzo a ruptura do mundo / Com o novo século”. O mundo surge pois, na sua essência, como descontínuo, o mundo é, em si, “ruptura” – diríamos que entre seres, línguas, culturas, tempos e espaços –, constituindo a tradução uma tentativa de superação dessa fractura, mas, simultaneamente, instituindo-se ela mesma como a evidência dessa fratura. A primeiro plano é aqui chamado o desfasamento de épocas, entre tempos passados e o momento actual, “o novo século”, inaugurando-se logo no *incipit* a isotopia do tempo que percorre todo o texto.

A afirmação inicial reveste-se de um tom algo patético, pela solenidade da dicção, mas também pelo facto de “eu” e “mundo” constituírem grandezas desiguais, e a tarefa a que o eu lírico se votou aparecer assim, desde o início, condenada ao fracasso. De imediato, porém, a elevação do tom é ironicamente desmontada, através de uma cadeia de imagens que contrariam a visão corrente da tradução enquanto exercício todo mental, enquanto embrenhada reflexão e busca de equivalências. Aqui, pelo contrário a tradução passa em primeira linha por uma dimensão somática, física, de exercício dos sentidos: “Escrevo com os olhos ardidos / Pelas no-

vas visões do passado. / Levanto um braço e procuro / Mais uma palavra suada.”, “Retiro lentamente da cabeça / Incrustações de vícios”, “Sorvo o tédio”, “Recomeço a coçar-me”, “Se o meu olhar souber seguir as novas pistas / Pisarei paciente a luz dinâmica / Ouvirei o murmúrio dos ordenadores / Sentirei os sinais dos guias intérpretes” (sublinhados meus). Nesta medida, Armando Silva Carvalho preserva também aqui aquela ligação ao mundo físico, natural, concreto, que se encontra em tantos dos seus textos. Lenta e penosa, a tradução revela-se aquela actividade sofrida de que tantos tradutores célebres, como Lutero,¹⁰ ou outros menos célebres, nos deram testemunho: “Agora que o silêncio é uma crosta de sangue / Nos meus ombros / Recomeço a coçar-me.”. Desde a grandiosidade de “Lentamente traduzo / a ruptura do mundo” até à trivialidade de “Recomeço a coçar-me” desenha-se um movimento descendente contínuo, de irónica condescendência do “eu lírico” consigo mesmo, pelo facto de se dedicar – inferindo-se que retirando daí algum proveito e certamente algum prazer – a tão ingrata, mal remunerada e, até, desacreditada tarefa.

É a partir do proverbial sofrimento de tradutor, denunciado nestes termos de padecimento físico, e justificado, seja pela solidão e pelo cansaço, pela busca da “palavra suada” ou pela crivagem dos recursos, seja ainda pelo “tédio” que o acomete, que logo este profissional das letras é assaltado pela dúvida quanto ao sentido do seu esforço. Fazendo-se eco da imagem corrente do tradutor como mera ponte entre terceiros, diz de si mesmo, num gesto provocador e

¹⁰ Pronunciando-se sobre a sua tradução do *Novo Testamento*, empresa que levou a cabo juntamente com Philipp Melanchthon e Matthäus Goldhahn, Lutero escreve no seu “Sendbrief vom Dolmetschen”, de 1530: “. . . Ich habe mich des beflissen, daß ich rein und klar Deutsch geben möchte. Und ist uns sehr oft begegnet, daß wir vierzehn Tage, drei, vier Wochen haben ein einziges Wort gesucht und gefragt, haben’s dennoch zuweilen nicht gefunden.“ (in Störig² 1969: 20). Quintela dá do passo a seguinte tradução: “Ao traduzir esforcei-me por dar um alemão puro e claro. E muitas vezes nos sucedeu andarmos quinze dias, três, quatro semanas em busca de uma só palavra, e algumas delas a não encontrámos.” (Quintela 1999: 647).

auto-irónico: “Valerá a pena? Não faço disto a festa. / Sou simples. / Sou o intermédio.” Na afirmação “Sou o intermédio” culmina todo o efeito intencional de *batbos*, descarregando-se nesta autocaracterização – note-se que através da substantivação de um adjetivo – o baixo estatuto de quem traduz. Ao mesmo tempo que se retoma a clássica conceção do tradutor enquanto instância mediadora¹¹ entre autor / texto original e leitor da tradução / texto traduzido, dá-se igualmente a entender a sua insignificância e a sua invisibilidade. Na sua própria avaliação, traduzir também não se configura como trabalho totalmente conseguido, íntegro e impoluto. Na afirmação “Retiro lentamente da cabeça / Incrustações de vícios / Pequenas recordações de males menores / Ácidas partículas” estará, porventura, implicado o recurso a soluções padrão, estereotipadas, a pequenas imperfeições, eventualmente a erros que tenha cometido. É pertinente invocar aqui o recurso do poeta à ironia enquanto “*dispositivo de distanciamento*”, como frisa Manuel Frias Martins, e, por aí, enquanto forma de “comentário à realidade individual e colectiva” (sublinhado meu).¹²

Que imagem colhemos do quotidiano deste tradutor? Este “eu” dá-se-nos a conhecer como alguém que trabalha pela noite dentro até ao raiar da madrugada – “Faço o trabalho no brilho embaciado / Da noite” . . . / “Surgem os primeiros revérberos do sol” –, atualizando-se assim, ironicamente, o paradigma do poeta romântico

¹¹ Refira-se, entre muitos outros possíveis, o testemunho de Goethe em carta a Carlyle, de 20 de Julho de 1827, que se reproduz na tradução de Paulo Quintela: “E é assim que todo o tradutor deve ser encarado: como medianeiro neste trato universal do espírito, fazendo do fomento da permuta a sua ocupação. Pois diga-se o que se disser da insuficiência da arte de traduzir, ela é e continuará a ser um dos ofícios mais importantes e mais dignos da vida universal.” (Quintela, 1999: 650).

¹² Numa recensão à edição da *Obra Poética (1965-1995)*, de Armando Silva Carvalho, observa pertinentemente Manuel Frias Martins: “O elemento que gostaria de sublinhar na sua produção é sobretudo o da ironia. . . . Não estou a falar do humor, nem da sátira, nem sequer da diatribe. Refiro-me à ironia como *dispositivo de distanciamento* e, por aí, de comentário à realidade individual e colectiva.” (Martins 1999: 312).

e solitário. A expressão “Levanto um braço e procuro / Mais uma palavra suada” sugere o gesto algo antiquado de lançar mão a um dicionário ou a qualquer outra obra de consulta, sublinhando-se com a hipálage “palavra suada” o esforço físico continuado e a dimensão física do homem tradutor. Ao admitir o recurso a ferramentas em suporte papel, este tradutor sujeita-se a que o desvalorizem pela utilização de auxiliares considerados retrógrados, pela sua desatualização, nomeadamente pelo eventual desconhecimento ou falta de familiaridade com as recentes possibilidades de tradução assistida por computador.

Como logo os versos seguintes se apressam a dar a ver, ele não desconhece porém as novas tecnologias, sendo muito curiosa a visão que delas nos transmite. Qual peregrino de Delfos, está disposto a consultar os novos oráculos, a pacientemente auscultar e seguir as todo-poderosas indicações fornecidas pelos computadores através de luzes e murmúrios, sinais que há que entender e trabalhar. Interessante é a sua escolha do termo “ordenadores” para se referir a estas máquinas auxiliares de trabalho. Mais do que mero decalque do francês “ordinateur” ou do espanhol “ordenador”, a opção parece implicar, na sua polissemia, tanto a ideia de que são elas quem agora dita as ordens – leia-se, as equivalências –, que o tradutor segue obedientemente, como a de que, sendo máquinas, regularizam, aplanam, eliminam a *nuance*, a conotação particular, desconhecem a exceção, o caso único, desviantes, uniformizam – numa palavra, desumanizam. O que aparece “ordenado”, aqui, as soluções indicadas por esses poderosos aparelhos mecânicos, parece não inspirar confiança à voz que no poema se articula. Tanto as máquinas como os seus roteiros são vistos como criaturas “secas”, “conformadas”, “con-formadas”, ou seja, sem vida, padronizadas, sem margem para a intervenção criativa. Com a metáfora de “guias intérpretes”, que parece aplicar-se aos “ordenadores”, a máquina assume traços humanos, passando a concorrer com o

homem e, até, a sobrepor-se-lhe. Encontra-se, portanto, aqui também colocado o problema da complexa relação homem / máquina na nossa civilização.

Se, até este ponto, o gesto dominante, ainda que não exclusivo, era o da auto-avaliação, com a estrofe seguinte vem a primeiro plano um outro tema fulcral do texto, o da crítica social e da linguagem, já anunciado nos primeiros versos. Num movimento de viragem para fora de si, este tradutor situa-se agora frente ao seu público, não um conjunto formado por indivíduos singulares, mas antes “multidões”, massas que, na sua impreparação, porventura até superficialidade, aspiram ao fácil e impossível. A ideia da rutura, presente já na abertura do poema, é agora expressamente aferida ao domínio da linguagem: os novos públicos, comodamente instalados, estão habituados a comunicar através de palavras sem história. Acentua-se assim a clivagem entre o passado e o presente, que se intensifica ainda mais na medida em que estas multidões esperam a transação, em termos mercantis, de algo de inegociável, “a tradução do amor nas almas desarmadas”. Estamos perante mais uma metáfora de não fácil decodificação. Serão essas “almas desarmadas” figuras, personagens literárias do passado não “armadas”, isto é, desprovidas dos instrumentos mecânicos que a modernidade põe ao nosso dispor e através dos quais, ao mesmo tempo, nos rouba o livre arbítrio, nos escraviza, nos torna agressivos e nos leva a perder traços de naturalidade e de humanidade? Seja como for, esta imagem convidada ao estabelecimento de uma relação com um passo de Jacques Derrida, em *O monolinguismo do Outro, ou a prótese da origem*, em que esta estranha metáfora comparece, ajudando-nos talvez a projetar alguma luz sobre o verso de Armando Silva Carvalho. Aí, o autor franco-magrebino discorre sobre a sua própria identidade, elegendo como interlocutor imediato um outro escritor, igualmente franco-magrebino: “Ouso portanto apresentar-me a ti, *ecce homo*, paródia, como o franco-magrebino exemplar, mas desarmado, com

acentos mais ingénuos, menos vigiados, menos educados” (Derrida 33) (sublinhado meu).

Num movimento contrário ao das estrofes iniciais, que deslizavam em direcção ao anti-clímax “Sou o intermédio”, inicia-se agora no poema uma linha de afirmação pessoal e a imagem do tradutor ganha elevação e acentos dramáticos. Com a incisiva adversativa da estrofe seguinte, “Mas eu não esqueço”¹³, este tradutor perfila-se como o resistente que entra em declarada oposição a entidades e valores instalados, aquele que preserva a memória no meio duma sociedade sem consciência histórica. O que há de subversivo nesta atitude é sublinhado pela imagem do tradutor como contrabandista, aquele que secretamente transporta consigo os tesouros do passado, por exemplo tecendo palavras: “Faço como quem transporta diamantes / No estômago / Prata na cabeça dos dedos.”

Paradoxalmente, mais do que condenável, esta prática subversiva leva-o a reclamar para si um estatuto divino. Ao invés do Deus do *Génesis* ou do seu contendor Prometeu,¹⁴ que criam seres humanos a partir do barro, é ao “desmontar pessoas” que este profissional das letras pode emular com essas duas grandes figuras da *Bíblia* e da mitologia grega. Através de procedimentos hermenêuticos, das operações de descodificação inerentes à tradução, eleva-se como demiurgo, numa actividade simultaneamente divina e vil, mas levada a cabo com paixão. Todo o esforço físico no início desvelado encontra aqui a sua justificação.

Correndo o risco da sobreinterpretação, leio os versos que se seguem como uma acerba crítica social às multidões que, enquanto ele, noite adentro, se entrega ao ofício de desmontar e recriar os

¹³ Segundo Manuel Frias Martins, “Estar atento e não esquecer é. . . o impulso determinante da poesia de Armando Silva Carvalho” (Martins 1999: 312).

¹⁴ Leia-se o paradigmático hino de J. W. von Goethe “Prometheus”, escrito entre 1772 e 1774, em que o titã disputa a Zeus a supremacia e orgulhosamente se afirma como criador de homens (cf. Goethe / Quintela, 1958).

seres humanos que ganham corpo através da literatura, passivamente se instalam frente aos televisores para, numa fruição que Brecht classificaria de digestiva, contemplarem programas em que adoram a silhueta de ouro, o dourado metal, o bezerro de ouro, os ídolos, ou televisivas operações conducentes ao triunfo.¹⁵

Se é de demarcação a atitude deste eu lírico em relação a esses grupos que se entregam ao consumo televisivo – “E eu contemplo com o pavor / Lúcido dos cegos / A risonha coroa do triunfo” –, o mesmo não sucede com outras faixas da sociedade. Ao fim de uma longa noite de trabalho, já pela madrugada, evoca as crianças, imagem de futuro. Se é verdade que, mal despertadas do sono, trazem o olhar “turvo do cimento”, talvez porque correm o risco de perderem o contacto com o natural em virtude das muralhas de betão que as aprisionam nas cidades, também é certo que elas parecem constituir para o eu que aqui se articula um sinal de esperança. Vendo nelas porventura a ponte entre o passado, cujo legado cultural ele próprio procura contrabandear para o século presente, e o futuro, que talvez vá mais além do que uma acrílica degustação televisiva, mesmo mentalmente, num gesto abstrato, lhes passa pelos cabelos a sua mão envelhecida, insistindo-se assim na isotopia do tempo, subjacente a todo o poema.

Com a chegada da manhã desvanecem-se, quais fantasmas, as criaturas com existência ficcional e, de novo, se insiste na dimensão ironicamente romântica do poeta sonhador. A esta obstinação de escrita junta-se a experiência de uma sociedade cheia de imperfeições, o sonho do aperfeiçoamento pela intervenção da palavra, a consciência da dimensão utópica desse sonho. Depara-se-nos agora uma das imagens mais interessantes do poema. Este tradutor sonha-

¹⁵ Julgo poder ver aqui referências intertextuais a populares programas televisivos, como *Ídolos* ou *Operação Triunfo*. *Ídolos*, do canal SIC, teve o seu primeiro episódio em 2003 e a *Operação Triunfo*, da RTP, estreou em Fevereiro de 2003.

dor sonha com uma “prótese da escrita”. A leitura que de imediato se oferece é a de ver aqui ironicamente expressa a tradicional ideia da linguagem da tradução como insuficiente, debilitada, defeituosa, a precisar de conserto. Uma exploração do conceito derridaiano de “prótese”, sobrevivência, prolongamento, mas também a exploração dos muitos valores semânticos contidos no termo conduzem-nos, porém, no sentido oposto. A prótese (do grego antigo *prósthesis*, “adição, aplicação, acessório”) é o componente artificial que tem por finalidade suprir necessidades e funções de indivíduos. Assim sendo, podemos entender que, através da linguagem da tradução, acedemos a territórios em que sem ela não entraríamos. A prótese supera deficiências nossas, aumenta as nossas capacidades, leva-nos mais longe.

Na estrofe final insiste-se na falta de espaço para o sonho no momento atual, “o sonho não é proposta digna deste século”, diz-se, o sonho entra, mesmo, no domínio da delinquência. Mas de imediato passamos ao grande acorde final do sonho como origem mítica da vida e também como caminho para a nossa renascença. Lembremo-nos do dedo de Deus no famoso fresco renascentista de Michelangelo na cúpula da Capela Sistina, no Vaticano, a que os dois penúltimos versos parecem aludir. Michelangelo descreve nesse fresco o momento crucial em que o dedo do Criador toca o de Adão, para que ele receba um sopro de vida.

E, a terminar o poema, a profissão ética, de resistência, que podia ser de Prometeu, mas que talvez se possa antes associar a Sísifo e Mnemosine: “Por isso traduzo”.

Encontrámos neste poema reunidos alguns dos tópicos mais frequentemente associados à tradução e ao tradutor: a solidão, a paciência, a perseverança, a humildade, o sofrimento, mesmo físico, a paixão com que se devota ao seu trabalho, o fraco reconhecimento social, mas também a consciência do valor cívico da sua intervenção, do poder subversivo da palavra, da dimensão utópica da sua

atividade. Ironia, auto-ironia, mordacidade e sarcasmo convivem com o *pathos*, o sonho, a paixão e a utopia, e esta convivência parece fazer jus aos paradoxos sociais e psicológicos da prática da tradução. Traduzir é guardar a memória, é resistir, por exemplo às leis do mercado, à futilidade, é passar o testemunho às gerações vindouras, é intervir socialmente.

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**GRACEFUL INTERRUPTIONS:
THE WORK AND PERSON
OF IRENE RAMALHO SANTOS**

Mary Layoun

Resumo: “Graceful Interruptions” faz uma leitura de passos selecionados da obra intelectual e profissional de Maria Irene Ramalho Santos – na sua qualidade de especialista, colega e em múltiplos contextos disciplinares, institucionais e intelectuais – traçando o percurso das suas produtivas e provocatórias análises e da sua teorização sobre a lírica e a interrupção poética enquanto trajetória de “graciosidade” intelectual – e hospitalidade – na interrupção.

Palavras-chave: Hospitalidade; interrupção; *graciosidade*; poesia; Irene Ramalho Santos.

Abstract: “Graceful Interruptions” reads selected intellectual and professional work by Maria Irene Ramalho Santos – both as a scholar and as a colleague and in multiple disciplinary, institutional, and intellectual settings – tracing her productive and provocative analyses and theorizing of the lyric and of poetic interruption as a trajectory of intellectual “grace” – and hospitality – in interruption.

Keywords: Hospitality; interruption; grace; poetry; Irene Ramalho Santos.

Both Pessoa and Rilke, however, know only too well that ‘interruption’ is what grounds the poetic. . . . Thus, in Pessoa, as in Rilke, we find a poetics of interruption that is the paradoxical expression of a human longing for the *poetic* impossibility of wholeness and beauty. *Poiesis*, that is to say, all human making. . .

(Atlantic Poets 20)

I believe I love poetry best because it allows me to ‘travel’ the most.

(“American Studies as Traveling Culture”)

The first passage above is from the introduction to Irene Ramalho Santos’ *Atlantic Poets: Fernando Pessoa’s Turn in Anglo-American Modernism* as she maps the intellectual ground for her work on “the Atlantic poets.” That is, on the Atlantic poets themselves and on their poetry as the poetic construction of poetic impossibility. Simultaneously Irene Ramalho Santos sagely addresses poetry and the lyric at large – poetry which “does not have to wait for theory for the poem to irrupt” (21) – and the theory which comes after it. And, as interruption grounds the poetic in Ramalho Santos’ subtly stunning insights into the work of Rilke, of Pessoa, and of so much more, so too, and in an equally “quietly stunning” manner, it grounds the scholarly and professional life work of Irene Ramalho Santos herself.¹ For “*poiesis*” is, poetically or figuratively, precisely “all

¹ Unfortunately unable to read her work in Portuguese, I am able to reference only Irene Santos’ work in English. But, fortunate to have worked near and far with

human making.” Much less elegantly articulated than in Irene Santos’ compelling work then, “the paradoxical expression” of poetry is also the material figure – material as words on a page, figural in its articulation of a desire – for a not-yet, perhaps not ever, towards which human longing strains.

The second quote is from Irene Ramalho Santos’ essay, “American Studies as Traveling Culture: An Extravagant Nonnative’s Wanderings in Global Scholarship” in an essay in response to an invitation to take part in a symposium in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Amerika Instituut. There, in an essay solicited to allow for “virtually any kind of response from us, but preferably with an auto-biographical bent,” Irene Santos responds with a reflection of stunning force on her fields, her travels in and across them, and the very “traveling” of the fields themselves. And again, she keenly and gracefully traces the interruptions which are constitutive of the fields, her travels, and their “lineages.”

Each and both of the passages quoted above, then, suggest the “graceful interruptions” of the scholarly, pedagogic, and collegial work of Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos. How exactly?

“Graceful” is a qualitative assignment to – assessment of – that work. But, in addition to our conventional understanding of “graceful,” I would insist on the particular, perhaps idiosyncratic, grammatical story behind that adjectival descriptor. It is something more than simply our conventional understanding of “graceful.” The Christian overtones of “grace” in modern usage notwithstanding, it is its pre-Christian classical Greek origins that make it a most apt descriptor for Irene Santos’ work.

her for over thirty years, I will hope I have been able to be at least a passable student of this powerfully astute, intellectually and personally generous, and quietly steadfast scholar, teacher, and colleague.

Χάρις, conventionally translated as “grace,” is the nominative form derived from the active verb χαίρω (‘I am glad’), in its perhaps more familiar passive form, χαίρομαι, (‘I am gladdened’).² From this derives the ancient greeting between one and another, χαίρε. It is within this sense of “grace” – grace predicated on the interaction of one with another and on what we can consider, not only after Immanuel Levinas or Jacques Derrida or Tahar Ben Jelloun or even Merleau Ponty, but as Irene Santos so deftly illustrates in her work on Pessoa and the other Atlantic and trans-Atlantic poets – as the *interruption* of the one by another that the work of Irene Santos is “graceful.” Or rather, it is itself a “graceful interruption.”

Interruption is clearly one of the key concepts – and professional practices – around which Irene Ramalho Santos’ work turns. Elaborated in her extensive work on Fernando Pessoa and the interruption of the “American”³ poets which his poetry performs but a crucial trope recurring in much of her work, Irene Ramalho Santos’ interruption suggestively presents itself as a radical comparative practice. “. . . Because they *interrupt each other*, [they] provide a useful model for a better understanding of the modern lyric.” (2003: 22). It is the luxuriously, complexly ‘interruptive’ poetry of Pessoa that provides a rich point of departure for Irene Ramalho Santos’ statement here. “Pessoa’s concepts of Atlanticism and Interruption” are the specific referent for her “they” in the redolent insight above. But that interruption occurs both on the level of the poetry itself – as Santos’ magisterial work on poetry and lyric demonstrates so compellingly. And, perhaps even more suggestively, it occurs on the level of her own scholarly work as a whole.

² I recognize the simplistic clumsiness of this grammatical exercise in translation. There are far more ‘graceful’ ways to explain and translate this conjugation. But I insist on the distinction here to make a point.

³ In double quotes to indicate Ramalho Santos’ gently insistent expansion, pushing against a narrower definition of the boundaries of what “America” is.

In insightfully guiding us through a nuanced, theoretically informed reading of her poets and their poetry, Irene Ramalho Santos' work points to the rich intellectual provocation of understanding interruption at work. Her poetic readings of poetry, as her poetic theoretical insights, call us to a "better understanding" – certainly, in the first instance, of the poetic texts from which she always first draws. And then with deft and broad understanding, as her work draws from what she calls "posterior" theory, we see the full and compelling force of interruption as an attribute of "human making" and "human longing". For example, in her astute reminder – "National literatures are national only to the extent that they resituate the nation in the world system and thus reinvent the world system in a particular way" (2003: 5). – we can understand the work of interruption not only in poetry but also in "the world system."

Yet, this unpoetic restatement of Ramalho Santos' lovely readings of and reflection on the insights of poetry does not negate the extent to which we are in the wake of the poets and their poetry.

And in the wake that poetry creates ahead of us, one of the gifts of that poetry, we learn from the work of Irene Ramalho Santos, is precisely the work of interruption – the unexpected turn, the unforeseen encounter, the interruption of what we thought we were doing by something or someone else. Interruptions are the very stuff of creative making, of poetic insight, of poetic understanding. Interruptions are at the heart of the exquisite poems through which her scholarly work guides us. And interruption thus apprehended and comprehended, offers another gift of "better understanding" of, but not only, "modern poetry."

The rich understanding of interruption that underlies Professor Santos' scholarly work is clearly cognizant of "interruption" and its various manifestations in philosophical thought (Levinas or Derrida or Ben Jalloun), in poetic practice, and in the rich dialogue on the web of connections between "interruption" and "hospitality"

– which latter concept surely echoes the etymological sense cited above of “grace/χαίρειν.” In the face of interruption, of the other as interruption, χαίρομαι – “I am gladdened.” To welcome the other thus, to welcome the other as interruption, as challenge, is the possibility and the limitation at the heart of reflection on “hospitality.”

But that is a different, though related, story. Irene Ramalho Santos’ work, cognizant of these lofty debates and theories, engages them differently – through her attention to the figurative and material workings of *poiesis* (creative making). The “materialism” of her work, located in its keen attentiveness to language of poetry itself and to its rich webs of (proleptic and metaleptic) meanings, is simultaneously figurative in its larger vision and implications.

I like to see American Studies scholarship, as I see my favorite poets, as a series of travel encounters or practices of crossing and interaction constantly troubling the localisms of common assumptions about culture, fully aware of centers and margins and, rather than upsetting them, understanding the dynamics of dwelling and traveling. (Ramalho Santos 1999: 42)

Though the focus of this essay is on the state of American Studies outside of the United States, it is a signpost for the entirety of Irene Santos’ work as it gathers the senses here of “crossing” and “troubling” “rather than upsetting” into a richly developed network of propositions about “interruptions.” In a formulation far less graceful and far more strident than that of Irene Santos’ work, we can say something like: the interruptions of movement, of confrontation, of “crossing” and “troubling” that may not *upset* “centers and margins” – though those interruptions certainly *challenge* them – open a space for the very poetic, for poetry itself. It is in this context that Irene Santos’ profession – “I love poetry best because it allows me to ‘travel’ the most” – is most rich and provocative. Interruption, then,

we learn from the work of Irene Ramalho Santos, lets us see meaning being produced, the disquietude that is itself interruption – to ask questions, to puzzle relations, to see others and otherwise.

Whether looking back on over thirty years in the fields of comparative poetics, American Studies, or comparative literature or in tracing and re-tracing the networks of relations between poets and poetry, between seeing and not (Ramalho Santos 2000), between hearing and not, Irene Ramalho Santos' work, both as a scholar and as a colleague in the multiple disciplinary, institutional, and intellectual settings which she inhabits and through which she moves, is itself a productive and provocative trajectory of intellectual interruptions. Each essay that I read and re-read, every chapter of her *Atlantic Poets*, reminds me of that trajectory. They display her keen intellectual eye and ear cast now here, now there, always listening to and watching others, always welcoming – Χαίρε! – interruption – “troubling the localisms of common assumptions” about you and me, about us and them, about human and non-human – and drawing productively from it her own poetic inspiration. I will insist again in closing, with tremendous admiration and respect and fondness, Maria Irene Ramalho de Sousa Santos and her works are about and enact grace-ful interruption. They are a gift and a call to the rest of us.

The work of Irene Ramalho Santos, with patient and clear persistence, points us to the ways in which, in recognizing literature in general and poetry in particular as “creative making,” we can better understand interruption and its disquietude as constitutive of that *poiesis*. And we can also understand it as a resistance and perhaps even a challenge to established understanding of *poiesis* and of poetry, of culture and knowledge, of boundaries and borders. Interruption and its disquietude open a space and call out for a response of *poiesis* as much in the poetic as in the political. For it seems to me she concludes her *Atlantic Poets* with just such an

understanding – which she modestly attributes to Pessoa but which, I will insist, we can only apprehend and comprehend as we can because of her own ‘posterous’ work.

By conceiving of his own poetry as an open field of self-interruptive gestures, of imaginative alterity, while situating himself firmly in the “language-his-nation,” Pessoa teaches us how to read, not only poetry, but the increasingly transcultural word in which we live (Ramalho Santos 2003: 277).

So does the work and the person of Irene Ramalho Santos teach us to read and understand comparatively the ‘world in which we live’ – a richly provocative interruption.

Χαίρε, then, Irene Ramalho Santos – astute scholar, wise teacher, and dear practitioner of graceful interruption.

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**THE ARCHIVE, GENDER ROLES AND
THE DECONSTRUCTION OF SALAZARISM
IN ALBERTO SEIXAS SANTOS'S
BRANDOS COSTUMES**

Adriana Martins

Resumo: No quadro dos filmes que apareceram logo após a Revolução de 1974, *Brandos Costumes* de Alberto Seixas Santos é um caso singular. Ao assumir um caráter ensaístico, através do qual a vida quotidiana dos portugueses é analisada a partir de uma perspetiva doméstica, *Brandos Costumes* é um dos primeiros filmes a discutir abertamente os papéis sociais e de género durante o Salazarismo. Este ensaio examina como o uso de imagens de arquivo contribui, por um lado, para a discussão de papéis de género, e, por outro, da natureza ensaística experimental do filme, tendo por base a premissa de que as imagens de arquivo são utilizadas para desafiar a autoridade da verdade transmitida pelo regime de Salazar.

Palavras-chave: *Brandos Costumes*; cinema português; arquivo; género; não-inscrição.

Abstract: Among the films that appeared in the aftermath of the April 1974 Revolution, Alberto Seixas Santos's *Brandos Costumes* is a singular case. By assuming an essayistic character through

which the daily life of Portuguese people is analyzed from a domestic perspective, *Brandos Costumes* is one of the first films to openly discuss gender and social roles during Salazarism. This essay examines how the use of archival footage contributes, on the one hand, to the discussion of gender roles, and, on the other, to the experimental essayistic nature of *Brandos Costumes*. I base my argument on the premise that archival images are used to defy the authority of the truth conveyed by Salazar's regime.

Keywords: *Brandos Costumes*; Portuguese Film; archive; gender roles; non-inscription.

Talking of essay film, I would rather refer to the attitude of he who attempts “*essai-essay*”, but also attempts to debate a problem by using all the means that the cinema affords, all the registers and all the expedients.

Edgar Morin¹

In the history of Portuguese film, Alberto Seixas Santos's *Brandos Costumes* constitutes, for various reasons, a unique case. Firstly, although released in 1975, the film was shot before the April 1974 Revolution, but the end of the dictatorship allowed the critical incorporation of archival material which would never have been permitted by the regime's censorship a few years before.² Despite

¹ 'See Edgar Morin (*qtd.* in Rascaroli 39). Rascaroli quotes Morin from Giovanni Maderna (see Rascaroli's footnote #87).'

² See Eduardo Gêada, to whom “a few months before the fascist regime was overthrown films as different as *Brandos Costumes*, *Sofia e a Educação Sexual*, *O Mal Amado e Índia* were forbidden or prevented from being shown”/ “a poucos

the date of the film's premiere, *Brandos Costumes* cannot be placed within the framework of the movies Leonor Areal (2011) considers as belonging to "April's cinema" (*cinema de Abril*), since it does not result from what she terms "the urgency of the real" (*urgência do real*). Unlike many filmmakers who addressed the April Revolution, including Alberto Seixas Santos himself, the truth is that in *Brandos Costumes* the filmmaker did not go out into the streets to give voice to the oppressed people.³ *Brandos Costumes* is a film that portrays the Portuguese in the intimacy of their domestic lives.⁴

Secondly, Alberto Seixas Santos's film poses problems in terms of genre classification, since it can neither be considered a documentary *per se* nor simply a fictional film. Nonetheless, *Brandos Costumes* fulfills the criteria devised by Laura Rascaroli (2008) to characterize essay films, despite the difficulties in defining this concept. According to Rascaroli, the essay film constitutes a modality of filmic text that is characterized, among others, by two markers: reflexivity and subjectivity. The essay film also establishes a special relationship with the spectator, since the latter is directly questioned and encouraged to enter into a dialogue with the enunciator/film, something made possible by the rhetorical structure that informs it. As Rascaroli aptly claims, "[t]he essay film is an open field of experimentation, sited at the crossroads of fiction, nonfiction, and experimental film" (43).⁵

meses da queda do regime fascista, se encontram proibidos ou impedidos de estre-
ar filmes tão díspares como *Brandos Costumes*, *Sofia e a Educação Sexual*, *O Mal
Amado e Índia*". (93-94) Throughout the essay all translations are mine, unless
otherwise indicated.

³ Seixas Santos was one of the filmmakers who participated in the collective movie *As Armas e o Povo* (1975), covering street scenes in the period between April 25 and May 1, 1974.

⁴ See the comments of Nuno Teotónio Pereira and Alberto Seixas Santos on enclosed spaces and on the importance given to doors in *Brandos Costumes* in *O Lugar dos Ricos e dos Pobres no Cinema e na Arquitectura em Portugal*.

⁵ Consider Rascaroli's description of the essay film (35): "The essay film constructs such spectatorial position by adopting a certain rhetorical structure: rather than answering all the questions it raises, and delivering a complete, 'closed' argu-

Thirdly, *Brandos Costumes* is one of the first films released in the immediate aftermath of the April Revolution to openly discuss gender and societal roles and in particular the subaltern role played by women from different generations during Salazarism. This is possible due to the filmmaker's perspective, since he depicts the private lives of women and their interaction with other women within the framework of the family, here understood as a microcosm of Portugal's patriarchal society during Salazar's dictatorship. This perspective allows Seixas Santos to unveil the characters' thoughts and anxieties, on the one hand giving women the chance to express themselves, and on the other to denounce their repression by social rules and conventions.

It is my contention that the conjugation of these three factors, and above all the skillful use of, and reflection on, archival footage, transforms Seixas Santos's film into one of the first cinematic exposés of Salazar's regime and its effects on Portuguese society. Moreover, Seixas Santos's film epitomizes how the concerns of Portugal's New Cinema filmmakers were being aesthetically refined since the appearance of films such as *Os Verdes Anos* (Paulo Rocha 1963) and *Belarmino* (Fernando Lopes 1964) which gave an impetus to the critical portrayal of Portuguese society. In this essay, I will try to demonstrate how the use of archival footage contributes both to the discussion of gender roles and to the experimental essayistic nature of *Brandos Costumes*. I shall base my analysis on the premise that archival images are used to defy the authority of the truth conveyed by Salazar's regime.

ment, the essay's rhetoric is such that it opens up problems, and interrogates the spectator; instead of guiding her through the emotional and intellectual response, the essay urges her to engage individually with the film, and reflect on the same subject matter the author is musing about; this structure accounts for the 'openness' of the essay film."

The experimental character of Seixas Santos's film rests on an ingenious fusion of fiction and nonfiction. This results from a succession of shots depicting the daily life of a bourgeois family, their values, frustrations and aspirations, a depiction which is disrupted by elaborate "pictures", exercises of theatrical *mise-en-scène*, through which the spectator becomes aware of the characters' concerns. These pictures evoke the Brechtian belief that it was necessary to confront the audience with the artificiality of a representation, thus encouraging a critical perspective and promoting political engagement with the world. Therefore, characters unveil their inner thoughts and the more intimate facets of their selves which were repressed or silenced by the political regime and by social constraints. The audience's expectations are also disrupted, since this process of revelation is somehow "haunted" by a series of excerpts evoking some of the key moments of Portugal's 20th-century history, such as Gomes da Costa's military *coup* in 1926 and the consolidation of the New State (*Estado Novo*). The references to these moments function as a kind of chorus that makes the regime's voice reverberate, a voice that castrates the characters who seem unable to get rid of it, a suggestive indication of the ways in which the voice of the State overlapped with the voice of the individual. These excerpts stem from two main sources: in some cases, from archival footage dating from the period before the beginning of the *Jornal Português de Atualidades Filmadas*,⁶ and in others taken from this source. Other sources used by Seixas Santos in *Brandos Costumes* were fictional films either supported or given awards by Salazar's regime, such

⁶ The *Jornal Português*, a series of newsreels, was directed between 1938 and 1951 by António Lopes Ribeiro, and was promoted and financed by the National Propaganda Secretariat (SPN). According to Maria do Carmo Piçarra (16), "o aproveitamento do potencial propagandista das actualidades foi uma prática generalizada internacionalmente, sustentada por modelos mais ou menos informativos" / "the use of the propagandistic potential of the newsreels was a practice internationally adopted and supported by models that were more or less informative."

as *A Revolução de Maio* (1937, António Lopes Ribeiro) or *Chaimite* (1953, Jorge Brum do Canto, which received the Great Award of the National Secretariat for Information [*Grande Prémio do SNI*] and the award for best actor given to Emílio Correia).

The essayistic character of *Brandos Costumes* is to a great extent anticipated by the reference to Kafka's *Letter to his Father* in the narrative frame through the monologue of the youngest daughter in the family, who directly addresses the camera/the audience. Her age and rebelliousness epitomize the hope that Portuguese society might change after the death of Salazar and, in symbolic terms, of her own father. By incorporating Kafka's text in the monologue, Seixas Santos uses the latter as an epigraph which both prefaces the main issues of the film and constitutes a tribute to Kafka's work and ideas. The film maker's "borrowing" of *Letter to his Father* acquires a singular meaning when we think about the labyrinthine and bureaucratic universe of Kafka's texts, about the prominence of violence and abuses of power in his work, and about the specific topic of the text (the reflections of a son on the difficult relationship with the figure of an authoritarian and repressive father). In formal terms, the hypothesis of interpreting the youngest daughter's monologue as an epigraph is reinforced by the fact that the film begins with the news of Salazar's death through a voice-over against a black screen, followed by the national anthem, and only then by the screening of the title of the film. In semantic terms, the remediation of Kafka's letter briefly introduces the following aspects: (i) the perpetuation of an absence after death; (ii) an education system focused on the ideas of discipline and punishment, responsible for the daughter's character and her obedience to the paternal figure; (iii) the ambiguous position of the daughter *vis-à-vis* the death of the father, and her occasional identification with a prisoner who had always wanted to escape but simultaneously wishes to make changes in the prison-house. In short, this epigraph is essential to

an understanding of the film's critical discussion about gender roles and the so-called "gentle/mild manners" (*brandos costumes*) of the Portuguese people.

It is my contention that Seixas Santos's film already announces, and to some extent discusses, the philosophical reflection the Portuguese philosopher José Gil (2004) would make about what he called the phenomenon of "non-inscription" (*não inscrição*). In brief terms, the non-inscription is a characteristic of the Portuguese people which is evidenced by their inability to act and assert themselves, since it suspends desire and thus leads to the repression of the events which could not be inscribed. According to the philosopher, whenever the non-inscription operates it is as if the events never took place, and, consequently, no one can be held accountable for them. José Gil associates the attitude of Portuguese people's immobilism to the culture existing during the New State, whose impact transformed what could be considered a drive for change into an attitude of passivity and submission.⁷ By addressing the daily life of a Portuguese family centered on the father figure (even if the portrayed father did not admire Salazar, which is made explicit in the scene when, together with his youngest daughter, he discusses with friends the several possible ways to kill Salazar), Seixas Santos projects onto one of Salazar's central cells in his ideological machine – the family – the impact and efficacy of the regime's oppressive power and longevity, since four generations (grandmother, parents, eldest and youngest daughters, and the maid), different genders (the male authority in the family and the subaltern women's role the youngest daughter challenges), and diverse social

⁷ Other film critics have analyzed the phenomenon of non-inscription in Portuguese contemporary film. See, among others, Carolina Ferreira on Susana Sousa Dias's work (2014) and Daniel Ribas (2014) on João Canijo in the volume organized by Ferreira (2014).

classes (the bourgeoisie and the working class) are here portrayed and discussed.

Seixas Santos discusses what José Gil would come to call the non-inscription through the confrontation between the public (that which coincides with the regime's official voice) and the private (the daily life of the depicted family and the frustrations of its members), something which is marked from the beginning by the official announcement of the dictator's death, immediately followed by a shot of the interior of a house and the thoughts of a housewife who feels frustrated by her lack of freedom, by the sameness of her daily life, and by her dependence on her husband. It is curious that the public sphere somehow ceases to exist as a collectivity, merged with Salazar's voice and the basic tenets of his regime, whereas the daily life of a particular family corresponds to the experience of any family formed and shaped during the New State, even if the family – as the one in the film – did not support Salazar. The fact is that domestic life gravitated towards the father in the same way the life of the nation gravitated towards Salazar.

The filmmaker's strategy of making the collective succumb to Salazar's will and of transforming the experience of the individual, of all that is experienced within the framework of the family, into something collective, becomes evident when Seixas Santos uses a daring shot that lasts around one minute in which Salazar is portrayed dead in his coffin, and a voice-over is heard recalling the main principles of the regime and some of the key moments of Salazar's rise as a politician and the consolidation of his power in 1936. This is followed by sound footage showing how Salazar was a leader acclaimed by the people. This, however, should not be understood as a drive towards transformation, but mainly as a symptom of non-inscription and of the passivity Seixas Santos's film denounces. What could be considered as the collective support of the leadership of a politician fashioned as the protector of the nation is

subtly deconstructed when the camera returns to the context of the family, this time to the space of the eldest daughter's bedroom, to depict the confrontation between daughters belonging to different generations whose rigorous education has changed because of their age difference. The scene depicts the eldest daughter reading a letter sent by a soldier fighting in the Colonial War, a conflict which would be crucial to the fall of Salazar's regime and would contribute to demystify his aura as the protective father of the nation.

The combination of archival footage and the depiction of the family's domesticity illustrates what Jaimie Baron called *archive effect* and *archive affect*, which are experienced as a result of what Baron calls *appropriation films*, that is, the use of sound and visual material from previous sources to create a "temporal disparity" (and also an "intentional disparity") through which Salazar's regime is analyzed from a critical perspective. In other words, by ingeniously appropriating archival footage that gave support to the regime and using it in a different context of enunciation, Seixas Santos reveals its efficacy and impact on the quotidian life of several generations of Portuguese people, as he deconstructs the fallacy of what Eduardo Gêda called the "amiable rhetoric of the regime" (*retórica amável do regime*). This rhetoric is clearly rejected by the youngest daughter, whose reading of *The Communist Manifesto* as if she was learning how to read signifies her discovery of a new understanding of history which may bring about the possibility of making it anew (Trindade). The youngest daughter's subversive attitude - reading a text forbidden by the authoritarian regime in a loud voice - recalls and to a certain extent duplicates the filmmaker's initial strategy of remediation used in the epigraph when Kafka's *Letter to his Father* is appropriated to suggest a reflection on Salazar's regime and its impact on the life of Portuguese people. This time, however, the quotation of this programmatic text is used to herald in the April Revolution, that is, the end, at least in political terms, of the oppressive power of the

“father of the nation.” The film does not show any image of the army in the streets, but the sound of soldiers marching is the element that disrupts the paralysis of family life. The only person who is not affected by the sound is the youngest daughter, who continues to read *The Communist Manifesto*, stressing that “the history of any society has always been the history of class struggle” (*a história de qualquer sociedade foi, desde sempre, a história da luta de classes*). This final quotation works as a kind of moral that is complemented by other archival footage of Salazar’s funeral ceremonies and of his dead body as he lies in state.

Seixas Santos’s reappropriation of archival footage is crucial to the questioning of the truth of the regime and its values, since it draws attention to the epistemological gaps of official newsreels.⁸ This is possible because, as Daniela Agostinho (2) aptly points out, the archive should not be understood as a mere source of information, but mainly as a site of knowledge production which brings to the fore not only the archive’s discursive and epistemological implications, but also its performative dimension. As Agostinho claims, “the archive does not transmit pre-given meanings, rather it brings forth meanings that come into being through its multiple usages.” (3) This epistemological and performative dimensions of archival material are particularly relevant to the questioning of Salazarism, and it is curious to think about the impact caused by the long shot of Salazar’s dead body lying in his coffin, an image that is still not easily found in books or on the internet at the beginning of the 21st century, which suggests the difficulties the Portuguese still face in dealing with Salazar’s death and the need to reform Portuguese society.

⁸ I am borrowing the expression “epistemological gaps” from Daniela Agostinho who reflects on the appropriation of archival footage in Yael Hersonski’s, *A Film Unfinished* (1).

Through the appropriation of archival footage, Seixas Santos demonstrates how the archive can be, in line with John Tagg's contention (qtd. Agostinho 7), a product and an agent of disciplinary power, since, as Agostinho demonstrates in terms of the Nazi disciplinary apparatus, the archive can be "a mechanism to implement an idealized social order, to produce subjectivities, to manage life and death, and ultimately to yield authority." In her discussion, Agostinho draws attention to the etymological reflection made by Derrida in *The Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995). As the philosopher suggests that the archive houses authority, Agostinho claims that the archive arrests knowledge and imprisons meaning and interpretation, which explains the archival violence Derrida talks about. In *Brandos Costumes*, Seixas Santos's appropriation of archival footage serves, on the one hand, to reveal the archival violence of the New State and its authoritative nature; on the other hand, it opens the semantic possibilities of the archive by showing how lacunar it can be, a process that is set into high relief by the remediation of Kafka's *Letter*, the reading of *The Communist Manifesto*, the artificiality of the aforementioned "pictures," and the discussion of women's condition.

To conclude, *Brandos Costumes* is undeniably a revolutionary film for a wide range of reasons. Having started the shooting of the film during the dictatorship, Seixas Santos still had the courage to question the impact of Salazarism on domestic life and, in particular, on women's lives, thus deconstructing the family as one of the pillars of the regime. Moreover, the filmmaker knew how to make the most of the images which the New State propaganda was using to subvert its authoritarian ideological message. Above all, Seixas Santos, in that moment of transition towards democracy, was able, albeit unconsciously, to predict the consequences of a politics of non-inscription whose effects are still felt today. This prophecy is summarized in the epigraph to the film, with its reference to the

prisoner who, in an ambiguous and paradoxical way, despite wishing to escape, cannot help thinking about how to reform the prison-house. *Brandos Costumes* can, therefore, be considered one of the main films of the Portuguese New Cinema in that, as it has been pointed out by Eduardo Geadá, it reveals “an adult and modern cinematographic consciousness of the country” (*uma consciência cinematográfica adulta e moderna do país*), and presents itself as “a cinema of resistance to the cultural patterns of the regime, to the late academicism, and the technical incompetence of the old commercial cinema, to the prevailing clichés and demagoguery” (*cinema de resistência aos padrões culturais do regime, ao academismo serôdio e à incompetência técnica do velho cinema comercial, aos lugares-comuns e à demagogia reinantes*) (93), and is thus deserving of more critical attention by Portuguese film critics and audiences.

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A QUESTION OF BIRDS: POE AND BAUDELAIRE

Françoise Meltzer

Resumo: Poe e Baudelaire criaram pássaros que ficaram famosos: o corvo de Poe, o cisne e o albatroz de Baudelaire. Uma investigação detalhada da forma como os pássaros funcionam a nível textual ajuda-nos a entender como a poesia europeia e americana evoluiu ao longo do século 19, da imagética e tom românticos à experimentação em termos de versificação, conteúdo e tropos. Ou seja, estes ícones ornitológicos demonstram o modo como a poética de cada um dos autores se alterou face às exigências cada vez maiores da modernidade. O artigo argumenta também que se verifica uma progressão cumulativa da poética em Baudelaire, tradutor de Poe e influenciado por ele. Baudelaire foi buscar a Poe a ideia do poema em prosa e da importância da melancolia. Os tropos e figurações dos pássaros na poesia destes autores é, assim, um bom indicador da evolução do conceito e função da poesia.

Palavras-chave: Poética; poesia; Poe; Baudelaire.

Abstract: Poe and Baudelaire produced famous birds: the Raven for Poe, the swan and albatross for Baudelaire. By

looking closely at how these birds function textually, we can get a better grasp of how European and American poetry itself changed in the nineteenth century, evolving from distinctly romantic imagery and tone, to experimentation in versification, content, and tropes. These ornithological icons, in other words, demonstrate how the poetics of each poet is developed, in confronting the increasingly insistent demands of modernity. The essay also argues that there is a cumulative progression of poetics in Baudelaire, who draws from and translates Poe. Among many other aspects, Baudelaire drew from Poe's idea of the prose poem and of the importance of melancholy. The evolution in the notion and role of poetry can be discerned by looking at the tropes and figuration of the bird that each poet images.

Keywords: Poetics; poetry; Poe; Baudelaire.

And yet one cannot be sure that one's own writing has
not been influenced by Poe.

T. S. Eliot

This is an essay about some famous birds: Poe's "The Raven," and Baudelaire's swan as well as his albatross. The move from Romantic poetry to the verse of modernity is, most scholars of literature agree, evident in the progressive changes produced in turn by the works of the two poets in question. Moreover, as is well known, Baudelaire translated Poe and was deeply influenced by his writings. Baudelaire claimed that Poe and the monarchist (and very right-wing) Joseph

de Maistre had both taught him how to think. The two poets then, starting with Poe, perform what Longinus called *accumulatio* – Poe straining to leave the Romantic poets behind even as he integrates their images, and Baudelaire incorporating some of Poe’s precepts into his own poetry.

In forging his own poetics, Poe himself was famously caught between a decidedly romantic tone and imagery, and a struggle for a “new poetry.” The young Poe had thought of himself as first and foremost a poet, but became increasingly disillusioned with his verses. He had failed, he concluded, to write poems “of much value to the public or very creditable to [him]self.” Indeed, particularly in the United States, Poe is best known for his gothic tales and some of his literary criticism. Baudelaire, for his part, was (as Walter Benjamin was to argue) the principle herald of modernity, though he often used classical forms in his poetry, even as he frequently experimented with the prose poem. It is principally because of the content, not the form, of his poems that Baudelaire can be seen as modern.

But let us return to the birds. The profound changes in poetry evident in these two seminal poets – from Poe’s fraught and eerie verses, through Baudelaire’s powerful descriptions of the modern city – these changes can be demonstrated palpably by considering the iconic function of each textual bird. The birds in these works are like talismans that acutely manifest varying and changing poetics; poetics that were, of course, to have an immense influence on subsequent poets in Europe and the Americas.

We begin then, with Poe. Having just noted that in the United States, Poe is largely known for his prose works, we come to the exception: “The Raven,” known by all readers and students of poetry. Indeed, it is almost impossible to say anything about that poem without lapsing into particularly tired clichés, or repeating what endless critics have already noted. These pitfalls notwithstanding,

I will start with a brief consideration of the raven itself.¹ Generally considered a bird of ill omen (Poe's poem says this explicitly more than once), the raven plays, conversely, a good role in the Hebrew Bible. In the story of Elijah, a draught causes a famine; God tells Elijah to hide by a brook, and adds "I have commanded the Ravens to feed you there" (Kings I, 17: 5). The story continues, "And the ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening..." (*idem* 7). The raven in Christian art is thus the emblem of God's providence. *Brewer's Dictionary* notes that St. Oswald holds a raven with a ring in its mouth, that St. Benedict has a raven at his feet, and that St. Paul the Hermit is depicted with a raven bringing him a loaf of bread. All of these are allusions to the ravens feeding Elijah (Brewer and Evans 755).² This aspect of ravens – doing God's bidding, by God's direct command – also raises controversy, such that St. Isidore of Seville (7th century CE)

¹ I will occasionally be using crow and raven interchangeably, even though there are subtle differences. The website of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology says the best way to tell the two apart is by their voices. The voice of the raven says "kaaa kaaa," while that of the crow says "caw caw." "Similar Species: crows and ravens." (n.d.) *All About Birds*. <http://www.allaboutbirds.org/page.aspx?pid=2501> I believe this is a sufficiently minor difference to allow for the occasional (and in general usage) equation crow=raven, though any ornithologist would take issue with such a simplification. Indeed, Aesop's fable "The Crow and the Raven" makes the same point about voice serving as the distinction between the two black birds. In the fable, the crow is jealous of the raven, "because he was considered a bird of good omen." The crow then attempts to be a raven, cawing "as loud as she could" in order to make travelers think she too can predict the future. But one of the travelers, Aesop relates, reassures his companion by saying, ". . . it is only the caw of a crow, and her cry, you know, is no omen." Aesop's conclusion is that "Those who assume a character which does not belong to them, only make themselves ridiculous." It should be added that Aesop's other fable, "The Fox and the Raven" (which La Fontaine was to copy) is often translated as "The Fox and the Crow." The French insists on the confusion between the two birds, since both raven and crow are translated as *corbeau*. "The Crow and the Raven." (n.d.) *Aesop's Fables*. <http://www.aesopfables.com/cgi/aesop1.cgi?1&TheCrowandtheRaven>

² The raven also appears in Job 38:41 and again in Proverbs 147:9, both passages telling of how God provides for young ravens when they cry out in hunger. Moreover, the first bird that Noah sends out from the arc is a raven; the dove is second. The raven is thus both protected by God, but it is in the list of birds that are an abomination and cannot be eaten. (Leviticus 11: 13, 15).

is brought to warn, in book XII of his *Etymologiae*, that it is wicked to think that God gives ravens his counsel. The warning is repeated by Bartholomaeus Anglicus (13th century CE).

For the ancients, however, the raven is the bird of ill omen, though Aesop labels the bird a good omen. Good omen or bad, it is obviously this ability to presage that motivates Poe's poem. There is a Roman legend that the raven once had white feathers ("as white as a swan's," says *Brewer's*, adding that ravens were "not inferior in size" to swans). But Apollo, angry at the bird for tattling on a faithless nymph whom the god loved, first shot the nymph with his arrow, and then, as Addison's translation of Ovid puts it, "He blacked the raven o'er, / And bid him prate in his white plumes no more."³ The Roman legend thus has the raven descending from a swan-like ancestor, which is not insignificant to our purposes here. There is a fable by Aesop, "The Raven and the Swan," that also connects the two birds, though in this case with an emphasis on unalterable difference. In that fable, a raven envies the snow-white plumage of the swan, and tries to wash his own black wings to make them white. He washes his feathers for so long, since they continue to be black, that he dies for lack of food. "Change of habit," reads the moral, "cannot alter nature." The characteristic of ill omen comes, it would seem, from the raven's feeding on carrion, bringing infection and hence bad luck. The very presence of a raven and its hoarse croaks has come to mean a prophesy of death. Indeed, the verb *to croak* originally meant a prophesy of evil or misfortune, a now archaic usage. Cicero, meanwhile, was warned of his death by a flock of ravens, and as legend would have it, a raven entered the orator's

³ Ovid, 4. B. A. o. 1. A., Dryden, J., Pope, A., Congreve, W., & Addison, J. (1833). *Ovid*. London: A. J. Valpy. Qtd. *Brewer's*, *ibid*. In a similar vein, Benvolio says to Romeo, "I will make thee think thy swan a crow." (Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*. Act I, Scene 2).

bedroom and “pulled the clothes off his bed” on the day he was murdered. The raven also predicts rain (a less sinister presaging).

The stamp of ill omen notwithstanding, the raven is also known to have several characteristics deemed laudable by various scholars. Like the eagle and the swan, the raven is monogamous, and continues to feed its young even when the latter have learned to fly. Moreover, notes Bartholomaeus Anglicus, “the mildness of the bird is wonderful,” because “when father and mother in age are both naked and bare of covering feathers, then the young crows cover and hide them with their feathers, and gather meat and feed them.”⁴ Perhaps it is this characteristic that explains God’s choice of the birds to bring food to Elijah. Ravens also lead storks when they migrate, and defend them from other birds (Steele). The Aberdeen Bestiary (ca. 1200) uses the raven as an example of good parenting, admonishing parents to “learn from the crow’s example, and its sense of duty, to love their children.”⁵ And the bird is intelligent; Pliny the Elder writes, for example, that if a nut is too hard for a crow to crack, it will drop it on rocks or roofs until it breaks. In Danish mythology, Odin, the god of war, has a raven on each shoulder – Mind and Memory.

All of these somewhat contradictory attributes are at play in Poe’s figure of the raven. In the seventh stanza, the raven steps into the narrator’s chamber after he opens the window to find the source of the rapping. The raven is here described as “stately” with “mien of lord or lady,” and from “the saintly days of yore.” Poe is clearly aware of the raven’s biblical connections and its regal presence in some Christian imagery. The raven’s choice of the bust of Pallas on which to roost underlines its intelligence and ferocity; Pallas, after all, is

⁴ Macaulay, *History of St Kilda*, cited by Brewer’s, *Ibid*.

⁵ “Crow” (2011, January 15). *The Medieval Bestiary*. <http://bestiary.ca/beasts/beast252.htm>

the goddess of war and wisdom. She is thus aligned with Odin, also god of war. Hence, ferocity. Indeed, in stanza thirteen, the raven's eyes are "fiery," burning "into my bosom's core." Odin, however, has the two ravens, Mind and Memory, on his shoulders. The wisdom of Pallas, in other words, seems for Odin to be embodied by the ravens that remain affixed to him. Memory is already present in the previous stanza (twelve), when the bird is described as an "ominous bird of yore," a phrase that is repeated just before the narrator (who seems to be a student, with books strewn around him) wonders what the bird meant in croaking "Nevermore." The raven is then not from the present; it is rather ghost-like and, like Pallas, represents a lost time. It follows then that the next stanza (thirteen) brings up the lost Lenore who is lost as well to the present and will never again press the cushions of the student's chamber.

Stanza fourteen opens with iconic religious allusions: seraphim and angels. They have been sent by God, the narrator decides, to give him "respite and nepenthe" from his grief on losing the fair Lenore. The combination of Homeric and Christian allusions matches the layered connotations of the raven. Moreover, the narrator is unable to drink the nepenthe and "forget this lost Lenore." Memory and Mind, we might say, in the form of the raven, refuse him escape from grief and remembering. The following stanza calls the raven "Prophet," and declares that whether the bird comes from the "Tempter" or from a "tempest," it is nevertheless a prophet. The student here asks, to which there will be the usual reply, "*is there balm in Gilead?*"

The question is a nearly exact duplicate of the biblical verse in Jeremiah⁶. In that book, God is angry with his people because they have taken to worshipping other gods. God gives the prophet

⁶ For the religious and philosophical roots of Poe's thinking, see Forest (1928). Poe was clearly aware of the Jeremiah passage.

Jeremiah the inspiration to speak for him, and to explain to the people that a great drought will ensue as a result of the peoples' worshipping of Baal. God punishes thus Jerusalem and Judah, and promises to punish as well those Israelites who have gone to Egypt. But in Jeremiah 8:18-19, the prophet laments the retributive destruction of the land of Judah, personified by him as the daughter of his people: "My grief is beyond healing, my heart is sick with me. Hark, the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land. . .". Dismay, the prophet says, has taken hold of him, "for the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded." (8: 21). It is in this context of lamentation that Jeremiah asks, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?" (8: 22). The question is never answered. Later in Jeremiah the balm from Gilead comes up again, this time in reference to Egypt, which had been defeated by the Babylonians: "Go up to Gilead, and take balm, o virgin daughter of Egypt! In vain have you used many medicines; there is no healing for you" (46: 11). Poe, in the fifteenth stanza, takes up the question from the first passage again, this time (as it were) demanding an answer: "Is there – *is* there balm in Gilead? – tell me – tell me, I implore." The italics here serve to restate Jeremiah's question with urgency. The raven, of course, is then made to reply that there will never again be such a balm in Gilead.

There is an aspect worth noting in the biblical passages about the balm from Gilead. Jeremiah laments that his "grief is beyond healing," and that his heart is sick with him, "for the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded." In an opposing context, when the prophet addresses himself to those in Egypt (also personified as a woman – the virgin daughter of Egypt), Jeremiah similarly says that there is no healing for her. This repetition serves to emphasize that, in the case of the prophet, his grief is so great

that it cannot be healed; in the case of Egypt, her evil is such that she is beyond healing as well. In both cases, then, the damage is so great that it is beyond cure, even with the balm from Gilead. Moreover, Jeremiah identifies so much with the punished land of Judah that he says her wound is the same as the resulting wound in his heart. The overall effect then is utter hopelessness and sorrow, which are precisely what Poe wants as the effect of his poem. The tenor of the biblical passage then, to which Poe alludes, exemplifies a tone of extreme melancholy – the tone that, in “The Philosophy of Composition,” the poet had stated was the intended one for “The Raven.” “Melancholy,” he writes, “is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones” (*Great Short Works* 533).⁷ The leitmotif of the poem is grief that will never be healed.

Most Poe scholars mention Dickens’ pet raven Grip as the main influence for Poe’s poem, and there is no doubt that Grip played a major role in the inspiration. When Grip died, in 1841, Dickens had him stuffed, and in the same year (at his children’s request) wrote the bird into the historical novel, *Barnaby Rudge*.⁸ Also in the same year, Poe wrote a review of the novel, drawing attention to the raven, “whose croakings are to be frequently, appropriately and prophetically heard in the course of the narrative. . .” (1841). He added that Grip was “human-looking” and that his voice was like music mixed into the whole. Four years later, Poe wrote “The Raven;” “The Philosophy of Composition,” the essay that purports to explain the source and production of the poem, was published the

⁷ Poe’s *Great Short Works* (1970) are hereafter *GSW*.

⁸ The stuffed Grip can be viewed today in a shadow box in the rare books department of the Philadelphia Free Library. There is also a crow in *Bleak House*. Another influence may have been the texts and drawings of Audubon. See Ziser, Michael (2007, December) Poe, Lacan, Von Uexküll, and Audubon in the Zoosemiosphere. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 12(3), 22 ff. Ziser says that Poe may actually have heard a lecture on birds by Audubon, when the latter was in Philadelphia in 1841.

following year. Poe had originally intended to use a parrot as the bird in the poem; perhaps Grip played some part in Poe's decision to use a speaking raven. In any case, Dickens' raven was almost certainly an influence in Poe's choice of that bird for his poem.

The intent of "The Philosophy of Composition" is somewhat problematic. One edition of Poe's works refers to the essay as "half tongue-in-cheek" (*GSW* 563), Baudelaire, however, had translated the essay, and taken it to be of crucial and grave importance. Mallarmé, for his part, dubs the essay "pure intellectual play," and refers to a "recently revealed letter" from Poe to a friend, in which the American poet says that the method of composition outlined in the essay had nothing authentic about it. Mallarmé continues, "The idea [for the essay] came to [Poe], suggested by the critics' commentaries and investigations, that the poem could have been thus composed. He consequently produced this connection, simply for the purpose of an ingenious experiment. It amused and surprised him to see this idea so promptly accepted, like a *bona fide* made declaration." Nonetheless, concludes Mallarmé, an idea is an idea, and the pages Poe produced are no less congenial to Poe, and sincere (*Oeuvres complètes* 771-72).⁹

Whether seriously or in jest (or both), Poe produces a lucid account of his poetics in "The Philosophy of Composition," and it is thus worth revisiting the more salient aspects of the essay. To begin with, there is that is not willed in the creation of "The Raven," writes Poe – nor should there be in poetic composition *tout court*. There is, to repeat, no accident of composition here. Poe writes that nothing of "The Raven" "is referrible [sic] either to accident or intuition – that the work proceeded, step by step, to its completion

⁹ Mallarmé's *Oeuvres complètes* are hereafter *O.C.* Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem” (GSW 530).

The poem must also, continues Poe, elevate the soul: “It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul” (GSW 531). Beauty, moreover, is “the sole legitimate province of the poem.” Beauty is not a quality, “but an effect,” and is not intellectual or sentimental, but rather, he repeats, “the excitement, or pleasurable elevation, of the soul” (*idem* 532). Poe next discusses tone, and concludes, “Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.” Refrain is of the essence, and the word that embodies melancholy best is “Nevermore.” Since Monotony (or repetition) is key, Poe decides that an animal, rather than a human being, should repeat “Nevermore.” He rejects the parrot, and chooses the Raven “equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended *tone*” (*idem* 534). As to melancholy, Poe decides that the most melancholic of all topics is “Death,” and concludes that, “the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world.” To this he adds the bereaved lover.

Poe explains that his poem builds on the bird’s repeated word, first with the narrator asking commonplace questions and ending, of course, with the devastating conclusion that the narrator will never again “clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.” But, concludes Poe, poems need complexity as well as “some amount of suggestiveness – some undercurrent, however indefinite of meaning.” There must not be an “*excess* of the desired meaning,” however, or the poem will turn into prose (which Poe derisively notes describes “the so called poetry of the so called transcendentalists”) (*idem* 541). Hence the final two stanzas, which are meant to “pervade all the narrative which has preceded them.” Thus “take thy beak from out *my heart*,” is “the first metaphorical expression in the poem.” Combined with “Nevermore,” the reader is

brought to a moral. The Raven becomes “emblematical of *Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*” (*idem* 542). And the Raven, clearly, along with the melancholy he inspires, are never going to leave Lenore’s bereaved lover.

We are in a better position now to recognize the importance of Jeremiah’s lamentations as another “undercurrent” pervading the “The Raven.” Poe’s declaration that a poem must establish tone, and that melancholy is “the most legitimate of all the poetical tones,” finds its tonal pitch in Jeremiah’s sorrowful outpourings. Perhaps most significantly, Jeremiah provides the notion of grief without healing; a grief so great that even the balm from Gilead is helpless to assuage. Death, which Poe calls the most melancholy topic, is for him particularly so when a beautiful woman has died. It will have been noted that Jeremiah refers to Judah as the daughter of his people, and to the people in Egypt as a virgin. Melancholy thus is gendered in the feminine, a point worth noting even though the Bible often contains metaphorically feminized lands or cities. My point here, however, is that Jeremiah’s hopelessness is, as Poe was to argue in his essay, made more acute by the trope of a beautiful and/or virginal daughter. Jeremiah wishes his “head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (9: 22) He is like Poe’s bereaved lover, his own heart wounded “for the wound of the daughter of my people.” “Take thy beak from out my heart,” cries Poe’s narrator.

Poe’s raven is the personification of sorrow – whether ill intended or sacred – with a mixture of pagan and Christian allusions. On the one hand, the narrator refers to “that God we both adore,” placing the raven in the Judeo-Christian context. On the other hand, the fact that the raven comes from “the Night’s Plutonian shore,” is on the bust of Pallas, and other such allusions to what is “ancient” place the raven in the tradition of Greco-Roman paganism. Moreover, Poe externalizes his Raven until the end, when it has penetrated his very

heart, not unlike Jeremiah's wounded heart. Finally, whereas Poe emphasizes, in his essay on the poem, that the purpose of poetry is to elevate the soul, the student who tells his story is left, at the end, with his soul forever unable to lift itself "from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor." The shadow, of course, is that of the raven. Like Jeremiah, the raven is a prophet – but we are left with ambiguity as to whether it comes from God or the devil. The reader at the end recognizes the raven as *emblematic*, Poe tells us, of mournful and never-ending remembrance. But there is also an aspect of self-torture here, as Poe points out in his essay. The student is impelled, Poe explains, "by the human thirst for self-torture. . .". He is given to "the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer 'Nevermore.'" (*GSW* 541). It is this luxury of sorrow and the need for self-torture and superstition, that separate the student from the poet. There is, in other words, an inherent irony in the poem – a distance between the narrator and the implied author.¹⁰

* * *

He makes a swan-like end, / Fading in music
Shakespeare, *Othello*

¹⁰ Most Poe scholars agree that Poe is particularly influenced by the *Frühromantiker* Friedrich Schlegel, and that it is the latter's notion of irony that most influenced Poe. For a good variety of articles on Poe, see *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Boston: G.K.Hall & Co., 1987). See G.R. Thompson (1973) Thompson, however, somewhat overplays his thesis that Poe is comical, tongue in cheek and full of satirical play. See also Thompson's Introduction to *GSW*, where he claims that "the true horror, the true *Gothic* quality, of Poe's tales lies in their substantive irony, for Poe's tales are more than ironic in mode, more than supercilious hoaxes. . . The insinuated burlesque, the ironic modes of language, and the ironic themes merge with ironies of plot and characterization in the creation of an absurd universe." (44-5) This view is, in my opinion (and in that of other Poe scholars) very much an overstatement.

In Baudelaire's great swan poem on exile, there is also irony, but it is dark, produced by the contrast between the exiled figures in their present environment, and the unrecoverable one that they long for. The poem is dedicated to Victor Hugo, and Baudelaire writes directly to the exiled writer in December of 1860. Baudelaire explains that in the poem, he wanted to say quickly "all that an accident, an image, can contain in suggestions, and how the sight of a suffering animal pushes the mind toward all those beings whom we love, who are absent and who suffer, toward all those who are deprived of something that will never be found again." (*Oeuvres complètes* 1007).¹¹ Whereas Poe had begun with a tone for his poem, and then moved to find what figures could inspire the melancholic tenor he wanted, Baudelaire's poem is inspired by a chance encounter that puts memory into the foreground. The movement is then the opposite of Poe's; Baudelaire happens upon a suffering swan, which becomes the talisman that triggers the poem and all of its allusions. Those allusions produce a series of images that seem unrelated until one senses what the Baudelaire scholar Pierre Jean Jouve describes as "the secret association" (*OC* I, 1004).¹² The secret association here is, of course, exile – from one's destroyed homeland (Andromache, with both Troy and her husband Hector lost forever; the Negress who longs for her home and its palm trees, Victor Hugo himself), to sailors forgotten on a desert island, to the vanquished, the forgotten, captives, to the old city of Paris itself, lost forever under Haussmann's tireless bulldozers. Finally, there is the central figure of exile – the one that inspires

¹¹ Baudelaire's *Oeuvres complètes* (1975) are hereafter *OC*.

¹² Jouve's idea of a discordance in the "chain of ideas" and the unifying "secret association" is reminiscent of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*. That work too presents an apparently discordant series of musings (that is, the different perspectives in the letters, principally between Usbek, and Rica and, later – and dramatically – Roxanne). It is Montesquieu himself who claims that there is a "secret chain" unifying the whole of the novel.

the entire chain of allusions – the suffering swan, fluttering in the dust and reproaching God for the lack of rain.

Baudelaire writes to his mother in the same year of 1860, making it clear that he knows he has composed poetry out of the ordinary. He has produced, he tells her, “new and passably singular verses.” (OC I, 1008) Hugo, for his part, responds to Baudelaire’s letter promptly, describing the swan poem in language that seems to anticipate Mallarmé’s own swan sonnet: “Like everything that you do, Monsieur,” writes Hugo to Baudelaire, “your *Swan* is an idea. Like all true ideas, there are depths. This swan in the dust has beneath it more abysses than the swan of Lake Gaube’s bottomless depths. One glimpses these abysses in your verse, which is full of shivers and shudders” (*idem* 1007). Hugo senses the cold void that underlies Baudelaire’s anguished swan in the city; Mallarmé will make such a glacial terrain explicit. Hugo’s choice of Lake Gaube powerfully makes the point; the Lake, high in the Pyrenees, is known for its alluvial glaciers. Hugo is aware of the newness then, of Baudelaire’s verses. In a letter responding to another of Baudelaire’s poems dedicated to him, Hugo tells Baudelaire that he has created “un frisson nouveau.” (qtd. Pichois *idem*: 1011).

The traces of Poe’s “Raven” are evident in the Baudelaire poem. They are already in the letter to Hugo, as we have seen, when Baudelaire explains that his encounter with the suffering swan made him think of “all those who are deprived of something (*quelque chose*) that will never be found again.” The penultimate stanza of the second part of the poem formulates such irrevocable loss precisely: “[I think of] anyone who has lost that which cannot be retrieved / Never, Never.” Poe’s word “Nevermore” is echoed here, and for the same reason: like the lost Lenore in “The Raven,” *le cygne* is about what is irretrievably absent. But there is a difference: Baudelaire’s poem includes *things* and *places*, as well as people that are lost. Thus Hugo, Andromache, the Negress and the swan itself have

lost, not a lover, but their homelands. And thus the poet himself has lost the Paris he knew so well; he is surrounded by ruins of the past (the demolished streets and buildings to make way for Haussmann's new wide avenues), and the ruins of the future (the columns and fragments of stone and marble that will make for the ostentatious edifices in the new Paris of the Second Empire). The present, however, like that of the swan, is intolerable.¹³

Baudelaire's homeland is, in fact, the city of Paris, and he feels as exiled in the new one under construction as do the more literal exiles in places far from home.¹⁴ This sense of being a foreigner in what is supposed to be native soil produces what some critics have called *étrangeté* (or strangeness) in the poem, not unrelated to the Russian Formalists' *ostranenie*, or to what Brecht called the *Verfremdungseffekt*. Such strangeness is also close to Freud's notion of the Uncanny; the poet, in other words, is somewhere that is long familiar (Paris), and that is now unrecognizable to him. Hence the lines, "The old Paris no longer exists (the form of a city changes faster, alas! than the heart of a mortal)." The notion that the city

¹³ For a reading on Baudelaire and time in this regard, see my *Seeing Double* (2011), 208-28 ff.

¹⁴ The young Baudelaire had written a poem called "L'exilé" while at school; it was written in Latin and French. The verses won Baudelaire first prize in Latin poetry at the collège Louis-le-Grand in 1837. The poem is taken from Chateaubriand's *Le génie du Christianisme* (Part I, Book V, Chapter xiv). In that passage, Chateaubriand argues that the most moral of man's instincts is the love of country. The harder the climate, he continues, the greater the attachment to one's native soil. He then tells the story of "a Frenchman obliged to flee during the Terror." With his last remaining coins, the man buys a boat and, with his wife and two children, sails on the Rhine, fishing to stay alive and attempting to avoid being beaten by the xenophobic population. His only consolation was "at times to breathe air that had passed over his country." ([1866] *Le génie du Christianisme par M. Le Vicomte de Chateaubriand*. Tours: Alfred Mame et Fils, 78). The schoolboy Baudelaire renders this consolation as being more fragile (despite the addition of flowers): a *small* consolation remains, he writes, because "those in exile breathe air that *perhaps* caressed the flowers in the gardens of their native land" (*O.C.* 230; emphases mine). Thus the theme of exile was long in the poet's thoughts, and he was well versed in the works of Chateaubriand, another exile who longed for his homeland.

changes more than the human heart is reinforced in the opening of the poem's second part, which will lead to a list of the building blocks and fragments lying on the ground in preparation for building the new Paris: "Paris is changing! But nothing in my melancholy has moved!" After describing the debris that clutters Paris, the poet writes, "everything for me becomes allegory, and my beloved memories are heavier than rocks."

The construction sites in what will be the new Paris are then allegories of the weight of memory. Indeed, memories weigh the narrator of the poem down because he cannot escape them, any more than he can lift the melancholy that, in the face of so much change, is all that remains immovable, even heavier than the huge stones that surround him. The stones and rocks themselves, however, are the symptoms of change, while it is the poet's melancholy that, heavier still, roosts immovably, an internal version of Poe's Raven on the bust of Pallas. Baudelaire's final stanza refers to "the forest in which my mind is exiled," and where a memory (*Souvenir*) blows the hunter's horn. The poet's mind is hiding in the forest, but Memory will find its prey; it sounds the horn to signal that the quarry is near. The poet's mind will not escape, then, and will be hunted down by the inescapability of remembering. It is to be noted that, while the other figures of exile have to do with literal displacement, the poet's mind is described in purely metaphorical terms, since the exile is inward in this case, and thus abstract.

We are, then, far from the imagery of "Correspondances." In that famous sonnet, it will be recalled, man passes through a "forest of symbols," its trees "living pillars" that at times speak in obscure words and observe him with a familiar gaze. The forest of "Correspondances" is like a Celtic sacred grove, emitting runes that man is incapable of deciphering – but there is, somewhere, an innate, if pagan, sacredness. In the swan poem, however, the forest is in the mind, and it is the mind itself that attempts to hide in it, in

order to run from the hunter Memory, which will always succeed in reinserting itself into the poet's thought. The third line of the last stanza adds to the complexity: the poet thinks of sailors forgotten on an island – but in that case, being forgotten is a dreadful fate. What the sailors and the poet have in common is being exiled; but while the poet longs for amnesia (as it were), the sailors conversely hope desperately to be remembered. It is not here a question of the sacred, but rather the burden of memory and the inevitability of melancholy.

The swan, in the midst of these exiled figures, functions as the fulcrum of all the other exiles. It is the iconicization of despair and of being (to return to Freud) *not at home*. The poet is crossing the new Carousel – in full construction and emblematic of the old Paris that is disappearing – when he encounters the swan, that has escaped from its cage and is scratching and dragging its feathers through the rough ground. The image is reminiscent of the albatross in the poem of the same name (written in 1859, around the same time as the swan poem). Once on the ground, the albatrosses, “kings of the azure sky,” are clumsy and shamed, “Pitifully letting their large white wings / Drag next to them like oars.” The swan is graceful on the water, and it too is awkward on land. Both are snatched from their natural surroundings – the albatross by sailors, and the swan by merchants selling their wares in a crowded Parisian square. In both images, the dirt of the ship (the albatross) and the dust of Paris under construction (the swan) are contrasted with the plumage of the birds, trailing on the ground; filth versus purity, in other words. The poet will be likened to the albatross: he too is the prince of the clouds; he too is “[e]xiled on the ground in the midst of taunts”; he too has “giant wings that prevent him from walking.” Thus the albatross, like the poet and the swan, is a figure of exile, displaced and as if imprisoned in territory not its own.

But the swan is more than that. While the albatross functions as a simile (“The Poet is similar to the prince of the clouds. . .”), the swan is an encounter that serves to stimulate the poet’s memory; it is the allegory of mourning a lost home, a sentiment that will be echoed by the poet who longs for the Paris he once knew. The swan crystallizes this sense of not being at home; and the other figures of exile, reinforcing as they do the notion of homesickness, add weight to the despair born of homelessness that permeates the poem. The swan mimes the gestures that are natural on its “beautiful native lake,” by rubbing its “palmed feet on the dry cobblestone”; by opening its beak to a stream without water; by “nervously bathing its wings in the powder.” But in the context of a busy Paris market, those gestures are both senseless and dislocated. In this sense, the swan is like the poet who walks as if in the old Paris, while being constantly reminded that he is in the new one, wherein his usual gestures no longer belong and are nothing more than the symptoms of futile dislocations.

Like the Raven, the swan also speaks. The poem does not mention the legend that the swan sings just before it dies, but the implication is clear. With its “heart full” of its native lake, the swan speaks words of reproach to the natural elements that are lacking in the dry dust of the new city: “Water, when will you finally rain? When will you thunder, lightning?” In the following stanza (the last of the first part of the poem), the poet sees the swan as “this unhappy creature, strange and fatal myth. . .” It looks at times at the sky (“like Ovid’s man”), which is “ironically and cruelly blue” (a line that Mallarmé will recast in his own poem, “L’azur”). The sky presses on the swan’s “convulsive neck” (again, there will be an echo of this in Mallarmé’s swan sonnet) and reaches out with its “grasping head” as if addressing its reproaches to God. Such reproaches, the reader already knows, are useless; the swan, like the poet, is condemned to exile and death. Whence, one

surmises, Hugo's recognition of the "abysses" that lie beneath the city's powdery ground on which the swan is caught. The poem, particularly in its second part, is filled with exclamation points, as if repeating the swan's inconsolable cries (for example: "Paris is changing!" or "worn away by a desire without respite!"). Like Jeremiah's lamentations, Baudelaire too cries for a city being destroyed; but the destructor is the hand of modernity.

Poe's Raven is a prophet that comes in from the cold (it is a "bleak December") to settle on the bust of Pallas in the student's luxurious rooms. By virtue of repetition, and as a result of the student's own masochistic questions, the Raven intones its word and thus makes the loss of Lenore a final and eternal one. As Poe himself says, in "The Philosophy of Composition," the Raven becomes "emblematic" in the last two stanzas, which "pervade all the narrative." (GSW 541) But is only in "the very last line of the very last stanza," that the Raven becomes clearly emblematical of "*Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*" (*idem* 542). The Raven then, if we follow the definition of emblematical, is a symbol of mournful and endless memory.¹⁵

Baudelaire's swan, however, is not the symbol of memory; rather, the poet's chance encounter with that bird – and its suffering – triggers his memory of a series of exiles. The swan, in other words, is an outward manifestation and fulcrum of the poem's gradual trope of internal exile. The swan is then not a prophet, but rather a figuration of deterritorialization (to use Deleuze's term) – the swan's wild gestures make the poet's dislocation come into focus, and the poem's achievement is the clarity with which such dislocation (for the poet as well as the reader) comes into sharp view. Neither a prophet nor a symbol (nor an emblem), Baudelaire's swan is an allegory of

¹⁵ "Emblem," in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970: "a symbol linked pictorially with its referent."

the loss of native ground. Such a loss is as final as that of the lost Lenore, but Baudelaire manages to elicit melancholy (which was, it will be recalled, Poe's primary intent) as a symptom of modernity (the new Paris) rather than as a somewhat supernatural encounter with a Raven and the death of a beautiful woman. The loss of the old Paris is made explicit by the swan's desperate gestures. There is an autobiographical aspect to Baudelaire's poem, as there is to Poe's, but Baudelaire's lyrical "I" writes the destruction, not only of a city, but of a way of life and of being-in-the-world as well. It is in this sense that Baudelaire has performed a shift in modern poetry: modernity, with its new urban centers, crowds and bulldozers, has destroyed a way of life for the poet, whose mind hides in a forest to escape the inevitability of dislocation, and the sorrowful burden of memory.

The swan externalizes what the poet experiences; the other exiles, including those in the last stanza, accumulate to emphasize the leitmotif of mental exile from the triumph of industrialization and the bourgeois capitalism that supports it. The poet's writing of the modern city becomes another gesture of despair, like the swan's convulsive neck and vain entreaties to some sort of god. It will be noted that the swan's beak is not in the poet's heart, unlike in Poe. Rather, it is the swan's heart that is full of melancholy when it speaks its agonized pleas. The trope of the swan, then, functions as a talisman of the ills of modernity and of the poet's ensuing melancholy. So too, the rocks and stones that surround the poet become analogies of the heaviness of that melancholy: everything becomes an allegory for the insistence of modernity, as the poet tries in vain to escape the memory of the past.

* * *

Poe's Raven is a bird of ill-omen, and the poem tells the story of a mind torturing itself and watching itself go beyond the limits of the real, into (the reader surely surmises) self-destruction. We might say that its gothic tone is the offshoot of Romanticism, steeped in the imagination and in individual subjectivity, pushing toward a vague supernatural that defines, among other aspects, the gothic and its ancestor, the German fairy tale. The hallucinatory aspects of "The Raven" are made palpable, such that "some undercurrent, however indefinite of meaning" that Poe calls for, is attained. Yvor Winters quipped (voicing a common American opinion) that Poe was second-rate, one of many whose gift for language is inadequate to their task. This view is no doubt the result of a differing notion of poetics today – what was hugely popular in Poe's day sounds somewhat corny to the modern ear. That change in taste begins, as we have seen, with the verse of Baudelaire.

Poe wrote that "When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect. . ." (GSW 532). His raven is meant to provide such an effect, and to make the reader dream of "glories beyond the grave." Not so Baudelaire's swan – a real animal on the dusty street, triggering the poet's memories of the lost, forgotten and homesick. Baudelaire sees in his swan the consequence of an unforgiving, insistent and triumphant modernity. He does not strive for a melancholic tone (as does Poe) nor speak of his own sterility (that was rarely his problem and not often mentioned in his *oeuvre*). Nor does Baudelaire (unlike Mallarmé, his disciple) question the ability of language to convey. It is rather the paralyzing and immovable presence of an inescapable melancholy that Baudelaire confronts in the city; a melancholy that the suffering and exiled swan both embodies and allegorizes for the poet of modernity.

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O CÓMICO E A VIOLÊNCIA: A AUTORIDADE DA VÍTIMA

Antônio Sousa Ribeiro

Resumo: O artigo propõe-se contribuir para a análise do problema da relação entre o cômico e a violência, concedendo especial atenção a textos autobiográficos, em particular da literatura do Holocausto, e ao uso do cômico e do grotesco como modos de recusa do estatuto da vítima.

Palavras-chave: violência; holocausto; vítima; cômico.

Abstract: The article is a contribution to an analysis of the problem of the relationship between the comic and violence, with special emphasis on autobiographical texts, in particular in the framework of Holocaust literature, and on the use of the comic and the grotesque as ways of refusing the status of the victim.

Keywords: violence; holocaust; victim; comic.

Onde há violência, há vítimas da violência, isto é, seres humanos em cujos corpos a violência se inscreveu e que, de muito diferentes maneiras, terão de transportar consigo essa inscrição num futuro irremediavelmente marcado pela experiência do sofrimento. Como escreve a filósofa francesa Simone Weil no seu grande ensaio “*L'Iliade ou le poème de la force*”, a violência, por definição, reifica radicalmente as suas vítimas, degrada-as à condição de simples objetos. No capítulo sobre a tortura do seu livro *Jenseits von Schuld und Sühne (Para além de culpa e expiação)*, Jean Améry demonstra essa reificação de um modo extremamente incisivo, definindo a tortura como a “negação radical do outro” (52) e vendo nela a completa “transformação do ser humano em carne” (*idem*: 50):

A pessoa torturada nunca mais deixa de se admirar de que tudo a que, conforme a inclinação, se possa chamar a sua alma ou o seu espírito ou a sua consciência ou a sua identidade se desvanece quando as articulações estalam e se estilhaçam. (*idem*: 57-58)¹

A vítima sobrevivente encontra-se numa situação paradoxal: por um lado, tem de reivindicar o estatuto de vítima, tem de assumir a condição moral da vítima, para usar a expressão de Didier Fassin (Fassin e Rechtman), pois só assim pode exigir o direito a ser indemnizada, encontrar reconhecimento e manter viva a memória da violência sofrida; por outro lado, é forçada, ao mesmo tempo, a pôr em questão o próprio conceito de vítima, a recusar a fixação no papel da vítima, na medida em que este papel implique a redução permanente ao estado da reificação, como objecto de compaixão ou como alguém que, de algum modo, está irrevogavelmente preso por toda a eternidade ao ponto do sofrimento experimentado. Por

¹ Salvo indicação em contrário, as traduções são minhas.

outras palavras, trata-se de reconquistar uma posição de sujeito, de reivindicar, em sentido literal, um estatuto de autoridade e, assim, afirmar de novo a identidade posta em causa pelo acto da violência. Como pode ler-se em Imre Kertész acerca do impulso motor da sua escrita:

. . . eu queria conquistar poder sobre a realidade que, por sua vez – de maneira muito efectiva – me tinha em seu poder. Eu queria sair da minha eterna condição de objecto e transformar-me em sujeito, queria nomear eu próprio, em vez de ser nomeado. (61)

Parafraseando a pergunta famosa de Gayatri Spivak sobre se “o subalterno pode falar?”, poderia perguntar-se, neste contexto, se a vítima pode falar. É sabido como Spivak formula a sua pergunta em relação ao sujeito dominado no quadro da relação colonial enquanto relação de violência ou, mais exactamente, em relação à mulher colonizada, duplamente oprimida. Entretanto, sabemos bem que tanto o/a subalterno/a como a vítima podem muito bem falar – afinal, vivemos, nas palavras de Annette Wieviorka, na “era da testemunha”. A questão decisiva a formular, porém, continua a ser a questão das condições, tanto de articulação como de recepção, em que pode processar-se esse falar. Estas condições exigem, nomeadamente, uma esfera pública em que o acto do testemunho possa esperar reciprocidade, isto é, pressupõem a disponibilidade dialógica para manter aberto um espaço de ressonância adequado para a voz – ou o grito – da vítima. Por outro lado, não são menos decisivas as modalidades da fala, isto é, essa voz tem de ser capaz de se articular de uma forma que a faça não só ser ouvida, mas também constitua efetivamente a autoridade da vítima no sentido atrás referido. Por outras palavras, levantam-se, neste contexto, questões que têm que ver com a retórica do testemunho e que, em aspetos essenciais, são também questões estéticas e estão

relacionadas em aspetos decisivos com estratégias discursivas que permitem, de diferentes modos, refratar e criar distância relativamente à experiência do sofrimento e da violência. Neste aspeto, a vítima deve exhibir verdadeiramente aquela “altivez do sofredor” de que fala Nietzsche na Nona Secção de *Para além de bem e mal* – num passo que, de forma inquietante, quase parece descrever a situação do sobrevivente de Auschwitz:

A altivez espiritual e o nojo de todo o ser humano que sofreu profundamente. . . , a certeza arrepiante, de que ele está totalmente repassado e impregnado, de, devido ao seu sofrimento, *saber mais* do que os mais inteligentes e sábios podem saber, de estar familiarizado e ter estado “em casa” em muitos mundos distantes e terríveis dos quais “vós nada sabeis!” . . . esta altivez espiritual silenciosa do sofredor, este orgulho do escolhido do conhecimento, do “iniciado”, do quase sacrificado, acha necessárias todas as formas de disfarce, para se defender do contacto com mãos atrevidas e compassivas e, em geral, de tudo o que não seja seu igual na dor. (225)

Entre as “formas de disfarce”, isto é, entre as estratégias retóricas que, por um lado, geram distância entre a vítima e as suas próprias experiências e, por outro, mantêm presente o abismo intransponível entre ela e aqueles que não partilharam essas experiências, a dimensão do cómico ocupa um lugar talvez inesperado, mas irrecusável. No plano estrutural, o cómico pressupõe sempre a latência de outras possibilidades do real e, nessa medida, através da produção de dissonância, implica um questionar da condição compacta e, aparentemente, imutável desse real. Mas será que o cómico pode ser um instrumento adequado lá onde, como em situações de violência extrema, essa condição compacta parece insuperável e total? Na verdade, o valor de posição do cómico na representação da violência constitui

um tema entre todos difícil e delicado com que, até ao momento, a investigação só se tem ocupado de modo muito lateral. Não obstante, a questão da interligação entre o cómico e a violência não pode ser descartada, pode ser abordada a partir de diferentes exemplos marcantes e, nos últimos anos, tem vindo a merecer atenção crescente da investigação, incluindo da investigação sobre o Holocausto, como revela, por exemplo, toda a discussão em torno do filme de Robert Benigni, *La vita è bella*, que, na verdade, representa uma espécie de comédia sobre o tema do Holocausto. Mas também relativamente a obras anteriores, como, para citar apenas alguns exemplos, *Jakob der Lügner* (*Jakob, o mentiroso*), de Jurek Becker, *Der Nazi und der Friseur* (*O nazi e o cabeleireiro*), de Edgar Hilsenrath ou *The King of the Jews* (*O rei dos Judeus*), de Leslie Epstein, a questão do cómico se coloca, por vezes de modo drástico.

É sabido como nos campos e, sobretudo, nos guetos, apesar de ou, talvez, devido às terríveis condições de vida, o humor não deixava de fazer parte da vida quotidiana. Emanuel Ringelblum, o historiador judaico que, em condições desesperadas, se tornou cronista dos guetos polacos, incluiu nas suas notas sobre o gueto de Varsóvia uma coleção de anedotas que circulavam no gueto (Des Pres 1988). O humor, incluindo o auto-humor, é, neste contexto, uma estratégia de sobrevivência, faz parte da astúcia dos que estão radicalmente privados de direitos e que, dessa forma, num plano simbólico, conseguem fugir ao mundo totalitário da violência nazi e manter aberta a possibilidade, mesmo precária, da dissonância. Mas será que o riso é de todo em todo possível quando se trata da representação do Holocausto? Num ensaio dos anos 80 sobre “Holocaust Laughter”, Terrence des Pres lembra que existe uma espécie de regra de decoro que exige que “o Holocausto seja abordado como um acontecimento solene ou mesmo sagrado, com uma seriedade que não admite qualquer reacção que possa obscurecer a sua enormidade ou desonrar os

seus mortos” (217). Nestes termos, o código da representação do Holocausto exige que seja lançado um tabu sobre o riso. Todavia, na história da escrita sobre o Holocausto, este tabu tem sido muitas vezes quebrado, justamente em textos da autoria das vítimas e de sobreviventes diretos ou indiretos.

Terei de me limitar a abordar o problema a partir de alguns poucos exemplos. Uma questão essencial começa por ser a de saber não apenas “como é que se gera o riso” e, em concomitância, “quem se ri?”, mas também quem tem um direito legítimo ao riso. Em *A Investigação (Die Ermittlung)*, de Peter Weiss (Weiss, 1976), um drama-documento baseado na montagem literal de passos das atas do processo de Auschwitz de 1963-65, sem dúvida uma obra canónica da literatura do Holocausto, surgem momentos de riso. Mas quem se ri são os acusados, que contam uns aos outros anedotas sobre os sobreviventes, não as testemunhas, cujas declarações se processam estritamente no registo da seriedade profunda da recordação da violência sofrida. Neste caso, portanto, o humor é utilizado como instrumento de caracterização da abjecção moral dos criminosos. Não se espera, em conformidade, que o leitor ou o espetador se ria, pelo contrário, a expectativa de receção visa inequivocamente a empatia com a seriedade do destino de sofrimento das vítimas. O mesmo acontece em muitos, seguramente a maioria, dos “disfarces” da experiência do Holocausto. Mesmo quando, como na novela gráfica *Maus* de Art Spiegelman, se recorre a meios tradicionais do cómico, no caso a forma do “comic book”, na vertente da história de animais ilustrada – como é sabido, todas as personagens sofrem o estranhamento da representação como animais, os judeus como ratos e os nazis como gatos – não se visa um efeito cómico. Em *Maus*, a história do pai de Spiegelman, um sobrevivente de Auschwitz, e, num segundo nível, também a história da relação difícil do filho com o destino do pai, não há, na verdade, nada que explore a possibilidade do riso, embora a moldura narrativa pressuponha a

dimensão do grotesco e, na narração, não deixe de haver momentos com acentuado potencial cómico.

Em contrapartida, é possível aduzir exemplos em que o cómico constitui um aspeto essencial e é justamente em relação a esses exemplos que a pergunta “a quem é lícito rir?” se impõe de uma forma muito particular. O conto *Mutters Courage* (*A coragem da mãe*), do escritor de origem húngara George Tabori, que sobreviveu aos anos do nazismo no exílio enquanto o pai morria em Auschwitz, narra a história da sobrevivência da mãe do autor em Budapeste. De um modo que se suporia totalmente inverosímil, Elsa Tabori, que, presa numa rua de Budapeste por guardas SS, é levada para um local de detenção para ser deportada, consegue representar de modo convincente o papel de alguém detentor de um passaporte protetor da Cruz Vermelha sueca, só casualmente esquecido em casa. A história é tida como boa e Elsa é libertada. Contra todas as regras da precaução, a mãe de Tabori estava, como era seu costume semanal, a caminho da tarde de jogo de cartas que de modo nenhuma queria dispensar. Uma vez escapada ao perigo mortal pela sua astúcia – e por uma sorte indescritível – consegue chegar ainda a tempo a casa das amigas, onde as amadas cartas já estão à sua espera.

Em *Mutters Courage*, como noutros textos de Tabori sobre o Holocausto, à cabeça a narrativa, depois transformada em drama, *Mein Kampf*, uma sátira a Hitler, não faltam pormenores cómicos, de sugestão surreal, muitas vezes em tom de farsa. Na verdade, os textos de Tabori fazem rir, ou pelo menos, repetidamente, sorrir. A narrativa sobre a mãe foi passada ao cinema em 1994, com realização de Michael Verhoeven, tendo o filme sido estreado em 1995. O verbete no *Lexikon des internationalen Films* é extremamente relevante para o problema que tenho vindo a tratar:

Primeira “comédia negra alemã sobre o Holocausto”, cujos momentos grotescos e de pura farsa não escandalizam, sabendo-se

da autoria “judaica” do guião. Impressiona, tanto como tentativa séria de pôr a nu o mecanismo complicado da máquina de destruição como também no esforço de dar forma ao inconcebível. (Katholisches Institut für Medieninformation, 1995)

Como se vê, da perspetiva desta obra de referência, os momentos cómicos do filme só podem ser justificados pelo facto de o autor ser judeu. Pressupõe-se implicitamente que um autor não judeu não teria direito ao uso do cómico no tratamento de um tema assim. Traça-se, assim, com clareza uma linha de fronteira que coloca questões de muito difícil resposta. Pode bem formular-se objeções ao traçar dessa linha de fronteira, mas ela é irrecusável: se se recordar a que é talvez a sentença mais famosa de Tabori, “der kürzeste deutsche Witz ist Auschwitz”² –, justifica-se, sem dúvida, perguntar se esta insondável frase, em si mesma dificilmente suportável, seria de todo em todo aceitável se não soubéssemos que o seu autor é um judeu cujo pai morreu no campo de extermínio.

A epígrafe a *Mein Kampf*, de Tabori, oferece uma pista importante de compreensão. De modo claramente programático, a epígrafe cita os dois versos do epigrama “Die Scherzhaften” (“Os joviais”), de Hölderlin: “Sempre a brincar e gracejar? Outra coisa *não podeis!* Ó amigos! Fere-me / Isto a alma, pois só desesperados a tal são compelidos.” (1991: 5). Só desesperados a tal são compelidos: através desta epígrafe, o cómico é justificado como instrumento necessário para aqueles a quem nenhum outro meio já resta. É, assim, sublinhado enfaticamente como signo da possibilidade de sentido numa situação que parece excluir esta possibilidade.

Se recuarmos à época imediatamente posterior à Primeira Guerra Mundial, encontramos esta questão da legitimidade do riso explicitamente tematizada num lugar central. Estou a referir-me à defesa

² A sentença é intraduzível: “A mais curta anedota (Witz) alemã é Auschwitz”.

do olhar satírico no prefácio de Karl Kraus à sua “tragédia em cinco atos com prólogo e epílogo”, *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*Os últimos dias da humanidade*). Este prefácio está escrito da perspectiva da voz satírica autoral. Kraus designou a guerra repetidamente como “Carnaval trágico” e, em conformidade, o tratamento satírico do tema neste drama incomensurável evidencia permanentemente traços marcadamente cômicos – na verdade, o drama, a meu ver, pode ser visto como uma obra-prima de entrelaçamento entre os gêneros clássicos da sátira patética e da sátira irônica. No prefácio, partindo da citação da fala final de Horatio em *Hamlet*, Kraus assume explicitamente a máscara da testemunha fiel à missão de “narrar com verdade” os horrores sofridos. É este papel de testemunha que confere ao autor satírico – e só a ele – o direito ao riso:

O humor não é senão a acusação lançada a si próprio por alguém que não enlouqueceu à ideia de ter suportado testemunhar as coisas deste tempo no seu perfeito juízo. Além dele, que transfere para a posteridade a vergonha de em tal ter tido parte, ninguém mais tem direito a esse humor. Os contemporâneos, que consentiram que acontecesse o que aqui fica registado, renunciem ao direito de rir, em prol do dever de chorar. (17)

O conceito de posteridade desempenha neste contexto um papel fundamental, já que aponta para a possibilidade de que, num futuro que não deixa de ser incerto, possam existir possibilidades de compreensão que vão ao encontro da intenção do autor satírico de entender e denunciar a Guerra Mundial como um acontecimento cujo absurdo não é acessível apenas com a seriedade do *pathos*, antes tem também de ser posto a nu com os meios do cômico. Neste sentido, aquele riso a que apenas a posteridade terá talvez direito não representa simplesmente uma descarga emocional ou uma diversão sem consequências: é, sim, parte de um processo de construção de

conhecimento complexo sobre um acontecimento que supera radicalmente toda a medida humana.

Regressemos à literatura do Holocausto, em cujo contexto, como tínhamos já visto, se colocam questões muito semelhantes. Se considerarmos uma obra entre todas canónica como *Se questo è un uomo*, de Primo Levi, poderá parecer à primeira vista que o autor não consegue escapar à fixação na sua experiência de Auschwitz. No seu breve prefácio, Levi sublinha ser desnecessário indicar que não existe no livro nada que seja inventado. A obra foi escrita pouco tempo após a libertação e foi publicada logo em Outubro de 1947, embora apenas tivesse obtido ressonância depois de a poderosa editora Einaudi ter, em 1958, feito sair uma nova edição. É indiscutível que o autor, enquanto pessoa, ao trazer à memória o que sofreu, revive todos os horrores do campo de extermínio; toda a narrativa está repassada de luto e indignação. Mas o escritor que está a compor um livro de memórias constrói, ao mesmo tempo, uma distância em relação ao vivido que lhe permite assumir, não apenas o papel da vítima, mas também da testemunha e do acusador. As pequenas vitórias no quotidiano do campo que vão sendo narradas e que permitem a sobrevivência, através da obediência absoluta aos códigos do campo e da adoção dos comportamentos adequados, são narradas de uma forma que faz com que o carácter de estado de exceção da aparente normalidade se mantenha sempre presente. Esta dissonância contém um potencial cómico que Levi não sublinha ao longo do relato, mas que se exprime ao fio deste na forma de uma atitude irónica que, apesar de muitíssimo discreta, é bem palpável. Pretende-se que o leitor reconheça como o quotidiano do campo é terrível, mas, ao mesmo tempo, também absurdo e mesmo, por vezes, ridículo. Assim, por exemplo, na primeira parte do capítulo “O último”, fala-se de uma “menaschka”, isto é, um recipiente para sopa toscamente improvisado, que tem o aspecto de um “objecto neolítico”. O narrador salienta em que medida a simples posse deste

recipiente elevou o seu estatuto social no campo: ele representa literalmente “um diploma de nobreza, é um símbolo heráldico” (Levi 129). Justamente o gesto discreto de auto-ironia aqui e noutros passos do relato permite ao narrador construir para si próprio uma espécie de posição de soberania, que está em contradição com a situação humilhante e desumana que está a ser narrada.

Gestos semelhantes de ironia e auto-ironia encontram-se noutros relatos autobiográficos, por exemplo, em *Sem destino*, de Imre Kertész. Limitar-me-ei, todavia, a um exemplo particularmente marcante, o romance *Eine Reise (Uma viagem)*, de H. G. Adler. *Uma viagem* – concluído em 1951, mas publicado apenas em 1962 pela Bibliotheca Christiana, uma editora pequena pouco representativa – é um romance autobiográfico: conta a deportação de Praga do próprio Adler, juntamente com a mulher e outros membros da família, nenhum dos quais sobreviveu. O fundamento autobiográfico surge, no entanto, no romance, submetido a uma forte lógica de estranhamento. A estação principal da viagem é o campo de Theresienstadt, que recebe no romance o nome fictício irónico de Ruhenthal.³ Outros locais recebem igualmente nomes fictícios, cujo uso, por si só, mostra que o romance não está orientado no sentido do testemunho directo: trata-se de um texto muito complexo, narrado através de técnicas refinadas de escrita modernista, que poderão fazer recordar o chamado “realismo mágico” pela acentuação da natureza fantasmagórica de coisas e situações. Peter Suhrkamp terá dito uma vez que, enquanto fosse vivo, este romance jamais seria publicado na Alemanha.⁴ Desconheço os motivos desta tirada, mas é fácil especular que a irritação do poderoso editor não pode deixar

³ Literalmente, “vale do repouso”.

⁴ O episódio é referido por Jeremy Adler no seu posfácio à nova edição do romance (1999: 310).

de estar relacionada como a forma desconcertantemente distanciada como a deportação e o extermínio são narrados no romance.

Noutros estudos, debrucei-me com mais demora sobre o romance de Adler (Ribeiro, 2008; 2013). No presente contexto, limitar-me-ei a sublinhar o modo como este romance polifónico trabalha do princípio ao fim com os meios do grotesco como estratégia principal de estranhamento. Veja-se o exemplo seguinte:

O crematório é prático e higiénico. É uma das mais belas e úteis invenções modernas, que não apenas o espírito, mas também o sentimento refinado de um coração esclarecido concebeu, para se fazer depressa o que tem de ser feito e poupar muito trabalho aos coveiros. Os fornos podem funcionar a óleo, mas, no estado actual da ciência, é aconselhável o aquecimento com energia eléctrica. (210-11)

O carácter chocante desta descrição é calculado ao pormenor pela voz narrativa. *Uma viagem* representa, na verdade, o exemplo singular de um romance sobre o Holocausto em que as palavras alemão, judeu ou campo não ocorrem uma única vez. A composição polifónica da narrativa e a constante refração dos acontecimentos através da visão e do comentário gera a imagem de um mundo fantasmagórico que, no seu conjunto – de modo reforçado pela inversão distópica do *topos* da viagem – se constitui como signo de um desenraizamento radical e, assim, no domínio da ficção, constrói perante os olhos do leitor uma imagem do Holocausto, que nunca é nomeado enquanto tal, como uma sequência de imagens de pesadelo. Esta estratégia de ficcionalização assume recorrentemente traços grotescos e surreais, muito próximos da dimensão do cómico. Poderia dizer-se, em resumo, que a resposta de Adler à pergunta sobre a possibilidade da representação da violência absoluta é, sem dúvida, inteiramente afirmativa, mas que essa representação só se

afigura viável se a testemunha como sujeito sofredor, como vítima, se retirar para segundo plano e for capaz de encontrar ou inventar modos de objetivação da sua experiência assentes numa lógica de distância e estranhamento que não hesita em utilizar os recursos do cômico e do grotesco para se constituir enquanto tal. Assim, este romance enfileira na linha daqueles textos que, segundo Terrence Des Pres, “se recusam a tomar o Holocausto nos seus próprios termos avassaladores, embora a base de que dependem seja uma memória muito nítida de acontecimentos reais” (220).

Em obras da chamada segunda geração, como, por exemplo, os romances dos autores austríacos Robert Schindel ou Doron Rabinovici, encontram-se sem dificuldade processos de estranhamento análogos. Em geral, como terá ficado claro, a questão difícil que me propus abordar só pode ter respostas simultaneamente nos planos ético e estético, que, neste contexto, se revelam verdadeiramente inseparáveis. A questão da legitimidade ética conflui, neste contexto, com a capacidade de gerar respostas credíveis no plano estético, isto é, dito de outro modo, o processo de constituição de autoridade que permite à vítima, como referi a abrir, pôr em causa um estatuto de menoridade hetero-atribuído e afirmar a sua autonomia como sujeito depende por inteiro da capacidade de construção de um universo retórico em que a memória viva do sofrimento se articule com dimensões de distância e estranhamento. O que implica que a pergunta, entre todas difícil, sobre se a dimensão do cômico poderá ser adequada à abordagem de situações de violência extrema não consinta respostas em geral, antes tenha sempre de ser aferida a partir da especificidade de cada caso particular.

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INTERRUPTION: PREPOSTEROUS READING OF MARIA IRENE RAMALHO DE SOUSA SANTOS

Max Statkiewicz

Resumo: O conceito de “interrupção” de Maria Irene Ramalho Santos tem como objetivo determinar a relação entre a literatura e o mundo. A singularidade da sua perspectiva reside no facto de questionar de forma radical a visão aristotélica tradicional, recusando-se a efetuar uma separação entre a literatura e a história. A interrupção funde o artístico e o político/histórico, ambos radicados na linguagem: “o que não pode ser dito é uma *não-coisa*”. A poesia é “fala pura”, mas as coisas também são “ditas” no diálogo entre a poesia e o pensamento. A um tempo continuando e interrompendo a tradição interruptiva do *entretien infini* de Maurice Blanchot, Maria Irene Ramalho Santos exalta a poesia no seu diálogo “pre-póster” com Coleridge, Pessoa (e os seus vários heterónimos), Rich, saíz e muitos outros, conferindo uma excecional dignidade à atividade da crítica literária.

Palavras-chave: interrupção; pre-póster; Pessoa; saíz; diálogo; poesia; pensamento.

Abstract: Maria Irene Ramalho Santos' "interruption" attempts to determine the relationship between literature and the world. The distinctiveness of her view consists in the fact that it radically questions the traditional Aristotelian view, and refuses to separate literature and history. "Interruption" brings together artistic and political/historical considerations, which are rooted in language: "if things cannot be said, they are *no-things*." The things are "purely spoken" in poetry, but they are also "said" in the dialogue between poetry and thought. Continuing, and interrupting, the interruptive tradition of Maurice Blanchot's *entretien infini*, Maria Irene Ramalho Santos exalts poetry in her "pre-posterous" dialogue with Coleridge, Pessoa (with his heteronyms), Rich, saíz, and with many others, bestowing at the same time an exceptional dignity upon the work of criticism.

Keywords: interruption; pre-posterous; Pessoa; saíz; dialogue; poetry; thought.

Aristotle's famous claim that poetry does not register the events that did occur (τὰ γινόμενα) but rather considers "the *kinds* of things that might occur and are possible in terms of probability or necessity" (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον) was largely accepted for a long time as a valid distinction between literature and history (1451b 5-6).¹ To be sure, Aristotle's ἱστορία is not exactly the modern, say Ranke's, *Geschichte*, and his ποίησις is not exactly poetry in the modern sense, but the rapprochement

¹ The optative with ἂν (ἂν γένοιτο) expresses potentiality, a future possibility; see Herbert, 407f.

between the two is perhaps not illegitimate, and certainly legitimate is the problematization of the relationship between the fictional world of a poetic work and the world of the writer and the reader; and it is legitimate to ask what Aristotle “could have thought” about this relationship.

The world of the writer, the reader, and the work does not need to be one and the same world, of course, but still there needs to be some common experience if the work of fiction is to be relevant. The ancient Greek word for this commonality of experience was μίμησις or imitation, possibly “representation” (as some – perhaps influenced by Eric Auerbach’s book – translate Aristotle’s μίμησις) (Stephen Halliwell, *The Poetics of Aristotle* 37). Other modern words for this relationship would be “aestheticization” (Oscar Wilde), *Verklärung* or “transfiguration” (Friedrich Nietzsche), “defamiliarization” (Viktor Shklovsky’s *остранение*, Bertolt Brecht’s *Verfremdung*), “clarification” (Leon Golden), “prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration” (Paul Ricœur), etc. Irene Ramalho Santos’ “interruption” belongs to these attempts to determine the relationship between literature and the world. The distinctiveness of her view consists in the fact that it radically questions the traditional Aristotelian view, and refuses to separate literature and history. Indeed, and perhaps paradoxically, interruption is what brings together the artistic and political/historical considerations. Ramalho Santos calls the “unreal reality” that interrupts poetic inspiration in the idealist sense of the romantic tradition, “politics”: to be sure, not in the sense of the politicians’ politics, but rather in the Aristotelian sense of the communal determination of the human being, or in the Heideggerian sense of being-in-the-world as the most proper characteristic of human *Dasein*.

Anankē or political necessity, writes Ramalho Santos, re-interpreting Aristotle’s τὸ ἀναγκαῖον (and also his more properly rhetorical εἰκός), “by bringing the political to break in upon the poet’s unifying

imagination”, in fact “accounts for the poetical” (222). Thus the apparent gap between the general (τὸ καθόλου), the domain of philosophy and, by extension, poetry, on the one hand, and the singular (τὸ καθ’ ἑκάστων), the domain of history and politics, on the other hand, is shown to be just that: apparent (Aristotle 1451b9-10).² Language itself is both general and singular in its *poietic* nature. It resides both in the verisimilitude of the general and in the necessity of the singular; no region of being can escape the régime of language: “when words break of / no thing may be,” says Stephan George; and Ramalho Santos: “if things cannot be said, they are *no-things*” (230; cf Heidegger “The Nature of Language” 60-61; “Das Wesen der Sprache” 163). And the naming of things does not depend, not entirely, on the poet. Poet himself/herself has to be named; and this naming is not obvious in the epoch of depersonalization (*Entpersönlichung*) (cf. Friedrich 36ff.; de Man 171f). Fernando Pessoa’s heteronyms: Alberto Caeiro, Ricardo Reis, Álvaro de Campos, and others – as well as the “orthonymic Pessoa” – problematize the naming of the subject of the poem; their “mental origin” lies in Pessoa’s “persistent and organic tendency ... to depersonalization and simulation,” as he himself affirms in one of those statements that may refer to both the ethical and the theatrical sense of his proper name (Pessoa 7). Ramalho Santos shows how some of the heteronyms are further differentiated according to the state of health or sickness (which is, she says, “the rudest form of self-interruption”), and she calls this elaborated world of *personae* “the most daring dramatization of interruption as a poetic strategy” and “the most accomplished decentering or even suspension of the subject in modernist poetry,” even though, or perhaps all the more because Alberto Caeiro’s self-

² Here lies the main difference between the Aristotelian and the Heideggerian conception of experience and truth; for Lacoue-Labarthe, the poetic experience is quintessentially singular (*Poetry As Experience* 47/71 *et passim*; *La poésie comme expérience* 69).

-interruptive disease attempts to question the very notion of poetic depersonalization and disengagement (Ramalho Santos 237-238).

Maurice Blanchot had already used the notion of *l'interruption* in order to question the traditional interpretation of Aristotle's ποιήσις, but he also focused on the *poietic* nature of human intercourse as such in the form of infinite conversation, *l'entretien infini* (*The Infinite Conversation* 75ff; *L'entretien infini* 106ff). Only such an interruptive dialogue can protect against all "terrible monologues." A dialogue between poets or between poetry and thought is privileged precisely because of its *poietic*, and at the same time interruptive nature. Ramalho Santos' staging of a dialogue between poets can be inscribed in this project of a "dialogue between poetry and thought", which Heidegger proclaimed to be the task of thinking and of poetry, of the thinking of poetry (*On the Way to Language* 161; *Unterwegs zur Sprache* 38f). Far from dispersing the power of language, such communal interruptive exchange intensifies it. Referring to António Ramos Rosa's notion of poetry as "the intact", and to Adrienne Rich's notion of poetry as "a concentration of the power of language", Ramalho Santos affirms that "the poetical needs the interruption of the political fully to ground itself as holding the power of language intact" (223). The power of language does not consist in the artistic or theoretical mastery, but rather in its interruptive dialogue: not a masterful, rhetorical discourse, but a conversation with its wording, silencing, waiting, rewording; in Paul Celan's and Büchner's memorable image, not the exalted speeches of Camille, Danton, Fabre, and the others about art (*Von der Kunst ist gut reden*),³ but Lucile's sensuous and political word-act-step: "*Es lebe der König*" (Celan "Der Meridian": 189; "Meridian": 40).⁴

³ "It feels good to talk about art," Celan, *Selected Poems* 402.

⁴ Celan, *Collected Prose* 40: "Long live the king!".

Although less dramatic than Celan's and Lucile's "counter-word" (*Gegenwort*), Ramalho Santos' and Hanni Ossot's "husband, cat, and kitchen" perform a similar interruptive function; if they are less spectacular, less obviously political, it is precisely because Ramalho Santos intends to include the every-day, the domestic (the "feminine") sphere into the realm of the political; in this way, the interruption is all the more striking. For what both Lucile and Hanni Ossot interrupt is not so much art as technique, as device (Skhlovsky's прием), but Art – *ab Kunst*, Celan says – a romantic idea of inspiration, of genius, a belief in an exceptional nature of the poetic utterance. However, poetry is not a privileged kind of language, writes Ramalho Santos, not in the sense of being invulnerable to the dangers of the every-day flattening, to the "apparently smooth course of conventionally spoken life," to the interruptive intrusion of a "person on business from Porlock," famously breaking up Coleridge's vision of the palace of Kubla Khan. This, however, becomes apparent only through interruption, be it in the form of a gnawing worm, as in Alberto Pimenta's exemplary case. Pimenta's "cuneiform song (before and after the worm)" [*canção cuneiforme (antes e depois de Ibe dar o bicho)*] is indeed an excellent illustration of a preposterous, before-and-after mode of interruption (232f).

prospero saíz's magnificent long poem *the bird of nothing* epitomizes for Ramalho Santos the poetic mode of interruption on an epic scale. Its first line, CaeSurA, could function as its interpretive subtitle; *the bird of nothing* interrupts both the "idea of poetry as an absolute" (in the tradition of Shelley) and the "idea of the poem as the nation" (in the tradition of Whitman). It is "the epic of American consciousness made problematic" (247). *the bird of nothing* is also an interruption of the Aristotelian distinction between the general (τὸ καθόλου) of philosophy and the singular (τὸ καθ'ἑκάστων) of history. The "bird" of the poem disperses into so many kinds of the common and less common, mythical, poetic, domestic and seemingly foreign, kinds

of birds; there are still “kinds”, but their generic unity is “nullified”. As the French *oiseau*, as Derrida’s *animot*, saíz’s “bird” should sound just like the plural (*oiseaux*, *animaux*) sounds. The same process of interrupted generality marks the long list of “american” rivers:

[and arizona a little papago spring
and connecticut a mohegan long river
and the ottawa’s big lake michigan
and mnisota the dakota’s cloudy water
and the big river mississippi of the illinois
and the missouri for those of the dugout canoe
and the mighty flat river nibdhathka of the omaha
and allegheny-ohio the beautiful river of the seneca
and the tanasi little river of the cherokee
and the algonquian river name wisconsin
and the big river-flats wyoming of the delaware] (148)⁵

Of course, the list is “long” only to those impatient to arrive at a poetic/philosophical *logos*, not to those who, like Santos and Lacoue-Labarthe, believe in the essential singularity of poetry. saíz’s “and” (here and elsewhere in the poem) is not exactly a comma, certainly not a mark of continuity, but precisely the mark of interruption; repeated at the beginning of each line, “and” is paratactic par excellence, resisting the Aristotelian *muthos* or *logos*, with its beginning, middle, and end – interruptive of the conventional naming, classifying, registering. Paradoxically perhaps, saíz’s poetry and Ramalho Santos’ interruptive/dialogical reading suggest a rereading of the poetic tradition, including the Homeric parataxes as a “preposterous” interruption of the Aristotelian tradition in the critical thought (“The poem *may* stand only insofar as it shuns poetics”, writes saíz in his

⁵ Quoted in *Atlantic Poets* 247.

poetic preface [v]). Poetic “singular plurality” appears all the more striking when set against (“interrupting”) this tradition. Extolling the poetic tradition, Ramalho Santos’ interruptive dialogue bestows at the same time an exceptional dignity upon the work of criticism.

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IV. POÉTICA / POETICS

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POST-IMPERIAL RE-IMAGININGS: GENDER AND ETHNICITY IN *PRÓSPERO MORREU*

Claudia Pazos Alonso

Resumo: Este artigo debruça-se sobre *Próspero Morreu*, a única obra teatral publicada por Ana Luísa Amaral até agora, e avalia o significado do seu diálogo intertextual com a peça de Shakespeare, *A Tempestade*, no contexto de um Portugal pós-imperial, examinando como três das personagens de Shakespeare (Caliban, Ariel e Prospero) são “traduzidas” para um público contemporâneo. Além disso, indaga como a ausência de mães na peça original é atualizada através de uma reinvenção da tradição, com a recriação de Penélope como uma personagem bem mais complexa do que parecia ser na sua figuração mítica inicial. Em última análise, argumentar-se-á que, através das tensões e conflitos entre o fado e a liberdade presentes nesta tragédia, Amaral problematiza dois temas incontornáveis no âmbito da sociedade portuguesa contemporânea, nomeadamente a raça e o género.

Palavras-chave: género; raça; tragédia moderna; *A Tempestade*; reescrita feminista.

Abstract: This paper tackles Ana Luisa Amaral's only play to date, the tragedy *Próspero Morreu* (2011), and discusses its intertextual engagement and revision of Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest* in the context of post-imperial Portugal. It examines how three Shakespearean characters (Caliban, Ariel and Prospero) are re-signified for a 21st-century audience. It furthermore considers how the figuration of absent mothers in Shakespeare's original is updated through the reinvention of tradition, by staging the iconic Penelope as a more complex character than its original myth allowed. Ultimately it will be argued that, through the ongoing conflicting tensions between fate and freedom featured in this play, Amaral interrogates two of the most ongoing pressing issues in contemporary Portuguese society, those of race and gender.

Keywords: gender; race; modern tragedy; *The Tempest*; feminist rewriting.

Mudam-se os tempos, mudam-se as vontades

(*Camões*)

In a recent testimony, Amaral, citing the Argentinian philosopher Maria Lugones, alludes to impurity as a means of resistance against the “tentativa de controle exercida por aqueles que possuem o poder, os que categorizam, os que tentam quebrar tudo o que é impuro, dividindo-o em elementos puros” (2013: 18). A proudly “impure” product, *Próspero Morreu* stands as a modern-day tragedy. It maintains unity of time, place and action, albeit it over one single act, but weaves into it an eye-catching hybridity, primarily stemming

from its daring creative intertwining of different voices from past Western cultural tradition. Starting with its title, Amaral engages with a wide range of hypertexts, which encompass not only two seminal canonical authors from early modern European tradition, Camões and Shakespeare, but also Greek myths. Revis(it)ing our cultural legacy is an important feminist endeavour because, as Adrienne Rich puts it: “We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us” (15).¹

In *Próspero Morreu*, Amaral’s familiarity with the Western canon, visible in multiple guises throughout her writing career as a poet (Klobucka; Ramalho), is extended to Shakespeare. Indeed, the play re-scripts the characters of Caliban and Ariel for the post-imperial age of the new millennium. Since the pretext for the play is an imaginary wake, a third character from *The Tempest*, Prospero, although dead as the title indicates, is present throughout in his coffin. In so doing, *Próspero Morreu* furthermore implicitly stages a dialogue with another play, *O marinheiro* by Pessoa, a fact touched upon by Eugénia Vasques who describes the unconventional gathering as being “de ressonância pessoana” (58).

Amaral’s first poetic licence resides in the forging of new female kinships, through the conflation of two different Greek myths, since Penélope becomes recast as Ariadne’s fictive mother. As Rui Carvalho Homem notes, “this *lineage*. . . is made possible by the line or thread that defines their significance in their respective *mythoi*” (5). As

¹ Specifically in the context of Portuguese drama, the trend towards the appropriation of male literary imagination from a woman-centred perspective became increasingly visible from the 1990s onwards. For two examples, see Inês Alves Mendes.

such, their genealogical bond recovers the importance of historically suppressed mother-daughter relations.²

A second poetic liberty, in a clear break with the social and figurative conventions of the past, stems from staging a romantic relationship between the rebellious daughter, Ariadne, and the man that she chooses to love (the “savage” Caliban) rather than the one that was destined for her in myth, Theseus. Her transgressive feelings for Caliban, disclosed to the spectators in a series of three asides, entail the post-colonial rewriting of a figure whose name was almost an anagram of cannibal and who was accused of having attempted to rape Miranda in the Shakespearean original.

The issue of racism becomes explicitly tackled in Ariadne’s third aside, coupling the feminist perspective with a revision of racial prejudice. Shakespeare’s monstrous Caliban was not explicitly black, but in Amaral’s text he becomes almost excessively emphasized as such:

Como posso dizer que amo a negridão
maior que o mundo viu:
monstro mil vezes monstro,
dizem eles,
um ser, disforme e feio, para os outros,
não para mim, que o amo (19)

Ariadne’s use of key phrases such as “dizem eles”, and “para os outros” highlights the fact that the racial stereotypes that label Caliban as “um monstro” were / are forced upon him by the prejudices of “civilised” white men. This powerful aside furthermore

² By giving prominence to the mother figure, Amaral is rewriting man-made literary *history*, all the more so given that, in Greek myth, Penélope only had one (male) child, Telemaque. We may recall at this juncture that in *The Tempest* Miranda was orphaned of mother.

debunks the widespread belief that the Portuguese are not racist, to which Freyre's theories of Luso-tropicalism had lent credence in the context of the mid-twentieth century Lusophone world. In fact, in the decades leading up to the new millennium, some mainstream Portuguese novels had begun to deconstruct the one-way myth of lusotropicalism, by exploring relationships between a white woman and a black or mulatto man. For instance Lídia Jorge in *A costa dos mûrmurios* (1988) inverted the depiction of sexual encounters between a white man and a black woman – which had, from the beginning of colonial times, been the more readily condoned face of the lusophone empire.³

In the early modern period, one such relationship was famously textualized by Camões (“Endechas a Bárbara Escrava”). Camões played with convention, in a way that was revolutionary for his time, by building a narrative of Renaissance courtly love where it is the slave woman, rather than the *dona angelicata*, that paradoxically seemed to have a complete power over her master. Yet, the fundamentally asymmetrical nature of the relationship of Camões and his slave often remained unquestioned ever since. By contrast when, immediately after the aside which divulged to the audience Ariadne's transgressive love, Amaral brings Luiz and Bárbara on the stage, the latter is very explicitly introduced by Ariel as a slave of a *bygone* age:

Olhai quem chega agora:
Bárbara, *a escrava*,
de Goa e *de outro tempo*,
e o seu amado, Luiz. (2011: 17) (my italics)

³ For an analysis of Jorge's subsequent more extensive deconstruction of the myth of luso-tropicalism in *O vento assobiando nas gruas* (2002), see Ana Paula Ferreira (2013).

Ariel's reference to Bárbara as belonging to a different temporal space is far from gratuitous: it hints at her being (and remaining) almost frozen in time, like Camões, whose first name retains old-fashioned spelling conventions.

Also relevant in the context of ethnic stereotyping is the fact that Caliban remains entirely silent throughout the first half of the play, a point which dramatically emphasises his historically subaltern position. As we reach the halfway point in the play, however, the pressing need for reimagining historically sedimented roles comes to the fore. According to Ariel – who in *The Tempest* was entrusted to release Caliban (admittedly at Prospero's bidding) –, the old repressive order has reached its end. As Caliban acquires a voice and takes centre-stage, it is Prospero's tyrannical power that is conversely named as monstrous by Ariel: “Sem liberdade é o poder um monstro / de braços bifurcados e língua bifurcada / onde se alojam leis sem pensamento / e se torna viscoso o coração” (*idem*: 31-32). Caliban, freed by the “magia do amor”, is afforded a moving love duet with Ariadne, showcasing their mutually reinforcing newfound agency. Nonetheless, the “magia do amor” is violently shattered when Theseus comes back on stage.

Theseus has a choice, highlighted by the fact that the fate of Ariadne is decided over several pages, in slow motion. But in a tragic climax, he kills his bride. Ariadne's murder, the enactment of an archaic honour killing that calls to mind issues of domestic violence still present in today's world, is the key turning-point in the play. As Raymond Williams puts it, regenerative modification of society is the purpose of modern tragedy: “The tragic action, in its deepest sense, is not the confirmation of disorder, but its experience, its comprehension and its resolution” (108). This explains why, in the aftermath of Ariadne's untimely demise, the play dwells on a range of reactions which, cumulatively, offer a fuller picture of the conditions that historically enable both order and disorder.

Caliban, unlike what might have been expected, doesn't take justice in his hands, arguably making him the better man. His non-violence contrasts with the open revolt of the mother, following her daughter's unnatural death. This is equally striking, for it turns on its head the traditional image of the woman as passive. Penélope acquires a dissenting voice, as she explicitly questions Próspero's residual influence, which perpetuates social and gender injustices, through the device of multiple unanswered rhetorical questions: "Assim Próspero vence?! / E assim renasce? Assim: a voz / de um morto?" (2011: 52). Hers is a powerful interrogation of the influence that an outdated patriarchal system continues to have upon the island. As such, her use of the present tense also brings the issue into Portugal's historical present in the new millennium. In fact, in this speech, Próspero's ghost is equated to a "vulture", recalling the celebrated poem by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, "O velho abutre", published in 1962 and widely interpreted as a thinly veiled reference to Salazar himself.

If the figure of Próspero is equated with patriarchal and colonial society, then his death could simultaneously present an opportunity for a long overdue transition to a post-colonial, more democratic society. Notwithstanding his physical death, however, as Penélope stresses, his ghost has yet to come undone: "Não há fio que desuna o seu fantasma?". Próspero's legacy (and by extension Salazar's too) still needs to be unravelled. As such, the question "Nada podemos nós?" (2011: 53) draws in the audience, through the use of the collective "nós", forcing us to reflect on Portuguese present-day society.

Sadly, it has taken Penélope's daughter unnatural death to shake her out of internalized subservience, so that any future change can only take place over Ariadne's dead body. One young woman, however, remains alive on stage: Bárbara, an arguably "peripheral" and powerless female character from the perspective of the dominant

order, here carefully recovered by Amaral. Interestingly, the last words (if we except Ariel) belong to her. Bárbara, speaking *after* Luiz (who declares that he “renega” the fixed, sedimented “tempo” that would be passed down as a legacy through his canonical poetry) succinctly, if ambiguously, expresses the complexities of her precarious position. She tellingly wishes for her braid – a material sign of her otherness both as woman and as racially other – to undo the power of Prospero’s paternally-authorized legacy, namely *history*. Her (non-European) hair re-inscribes the material body, and furthermore provides an incipient response to literary tradition, enshrined in poems such as “La chevelure” by Baudelaire. It may therefore be posited as an alternative ‘thread’ to white male canonical tradition. Yet the incompleteness of her response, underscored by use of ellipsis, stands out.

The action of the play had begun at dawn. In the course of one day, the play allowed people like Caliban, Bárbara, Penélope and Ariadne to briefly emerge from the shadows of history, as it revis(it)ed stock images of the past. The chronological frame of Amaral’s play is symmetrically opposed to that of Fernando Pessoa, since his ended before dawn, whereas hers begins at dawn and finishes at nightfall. Yet she does not simply seek to invert the Pessoaan dreamscape – since her play, unlike his, is not static. As it comes to an end, while the stage directions seemingly take the characters back to their initial positions, this self-consciously highlights the notion of performance and the fact that much has changed in the space of one day. The numerous instances of inexact repetition contribute to the partial empowerment of characters like Ariadne, and to a lesser extent Caliban and Penélope, and the concomitant downfall of Theseus. They thus become the new hero(in)es, displacing Theseus.

Last but not least, it is worth dwelling on the ambiguities pertaining to Ariel, who takes on the role of chorus, donning a white

mask throughout.⁴ In one significant respect, gender, s/he eludes classification. A male character in the Shakespearean original, s/he is initially posited in Amaral's tragedy as androgynous: "Esta coisa meio ela, meio ele" (2011: 16) in the words of Penélope.⁵ Ariel's own self-definition begins by negating gender altogether "Nem homem nem mulher" (*idem*: 29), but s/he ultimately fashions herself as, grammatically speaking, very definitely female:

E eu aqui estou,
chamada pelos tempos para o anunciar.
Para dizer também: quem morrerá? (*idem*: 30) (my italics)

As Owen and Pazos Alonso note, drawing on work by the feminist philosopher Battersby, the concept of androgyny is asymmetrical: "Conventionally gender crossover implied by the feminization of male genius could work in a positive sense for men but not the other way round" (*idem*: 18). Ariel's transitioning towards femaleness is thus significant, not least in her parting speech:

E eu, que a contei, ou eu, coro de nós,
irei ficar em história.
Escrava dos tempos, mas do tempo livre. (*idem*: 57)

This paradox foregrounds Ariel as both a female slave ("escrava", thereby associating her with Bárbara) yet free. She remains ambiguously poised between fate and free will and, one might add,

⁴ Although the mask is in keeping with the fact that ritualized stories were typically performed by masked actors, its colour may offer a post-modern take on Fanon's title, *Black Skins, White Masks*.

⁵ There may be an intertextual dimension to this transgenering, if we bear in mind that Woolf's Orlando, another character originating from Elizabethan times, becomes female.

between tradition and modernity: bound by male canonical norms (the chorus in tragedy), yet simultaneously able to transcend time. Tellingly, she also envisions herself as transcending a single identity, a plural “coro de nós”, thereby hinting at her ability to incorporate different voices within her (like a female Pessoaan *drama em gente?*). Early on, Penélope had described Ariel as being “de ousadia maior que Prometeu” (*idem*: 16), the male god credited with giving fire to humankind. If we interpret fire as a sign of knowledge and creativity, then perhaps the mediation of Ariel can help us to re-imagine the past differently, through the feminization of male genius.

In the closing lines of the play, inexact repetition suggests that reality, far from being fixed, is susceptible to change and revision:

Caiu a noite. E sopra um vento fino.
E não é já assombro
assombro tal? (*idem*: 57)

In contrast to the opening line of the play – “É de manhã e sopra um vento fino” (*idem*: 11) – the wind now features in an independent sentence, as a separate event: after night (often associated with femaleness in Western tradition) has fallen, a gentle wind begins to blow. The wind may hint at (re)-creation, bearing in mind the Biblical creation of the world: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen 1:1-2 New American Standard Bible). If so, the wind implicitly symbolizes the demiurgic hand of Amaral, showing that we are a far cry away indeed from a sterile repetition of Greek tragedy.

Coming back, by way of conclusion, to Amaral’s reflections about poetry as a no (wo)man’s land: “A minha terra de ninguém com gente dentro é, porque de gente feita, uma terra impura, de corpos e de

vozes daqueles e daquelas que antes de mim tiveram voz. E ainda as vozes dos que vivem ao meu lado, temporal e espacialmente, e que tantas vezes não lhe têm direito” (Amaral 2013: 19). Taking our cue from these remarks, we might say that *Próspero Morreu*, a play set in an imaginary island, arguably a “terra de ninguém com gente dentro”, is a deliberately impure palimpsest, made up of “corpos e de vozes daqueles e daquelas que antes de mim tiveram voz”. It includes those who still remain almost voiceless for the time being (Bárbara) and those who belatedly begin to acquire a voice (Caliban, Penélope), while teasing out the contradictions and ambiguities arising out of inherited cultural roles and expectations (Ariel). Perhaps not coincidentally set in the depth of winter, Amaral’s tragedy boldly succeeds in deploying impurity as a means of resistance in order to sow the seeds of change. Through a series of inexact repetitions at various levels, *Próspero Morreu* invites questions about our cultural legacy. In so doing, it exposes preconceived notions of gender and ethnicity that may, surreptitiously, linger on in Portuguese society to this day. In short, through poetic licence and defamiliarization, this complex and ambitious twentieth-first century tragedy allows the audience to experience the writing of the past differently, no longer in order “to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us”.

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**WOR(L)DS' WRIT(IN)' WOR(L)DS:
POETICS & POLITICS IN THE OPEN FIELD**

Graça Capinha

Resumo: Este curto ensaio pretende refletir sobre a natureza poética e política da linguagem, entendida a partir da materialidade da sua construção social e histórica, sempre em processo de adequação ou de resistência ao que é. Partindo da poética de energias formulada pela teoria *open field* (auto-proclamada herdeira de algum modernismo), procura-se observar como alguns e algumas poetas contemporâneos resistem às diferentes hierarquias de poder no discurso que regula o que entendemos ser a objetividade, o senso-comum, o legível e/ou o compreensível, o real. Expondo a artificialidade da construção, expõem-se as formas de teor colonial com que se naturaliza a subalternização do que é – e de quem é – o “Outro” da/na linguagem.

Palavras-chave: poética; política; gaguejo; rizoma; L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E; emigração; colonialismo; constelações identitárias.

Abstract: This short essay aims at reflecting on both the poetical and the political nature of language, observed in the

materiality of its social and historical construction, and always in its process of adjustment or resistance to what is. Based on the poetics of energies formulated by the open field theory (self-proclaimed heir to some modernist projects), it tries to envisage the ways in which some contemporary poets resist the different hierarchies of power in the discourse that regulates our understanding of objectivity, common-sense, the legible, the comprehensible, the real. Exposing the artificiality of this linguistic construction, these poets simultaneously expose the colonialist basis of forms naturalizing the subordination of what is – and of who is – the “Other” of/in language.

Keywords: poetics; politics; stuttering; rhizome; L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E; immigration; colonialism; identity constellations.

I would like to start this essay by addressing its title, which, to some extent, means that I will also be addressing the world of my writing before addressing the worlds of other writings. Unavoidably, when one writes, one creates a world *of* language, a world *in* language. But our page becomes a territory where other writings are already settled (the many pages we have read: other worlds *of* language and other worlds *in* language, i.e., other territories). Our world of language and/or our world of writing – the territory of our page – has already been occupied. The problem is, as Wallace Stevens put it, “that we live in a place / That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves”, for “There was a myth before the myth began” (1982a: 383).

In this sense, we are all colonized people and we are all immigrants. Arriving to this territory (of language), we must struggle,

adapt and adjust, in order to build our living in a world that we wish to call our own: a world in which we must also find some sense of freedom. We thus find ourselves struggling to build our own territory in the open field of language (I'm being metaphoric, yes, but then, who isn't? For we forget too many times that the word *does not belong to* the thing). In our words and/or worlds (of knowledge; of wisdom; of national, class, gender, and political identifications; of historical and social structures and practices), we discover ourselves, with Freud and Foucault (to name but a few), already *writ in words/worlds*; and, simultaneously, we are *writing the words/worlds of our selves* – amongst the many hierarchies of power in the discourse of other worlds and/or words before us. The first word/the first world, the original language, is no longer possible – a recognition that all poets have experienced (some of them more painfully than others), especially from Romanticism onwards, and mainly with Modernism. We are all derivative, claimed the 20th. century American poet Robert Duncan (1985). The worlds we make – and let us not forget that, etymologically, *poiein* means “to make” – are *made* of other *made* worlds (worlds previously written in our worlds), in a *bricolage* process (Lévi-Strauss): when allowed, we take what feels in key, what we take as useful and productive, and abandon old forms/old metaphors that no longer suit us. Like others before us, we are both subjects and objects in this process of the construction of the real: and what we call *the real* is nothing but *this social construction* of the real — *with* and *in* language. Being transdiscursive (Foucault 1992), my title, my writing, my language, my world and my self are – like everybody else's – “the real”.

It is this artificial, non-natural, and social nature of the real that the hegemonic powers in discourse erase. However, it is *writ*-ten in our words and worlds – even if unseen, even if unspoken, this social and poetic nature of the real is deeply imbedded in the open field

of every page or speech-act. Let us not forget that, etymologically, in Greek, the verb “to write” also means “to weave”: this social construction of the real is thus *woven* in the world – even if we are not aware of it. It is an objective construction, a part of our territory, even if a phantom: a “phantom objectivity” (Taussig). A part of language and/or of the real that, because socially erased, feels like an amputated limb (*idem*). The artificial construction is not present there now, but we may feel it – its pain is very objective. All of us have experienced it when struggling to invent a territory in language that may better adjust to what we would like our place and our self to be. That is how we build and/or how we write our worlds and/or our selves – in an agonistic process: both as subjects and as objects of the real. Ultimately, I guess what I am trying to argue is that the social construction of this territory, of the world and of our identity, is poetic – both a linguistic and a literary question (literary, again etymologically, taken as forms made with *littera*: made with letters). I want to argue that struggling to invent a territory in language that may better approach what we would like our place and our self to be is the goal and the priority of both any creative scientist and any artist or poet: this is what all of them primarily take as their job or life project. Trying to take hold of a new territory or to adjust and adapt to it, they are like any other colonizer or like any other immigrant: as an inevitable consequence of the actual deterritorialization process of their body and of their body of language, they must (re)build the territory of *the real* anew – if they want to survive and, in the first case, if they want to be gainers and master reality. For the colonizer’s power and the immigrant’s power are very different, both in economic dimension and nature. Let us say that I prefer poets of an immigrant nature: those who, instead of having things to say, “have nothing to say and are saying it” (Cage), always in search of the new words to open a new field/territory.

The struggle to change the hegemonic forms in language that shape the social construction of the real is therefore objective, and it implies a process of deterritorialization that, being poetic, is also both epistemological and epistemic. As with the immigrant Jew Franz Kafka, a line of escape is needed to avoid the language of the masters (even, and especially, when one is using it) and this leads to nomadism and to the rhizomatic experience of language and of self. This is a search through unknown territories – a search that will always have to deal with the lack of a center, with the lack of a map, with incompleteness. A search that will unavoidably lead to an actual non-(still; yet-to-be)Sense (Deleuze and Guattari), since we are dealing with counter-hegemonic forms of resistance to the accepted hegemonic social construction of the real – in language and through language. Such is the agonistic and/or poetic nature of language.

And, yet, no one listens to poetry. Or should I say, instead, *that is why* no one listens to poetry? Not many people think of poetics and of poetry as “respectable” discourses, capable of alternative forms of knowledge, of new visions of the world that are as “objective” and as “true” (whatever that means) as any other visions and any other knowledges of the world. In the hierarchies of the discourses of knowledge, the power of poetry is next to nothing. Just a few words from the poem-essay by the L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet Bob Perelman:

“The Marginalization of Poetry” – it almost goes without saying. Jack Spicer wrote,

“No one listens to poetry,” but the question then becomes, who is

Jack Spicer? Poets for whom he matters would know, and their poems

would be written in a world
in which that line was heard,

though they'd scarcely refer to it.
Quoting or imitating another poet's line

is not benign, though at times
the practice can look like flattery.

In the regions of academic discourse,
the patterns of production and circulation

are different. There, it – again – goes
without saying that words, names, terms

are repeatable: citation is the prime
index of power. Strikingly original language

is not the point; the degree
to which a phrase or sentence

fits into a multiplicity of contexts
determines how influential it will be

...

(3)

The problem is contextual, for poetry is thus out of the social context of power (who is Jack Spicer?) and to quote a poem to affirm some form of knowledge, even in academia, is far from the above mentioned “index of power”. The problem is that the patterns of production and circulation of poetic discourse are different from

the ones expected from a discourse of knowledge and/or power. The problem is that a poetic phrase or sentence *seldom fits*. And, in some poets' opinion, *it shouldn't fit*. As L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E poet and theorist Charles Bernstein says: "Don't get me wrong: I know it's almost a joke to speak of poetry and national affairs" [and, in this essay, also of scientists, colonizers, immigrants, and poets as being, as Shakespeare would put it, "made of the same substance"]. "Yet", Bernstein continues, "in *The Social Contract*, Rousseau writes that since our conventions are provisional, the public may choose to reconvene in order to withdraw authority from those conventions that no longer serve our purposes. Poetry is one of the few areas where this right of reconvening is exercised. . . . The political power of poetry is not measured in numbers; it instructs us to count differently" (1992: 225-6).

Interestingly enough Bernstein and Perelman, and a few associated with them in the 1970s, who came to be known as the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E School*, were (still are) simultaneously attacked by social and political theorists, journalists in major American newspapers, literary critics, and the poets of what Bernstein usually calls "the official culture". Why? Because of their political agenda. But, poetry being such a marginal and un-important thing, why such a fuss? I ask.

As an avant-garde movement, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* poets basically did what the Modernist avant-garde movements were doing at the turn of the 19th century to the 20th. century: they imitated the new social and political movements. They created their own audience through propaganda: through public intervention – with public readings, creating their alternative little presses, and publishing their manifestos.¹ Stylistically very different, the only thing we

¹ Marjorie Perloff claims that "it is the curiously mixed rhetoric of the *Communist Manifesto*, its preamble itself something of a prose-poem, that paved the way for

can say that is common to all of the *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* poets is their refusal to create images of the world that we can recognise immediately, since this would mean an acceptance and a legitimisation of the order of the world. Like the modernists before them (and Kafka is definitely one of their many influences), they refuse the hegemonic model of representation. But, in the same vein, they also refuse the works chosen by the official culture to represent cultural diversity, since what most of those chosen authors do is to accept the hegemonic model of representation (and the immigrant authors, in the so called American multicultural studies and anthologies, are here included).

Echoing Emerson, Bernstein (1992) claims that poetry is aversion to conformity in the pursuit of forms (1). Therefore, *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* poets aim at malformation in language – at disruption and interruption; against ventriloquism, they aim at stuttering or limping in language (many experiment with the dialogic character of blues or the improvisation of jazz to do that). They abandon mapped territories of language and of the self, *the worlds written in their worlds*, and, trying to escape the language of the masters, they err, nomadically, in the open and unmapped territories of language: in the territories out of *the* order, out of *the* sense – in a quest for other possible senses to re-write the real. They develop a philosophy of nonsense that takes this “open field” as the space of linguistic excess, since, when abandoning the world of order in language, we do not find a lack of language (Lecerle). On the contrary, when facing the excess of chaos and infinite multiplicity, one agonistically opens the field of infinite possibility for *other forms and models of representation* to emerge. These poets’ main poetic concern is then the question of form.

the grafting of the poetic onto the political discourse that we find in Futurist, and later in Dada and Surrealist, manifesto” (82).

They aim at a radical anti-formalist formalism, since new contents cannot fit in the forms we already know, and vice-versa (as post-colonial studies well show). This was also the question raised in the 1960s by Jerome Rothenberg when speaking, for instance, of Native American cosmogonies and the need for what he called an Ethnopoetics that would have to accept the untranslatability of those other worlds into the American hegemonic linguistic model of representation (1989). This is an epistemological question, and it is a question that clearly and simultaneously concerns a politics of language – modernist poets and artists were already dealing with it a century ago. Speaking about the invention of *collage*, Pablo Picasso once said: “different textures can enter into a composition to become the reality in the painting that competes with the reality in nature. We tried to get rid of ‘trompe d’oeil’ to find a ‘trompe d’esprit’. . . . [The] displaced object has entered a universe for which it was not made and where it retains, in a measure, its strangeness. And this strangeness was what we wanted to make people think about because we were quite aware that our world was becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring” (qtd. in Gilot & Carlton 70).

In Picasso’s time, displacement and strangeness in the forms of representation were demanded almost as a strategy of survival at a period when new geographies were being created by technological and scientific developments and industrialization: by new means of transportation shortening distances and creating a much smaller world, by wars that were also re-drawing the maps of the world, by migration from the country to the great cities and their new social relations and, inevitably, to newly created identities. The real was changing at a pace so different from the common conceptual and linguistic categories that tensions emerged in the dominant model of representation, tensions asking for a new universe of discourse. The chief concern of modern literature could only become the

problematics of language (Barthes). And that was the inauguration of what Marjorie Perloff (1986) calls “the other tradition” in literature: a tradition of experimentalism. The displacement and strangeness that new techniques like *collage* were dealing with had to do with this sense of change; speed was a new phenomenon, and the categories of time and space, as well as their relation, became one of the main concerns of artists and poets. In poetry in English, Ezra Pound was then the main cultivator of *collage*. Gertrude Stein wanted to catch the moment; the present was the only time she believed in, and even when using what we see as repetition she claimed that repetition didn’t exist (since neither we nor the sound are ever the same in time and space): she wanted to catch, like the Symbolists, language as the act of perception, language in the coming-into-being. Marinetti said “To a finished house we prefer the framework of a house in construction. . . . The frame of a house in construction symbolizes our burning passion for the coming-into-being of things” (qtd. in Perloff 102). The normal linearity, sequentiality and causality in the order of language were challenged, and most of the time, completely abandoned. In *Un Coup De Dés*, Mallarmé explored a spatial logic by liberating words freely on the page to let meaning emerge from contingency. And meanings did emerge from all of those experiments: different forms with different meanings, thus constructing different objects and different subjects. In these writing worlds of more than a century ago, to escape the language of the masters – to escape the wor(l)ds writ(ten) in our wor(l)ds – was a major revolution which meant to explore the field of excess of sound and of all the possible orders of sound/meaning, orders and voices that are still, *normally and/or normatively*, silenced. These poets and artists were struggling against form to liberate form. Trying to recuperate their original and, for many centuries, their lost social function as bards, these modernist poets wanted, not only to reflect, but mainly to affect

the real – this is the challenge that only a few poets and artists are still trying to respond to nowadays.

They became interested in the new developments of science, and many used scientific terms in their poems, as well as structures that were trying to imitate new physical structures recently discovered by science. In the first decade of the 20th century, fighting the artificiality of convention and looking for an organic poetry, Ezra Pound said the line should not obey the metronome, but, instead, the rhythm of the sentence. In the 1930s, William Carlos Williams, approaching biology, recognised the existence of a metric variable foot which depended on the breath of writing and reading of the poem: on the actual inspiration (no metaphysics included) and expiration of the body. Approaching physics, Williams was also the first to speak of the poem as a field of action. And, already in the 1950s, Charles Olson and Robert Duncan, deriving both from Pound and Williams, created the projective or open verse. And I will very briefly concentrate on this tradition because this is the model that I take to deal with language, in general, and particularly with poetry, namely the poetry written both by the so-called avant-garde poets and the immigrant poets. Always implying deterritorialization, this was the model that also led me to what I call “identity configurations” or “identity constellations.”

My main point is that for us, scholars dealing with questions of language – with the many epistemological and political questions in the social construction of what we call *the real* (and identities are a part of this social construction) –, perhaps more than for any other kind of scholar, the question remains, primarily, a methodological question. The awareness of chaos and contingency, of fragmentation and decentering, of incompleteness, of indeterminacy and relativity in the world – and in our selves – is not new. Scientists and poets have been dealing with it for more than a century. But the problem remains: how do we include chaos and contingency, fragmentation

and decentering, incompleteness, indeterminacy and relativity in language? And still be able to provide meaning and knowledge within the hegemonic context of what we call “the real”? With what kind of language? These are poetic and political questions, since we still have *to make* a language that, as Charles Olson was asking for verse in 1950, “if it is to go ahead. . . now”, it must “be of *essential* use” (15).

So, analysing the relation between language and the real, my methodology must be based on a non-collaborative model of language, against a collaborative communicational model that insists on recognisable images of the world. The reason for this is that I agree with Picasso when he states that “we are all quite aware that our world is becoming very strange and not exactly reassuring”. With Picasso and the poets that I have been speaking about, I take an agonistic model of language as my basis, and thus take Olson and Duncan’s theory of open field poetics as a methodological tool, an experimental tool that will help me deal with a language out of territory, a language of deterritorialization in a territory of a totalized world and of totalized selves. And, to this extent, my research on immigration functioned as a microcosmic research that became very helpful – to me, at least – to deal with macrocosmic questions.

In open field poetics, the representation of space and time remains the crucial problem: the concern with the representation of the coming-into-being of things. Olson’s foundational essay of 1950, titled “Projective Verse” (15-30), making what seems to be an aleatory use of the space of the page, begins with the words “(projectile”, “(percussive”, “(prospective” – between brackets that never close. After a critique of the “Egotistical Sublime” and/or “the private-soul-at-any-public-wall” of the conventional “I”, and of his/her authority in the poem, Olson asks for an exploration of the possibilities of breath “to bring the stance toward reality”. He

asks for a language of *drama* in contemporary poetry – a language of movement, change, tension and confrontation – to lead “to new poetics and to new concepts” (15). Using the words of Physics, he then speaks of the “kinetics of the thing”, the energy transferred from the thing to the poem, seeing the poem both as an energy-construct and an energy-discharge. In the open field of the page, through the projection of the body of the poet – which is breath, with the “acquisitions of the ear” – the particles of sound, the smallest of which is the syllable, charged with energy, attract and repel. Lines and images result from the formation of these sound-word clusters of energy within the field of composition. Only then the poem becomes an act, coming-into-being, a process – and not a product. “ONE PERCEPTION MUST IMMEDIATELY AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO A FURTHER PERCEPTION” (17), writes Olson, in capital letters. In this poetics of energies, the poem – this body in act – will always remain incomplete, unfinished, since every reading will re-enact the process of energies in a body that, like any other body, will never repeat itself in space and time (as Stein had argued [174]). We always in-breathe anew. Thus, claims Olson, “verse is to advance to its proper force and place in the day, now, and ahead” (17). “Which brings us up, immediately”, he concludes, “bang, against tenses, in fact against syntax, in fact against grammar, that is, as we have inherited it” (21). To a certain extent, echoing 17th century John Milton, in his disobedience as the first act of obedience to the law of creation, Olson argues that “the LAW OF THE LINE, which projective verse creates, must be. . . obeyed, and. . . the conventions which logic has forced on syntax must be broken open” (21). Olson, like many social scientists nowadays (namely the Portuguese Boaventura de Sousa Santos), is thus pleading for a new common sense, clearly within an agonistic model of language. He goes on to say that “breath is man’s special qualification as animal”, and “Sound is a dimension

he has extended. Language is one of his proudest acts. And when a poet rests in these as they are in himself (in his physiology, if you like, . . .) then he, if he chooses to speak from these roots, works in that area where nature has given him size, projective size” (25) for “the projective act, which is the artist’s act in the larger field of objects, leads to dimensions larger than man” (25). This was the epistemological challenge, as well as the political challenge that Charles Olson was offering in his poetics. “Keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen” (17), he demanded.

In the same vein, Robert Duncan addresses space/silence in the open field of the page, in “Some Notes on Notation”, the short introduction to his book *Ground Work. Before the War*:

In the ground work there is a continuing beat that my body disposition finds and my moving hand directs I follow in reading. Its impulses are not schematic but rise, changing tempo as the body-dance changes. The caesura space becomes not just an articulation of phrasings but a phrase itself of silence. Space between stanzas becomes a stanza-verse of silence: in which the beat continues. (1984 n.p.)

This ground seems not to be visible – and yet the poet shows it is there, and renders it visible. He goes on: “indicated by spaces of 1:2:3; which may be rendered 2:4:6: 9” – “the duration” becoming “flexible. . . in each reading”. Between the words there is, the poet says, “sounded-silence” – not an emptiness, but substance. In “A Song from the Structures of Rime Ringing as the poet Paul Celan Sings”, this substance is oxymoronically described as:

. . .
the possibility of no thing so
being there.

This ground, this Law, is our Nature, and yet, as Heraclitus argued, it is that which is most unfamiliar to us. It is therefore a *ground* at the margins of our already discovered and acknowledged continents. And “Margins signify”, Duncan writes.

Paradoxically, it is a ground that remains forever ungrounded – that is, untotalized and untotalizable: a ground-in-the-making, a ground in process. Robert Duncan’s *Ground Work* is the poet’s participation in the process, the poet’s participation in this making – which includes the making of his Self: nomadically, rhizomatically, uncentered and permanently deterritorialized, in expansion. This poetry constitutes his *rite of passage* between an old world and a new one, between an old “I” and a new “I” – in a *bricolage* process of transformation, thus arousing new modes of perception and recreating the world anew. At the time of the Viet Nam War, this *ground work* responded to the need for a radical revision of concepts such as centre and territory, such as self and language, such as citizen and city – a radical revision of what America meant. This was certainly the radical revision and political implication that led Duncan to renounce the United States, refusing to publish and be part of the American literary scene for a period of 15 years. Without a territory/without a ground, his groundlessness did neither mean an absence of substance nor an absence of the body of the literal earth. On the contrary, it meant the all-too-immediate presence of the land, the all-too-immediate presence of what America literally was (is): an imperialistic presence in which the absence of a mediating language resulted. Groundlessness meant the all-too-immediate presence of the war (in Viet Nam) and the refusal of any wor(l)d written in his wor(l)d.

Robert Duncan’s ground work was the struggle to conquer his language, a struggle that had to accept error as part of a ground/a field/a territory of language that has neither a beginning nor an end: for being in History, one must inevitably be *in the act*. The absence

of language is then revealed, simultaneously, as a “Christ of Poetry” and as an excess. The excess that Robert Duncan finds at the margins of words, in the “sounded-silence” and the “deeper rhythms” back of the beat of the heart and the breath: all the possibilities of sound and articulation: “There is a field of random energies from which we come, or in such myriad disorganization “field”/ rises as a dream/ the real. This projection of many dreamers” (*idem*: 144).

In “Notes on Poetics Regarding Olson’s *Maximus*” and going back to Pound and Joyce but also to Dewey and Emerson, Duncan describes his aesthetics based on energies in process:

Metrics, as it coheres, is actual – the sense of language in terms of weights and durations (by which we cohere in moving). This is a dance in whose measured steps time emerges from the dance of the body. The ear is intimate to muscular equilibrium. . . . But, if the muscular realization of language is the latest mode of poetry, the beginning point was muscular too, localized in the discharge of energy expressed in the gaining, first, breath, and then, tongue. The gift of spirit and of tongues. (1985 70, 72)

This muscular equilibrium at the root of all movement (of creative movement) – the movement of breath and of language – leads necessarily to experimentalism. Experimentalism then becoming an organic need: the need to exercise that muscular energy which is “the gift of spirit and of tongues” (and the biblical echoes are obvious).

In this aesthetics based on energies, the closed causal and sequential syntactical orders do not dominate but they will not be excluded either. In 1971, Duncan argued: “I’m not going to take the closed form versus the open form because I want both, and I’ll make open forms that have closed forms in them and closed forms that are open . . . we work to contain our feeling in our extending our feeling into time and space”. In Duncan’s project for a *grand collage*,

a *collage* that would include all the discourses of all the different knowledges – without hierarchies – causality and sequentiality are articulated with proliferation and contingency so as to allow for a form open to free association – always depending on the energies that are available at a given moment. To contain in the body of the poem is then, simultaneously, to extend into time and space. The linguist Benjamin Whorf, one of Duncan’s many influences, once wrote:

There comes a point where extension in detail ceases to be knowable and is lost in the vast distance, and where the subjective, creeping behind the scenes as it were, merges into the objective, so that at this inconceivable distance from the observer – of all observers – there is an all-encircling end and beginning of things where it might be said that existence itself swallows up the objective and the subjective. The borderland of this realm is as much subjective as objective. It is the abysm of antiquity, the time and place told about in the myths, which is known only subjectively or mentally. (57)

Duncan’s poetics is then based in an aesthetics of complexity made both of reflected and of broken rays/myths/words, deviating and proliferous, whose beginnings and ends cannot be knowable – because, in the borderland which is the realm of the poem, in the borderland which is the realm of the self and of the poet, “extension in detail ceases to be knowable”. This is *The Ground*, the decentered, rhizomatic territory – the unterritorialized territory – of the “sounded-silence” whose presence Robert Duncan tries to notate. In *The New American Poetry*, Duncan argued:

There is a wholeness of what we are that we will never know; we are always, as the line or the phrase or the word is, *the*

moment of that wholeness – an event; but it, the wholeness of what we are, goes back to an obscurity and extends to and into an obscurity. The obscurity is part of the work of the form, if it be whole. (Allen 436)

In open field poetics what is at stake in the use of language and in its renewal of the world is not a question of essences, but of responsibility. A responsibility demanded by a paradigmatic transition that Modernism and all the fields of knowledge inaugurated at the beginning of the 20th. century. We must be, as the last poem of Duncan's *Ground Work. Before the War* reminds us:

sent out from what we were to another place
now in the constant exchange

renderd true

(1984: 175)

For, as Wallace Stevens was asking in "Owl's Clover": "Suppose the future fails. . . . What man of folk-lore shall rebuild the world/ What lesser man shall measure sun and moon,/ What super-animal dictate our fates?" (1982b: 63).

In search of a future there are people who were/are actually "sent out from what they were to another place" living "in the constant exchange" of words and worlds: I am speaking of immigrants. And in 1988, I discovered that there was a group of poets writing in Portuguese in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. They were publishing only in the immigrant community's local newspapers, little magazines and small presses, and nobody had ever heard of them, neither in Portugal nor in the United States. For the first time in my life I was in need of using methodologies

that weren't very common in literary studies, namely participant observation. I spent three Summers living in the community, with a Portuguese family in New Bedford (a little town in Massachusetts where more than 60% of the population is either Portuguese or of Portuguese descent). I interviewed poets and leaders of the community, and tried to understand how and why a population that was almost illiterate could be reading and writing poetry – until one day one of those immigrant poets (no study beyond 3rd grade) told me he didn't even know what a poem was but, after having arrived in the USA as an immigrant, he felt that he had “to tell his [my] self anew” – not in English, but in Portuguese. So, *to tell his self anew*, he started writing “a bunch of words” – and then one of his colleagues at the factory saw them and told him, to his surprise, that “the bunch of words were poems”. How can I better illustrate the importance of language in the social construction of the real and/or of identities? Deterritorialized, both geographically and culturally, facing different jobs, different social relations, different hierarchies of power in the family²; facing different hierarchies of power in social classes (usually, the first job is in the factory – no matter what type of social background you bring from Portugal); facing different hierarchies of power in the discourses about the nations involved (Portugal and the USA), discourses about their histories (which is the centre? which is the periphery?), discourses about their geographies (is it the size of the country that matters? or the size of the world population speaking Portuguese?) – facing all of this, how can immigrants not feel the need to tell their selves anew? And I'm not referring to the learning of English as their new language. I met people who had spent 40

² For instance, women are usually the first to learn English and their position in the family power structure substantially changes because they are the ones dealing with banks, insurances, hospitals, etc.

years in New Bedford without speaking the language, since 60% of the population could speak Portuguese. And they wrote/write in Portuguese. They needed other forms/other representations of the real – because this was another “real”, one they could not recognize. They entered the borderland, the substance within the field of silence, the excess yet-to-be-spoken – the open field of language – to find other possibilities of articulation in Portuguese: to find other meanings, other orders of language, other identities. Changed by this process of deterritorialization, they became aware of the many “I’s in the process. They found a new poetics in their dislocation and in their “in-between-ness”, shaping a multitude of new (ideological, identitary, linguistic) territories at struggle. They needed other forms to re-shape their invention of a new tradition (Hobsbawm & Ranger), their re-imagined communities (Anderson), their linguistic artifacts (Balibar and Wallerstein) – because historical in their nature, words like nation, culture, community, identity, language emerged in a process of continuous historical recomposition, of deconstruction and reconstruction. This reconstruction was happening inbetween many ambiguities and ambivalences to create their own territory of language – still struggling in the context of different hierarchies of power in discourse, in the process, in the act: Wor(l)ds’ Writ(In)’ Wor(l)ds.

In the discourse and field of the poem, we will find neither “a Portuguese identity”, nor an “American identity”, nor “a Luso-American identity” – because they are all of them, and more. Instead, we find mobile identity configurations. There is a new language awareness and, playing with the new possibilities, the exploration of new spaces and new structures. Survival strategies are entangled, simultaneously and paradoxically, with cultural resistance on the one hand, and with the need for assimilation on the other. The different identity configurations differ with the different contexts where discourse is produced, thus leading to the switching of voices

and identifications, both in the poems and in the interviews: from Portuguese to American to Luso-American.

Beyond the politeness of irony, they choose excess, *pathos*, comedy and/or nonsense – these are some of the characteristics of this poetry. Just one example by poet José Brites, “Observações Dum Party/ASSIMilação” (“Party Observation/ASSIMILIKEation”):

Party Observation/ASSIMILIKEation

They come
polyester themselves
cocacole bottles to their mouths
learn by heart the televised English in *espectáculos*
some other *Amerde*-icanizations
the reduced space can take
and *bingo*
a Portugal of the fifteen hundreds
in a circus of the nineteen hundreds
in an America of two thousand. . . (39).

(*my translation*).

The structural syncretism of different times and different spaces must be dealt with, and the conventional order of grammar is not enough to contain the nomadic experience of the poet. Interestingly enough, nouns become verbs, accentuating the process of language in the act. Yet, in other poems, Brites can use the elegiac mode and speak of “saudade”, in the most conventional Portuguese tradition. In his daily life, one could say he is an American, speaking English at home, with his Irish wife, and at work, teaching at a secondary school. His identities are permanently created and recreated in language: always there, never entirely there. Instead of identity

configurations, one could use the expression identity constellations, since constellations only exist when seen from the earth, and their place and position varies, depending on where you see them from. And furthermore, considering the speed of light, it is very possible that most of those stars did already die, being no longer there, in the open field of our expanding universe. The little points of light are words, and the future will show us new constellations – in the open field of our expanding language. Fernando Lemos, a Portuguese artist and poet living in Brazil, seems to be speaking about this from his position of observer of constellations – in his identity too:

Places
where I
feel as if I
go to deliver
a message and I
lie
(72).

(*my translation*).

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“FADO” AND NOTHING ELSE

Ana Dantas

Para a Professora Maria Irene Ramalho.
Uma alma forte



Guitarra portuguesa

Resumo: Analisa-se um caso demonstrativo em que *fado* é o meio, e constrói-se uma analogia entre materialidade, aparência e tradução.

Palavras-chave: Fado; fado-destino; meio; materialidade; aparência; tradução.

Abstract: This essay analyses a representative case-study, in which *fado* is the aesthetic medium, at the same time that it tries to build an analogy between materiality, appearance and translation.

Keywords: *Fado-song*; *fado-fate*; aesthetic medium; materiality; appearance; translation.

Ainda não lhe conhecemos verdadeira tradução. “Fado” tem resistido ao longo dos tempos a repetidas tentativas de tradução que, por tão frustrantes, têm vindo a ser progressivamente abandonadas. “Fado” é fado e o falante de língua estrangeira, embora sem encontrar termo equivalente, parece não se perturbar com a situação, aceitando-o na sua especificidade. Encontramos “traduções” em dicionários e enciclopédias várias, mas, de facto, não conseguem refletir bem o significado. Uma pesquisa feita através da *Wikipedia* apresenta resultados para Fado, FADO e até eFADO, mas não são satisfatórias.

Durante anos, “fado” (canção), futebol e Fátima foram símbolos de um regime que resumia Portugal a estes três paradigmas, com um significado comum, alienação. E se “fadós” e guitarradas hoje se desdobram em plural de viagens e de canções, no dedilhar da viola e da guitarra, nos intérpretes e na amplitude das suas cordas vocais, nas casas típicas por onde a poesia ressoa, fazendo transbordar de felicidade o coração de quem a escuta, o fado-destino mora ao lado. A palavra portuguesa *fado* é geralmente traduzida por *fate* ou *destiny*, bem como a palavra *saudade* por *longing* ou

loss. No entanto, estas traduções ficam muito aquém da complexidade do seu verdadeiro significado. Interessa-me esta terminologia porque faz parte de um desígnio estrutural muitas vezes esquecido. Ao contrário do que possa querer parecer, o fado-destino é o meio clássico ou digital que sustenta a materialidade das coisas, permitindo uma atualização constante dos elementos. Ora, este fado-destino não tem nada de estático. Pelo contrário, está em permanente movimento.

É uso dizer-se que o destino já está traçado e será essa talvez a essência principal do “fado”, quer dizer, a impotência do indivíduo perante a sua sorte mas, quando se fala em fado-destino, esta asserção deixa de ser verdadeira.

Tomemos, como exemplo, “The Road not Taken”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Neste poema de Robert Frost, o meio é essencial para podermos entender a dúvida e o estado de espírito do poeta quando tem de tomar a decisão por qual dos caminhos seguir. Mais do que uma questão sentimental, ou de intuição, a fisicalidade e a aparência do trilho foram fatores preponderantes para que tivesse tomado uma primeira decisão. Só que a materialidade, no ato da escolha, pesou mais pelo fator da diferença, o que fez com que optasse pela menos viajada. Fazendo um paralelismo com Hans Gumbrecht (2009: 10-12), verificamos que este autor alerta para o sentido de a presença poder ser um fator que se articula no movimento e no espaço que se designa por “aparência”, que aqui, neste poema de Frost, faz todo o sentido. A vivência e as experiências do passado incorporam-se no presente, tornando-se vivas e perpetuando memórias. Sempre que falamos sobre presença do passado, estamos a falar sobre entrar no passado, sentirmo-nos dentro do passado, deixar que os nossos corpos produzam essa presença. E, em todas estas variantes, a presença é sempre material. Esta “aparência” é referida por Sandy Baldwin (2014) e explicada quando recorre a Michel Foucault (2008) sobre a noção do discurso como possuindo uma “materialidade repetível” que é “da ordem da instituição mais do que da localização espaciotemporal” (103). Através desta materialidade uma “afirmação circula, é usada, desaparece, permite ou impede a realização de um desejo, serve ou resiste a vários interesses, toma parte em desafios e lutas, e torna-se um tema de apropriação ou de rivalidade” (105).

Ora este discurso encontra eco enquanto “lugar do literário” que, segundo Baldwin, significa “ver a materialidade dos formatos como

literatura” (2014), formulação de que são exemplo os pixéis, fluxos que circulam e se renovam ininterruptamente, também eles sujeitos a falhas, vírus e recuperações, mas também a propostas de leituras e formatos vários, quer internos quer externos.

E o que é a literatura senão uma materialidade de formatos, na tentativa de um preenchimento de múltiplas revelações?

Importa agora regressar à questão do meio e verificar como este é um fator de presença do qual não nos podemos dissociar, enquanto veículo transmissor de boas e más notícias e, concomitantemente, enquanto elemento gerador de um fluxo dinâmico de energia. Neste caso, o elemento presença far-se-á sentir em grau tanto maior quanto mais o meio tenha sido danificado ou alvo de mutilações, agressões ou memórias (Gumbrecht 18).

Para Robert Frost, todas estas matrizes foram preponderantes, sobretudo quando associadas àquela situação em particular, a opção pelo caminho a seguir. Este meio de que falo é, na sua essência, o verdadeiro fado-destino que, tantas vezes e de forma errada, teimamos em separar.

Fernando Pessoa também enfrenta este dilema quando, referindo-se às nuvens, se interroga comparando-as a si mesmo: “Nuvens. . . São como eu, uma passagem desfeita entre o céu e a terra, ao sabor de um impulso invisível, trovejando ou não trovejando, alegrando brancas ou escurecendo negras, ficções do intervalo e do descaminho, longe do ruído da terra e sem ter o silêncio do céu” (2008: 194).

ou nos remete para o fado:

. . . Toda a poesia – e a canção é uma poesia ajudada – reflecte o que a alma não tem. Por isso a canção dos povos tristes é alegre e a canção dos povos alegres é triste.

O *fado*, porém, não é alegre nem triste. É um episódio de intervalo. Formou-o a alma portuguesa quando não existia e desejava tudo sem ter força para o desejar.

As almas fortes atribuem tudo ao Destino; só os fracos confiam na vontade própria, porque ela não existe. . . (1979: 98)

Quanto a mim, e para que conste, todos nós temos “essa coisa” a que chamamos fado-destino, quer dizer, meio. Mas, em Portugal, o que todos temos e é só nosso, é “Fado”.

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CAMINHOS PARA “A SABEDORIA POÉTICA”

Fernando Guimarães

Resumo: Com o Modernismo dá-se uma valorização da expressão simbólica, o que evidencia o facto de este movimento artístico não ser só vanguarda. Ele encontra raízes em movimentos anteriores como é o caso do Simbolismo. Almada Negreiros refere-se explicitamente à importância do símbolo na sua obra, o que se vê claramente no seu livro *Mito-Alegoria-Símbolo*, embora ele tenha assumido uma forte atitude de vanguarda. Uma opção como esta tem sobretudo em vista reduzir o papel da subjetividade na poesia. Fernando Pessoa, com a sua conceção de poesia dramática, que é uma encenação de vários autores, encaminha o Modernismo numa direcção que é precisamente a mesma.

Palavras-chave: Simbolismo; Modernismo; símbolo; alegoria; subjetividade.

Abstract: The modernist literary movement is characterized by its symbolical expression that means more than an avant-garde artistic movement. It has its origins in preceding movements such as Symbolism. Almada Negreiros refers explicitly to the importance of the symbol in his work, which is evident in his

book *Myth-Allegory-Symbol*, although he assumes an avant-garde attitude. Such an option tends to restrict its subjective role in poetry. Fernando Pessoa's conception of dramatic poetry, which is a simulation of several authors, leads Modernism to a path that is precisely the same.

Keywords: Symbolism; Modernism; symbol; Allegory; subjectivity.

Entre nós, os simbolistas apostaram numa renovação da linguagem poética, a qual quebrou a tradição literária do seu tempo e se colocou mesmo numa linha de evolução que conduziu de certo modo ao Modernismo. Assim, poemas como “A epifania dos licornes” e “Um cato no pólo” e o texto introdutório de *Horas* de Eugénio de Castro abrem caminho a um expressão futurista ou surrealizante; grande parte da obra de Ângelo de Lima – pelo modo como desarticula a expressão verbal – antecipa propostas da poesia experimental; alguns aspetos significativos da poesia de Camilo Pessanha não deixam de estar presentes no Pessoa ortónimo, em particular as suas propostas interseccionistas.

Será, pois, com o Modernismo que a mudança há de atingir um dos pontos mais altos na nossa literatura, nomeadamente na poesia. Definir-se-á uma poética que se vai preocupar em valorizar o papel desempenhado pela linguagem no poema. Tal valorização implicava não só questionar uma expressão muito marcada pela subjetividade ou sentimentalidade, a qual não era mais do que uma deriva epigonal dos poetas românticos, mas também confrontar-nos com o próprio sentido dessa linguagem que passava a ser considerado sob uma forma diferida, a qual se abria para uma expressão simbólica.

Com o decorrer do tempo, este último aspeto, em que se considera o papel reservado ao símbolo, tornou-se particularmente sensível nas artes plásticas. Aí o princípio da imitação é posto claramente em questão. Dizer que “o artista não imita, mas cria” passou a ser um lugar comum; mas nem por isso deixara de entrar em conflito com um público menos preparado, fosse ele um frequentador de exposições ou um leitor de poesia. Em geral, era esta a receção. E se tal incompreensão já tinha acontecido em relação aos simbolistas, maior se tornou relativamente aos modernistas da geração do *Orpheu*.

Um representante dessa geração, Almada Negreiros, irá empenhar-se na valorização dessa expressão simbólica, o que ficou bem patente num livro de poucas páginas que publicou em 1948. Ele intitula-se *Mito-Alegoria-Símbolo*. Se quiséssemos ser breves, concentraríamos a reflexão por ele desenvolvida em duas afirmações que são, no fundo, uma espécie de dísticos: “Ver, conjugação dos cinco sentidos, é pensar” e “Homero era cego porque já tinha visto tudo”. Atente-se na circunstância de Almada se referir numa destas afirmações à cultura grega, como se reconhecesse estar aí o que seria uma verdadeira origem, e esta encontrava-se precisamente num poeta.

As epígrafes de J.-B. Vico e Delacroix que servem de limiar ao livro são também elucidativas. Aparece de novo o nome de Homero. É Vico quem se refere aos seus poemas, os quais, pelo seu fundo mítico, permitiriam criar condições expressivas onde a reflexão do homem encontraria um espaço favorável àquela visibilidade que, revertendo à primeira das duas afirmações de Almada atrás citadas, “é pensar”. E esse pensar, que no mito encontra um lugar de revelação, abre-se para uma expressão que será inovadora. Eis, confirmando tudo isto, a citação de Delacroix: “O novo existe e pode mesmo dizer-se que é precisamente tudo o que há de mais antigo”.

Almada Negreiros sistematiza neste livro os seus estudos e as suas intuições em torno de uma visão do mundo de natureza simbólica que assenta numa dilucidação de procedência geométrica

muito inspirada no pensamento teórico dos artistas da Renascença que prosseguiram os pontos de vista desenvolvidos pelos neo-platónicos. Daí a procura de uma *ratio hermetica* que encontrava a sua mais perfeita expressão, dentro da obra plástica de Almada, no mural “Começar” gravado a toda a extensão de uma das paredes da Fundação Gulbenkian.

Almada está atento à diferença entre símbolo e alegoria: “Das alegorias de Homero aos símbolos de Pitágoras vão cinco séculos gregos. Alegoria é anterior a símbolo. E regista-se o facto de se atribuir a Pitágoras a palavra “filosofia”. O que distingue alegoria de símbolo é uma não ter número e o outro tê-lo”. Se nos afastarmos de uma possível interpretação numerológica – que, no entanto, é essencial para se conhecer bem o pensamento de Almada na medida em que se encaminha para uma poética que deflui ao longo da sua obra e se apura no abstracionismo patente no referido mural –, poderíamos encontrar na expressão simbólica a capacidade da linguagem se dispor a uma expansão significativa que vem perturbar ou, finalmente, criar condições para que em arte aquele ideal de imitação, tão acalentado pelos precatistas a partir de Aristóteles ou Horácio, fosse posto em questão pelo Modernismo.

Palavras como *símbolo* e, referida a um movimento literário, *simbolismo* podem levantar algumas perplexidades e mal-entendidos. Mas tais mal-entendidos e perplexidades ocorrem devido a uma má compreensão do que seriam as múltiplas possibilidades significativas que ocorrem no símbolo, sempre que se contrariava a partir dele uma significação de procedência temática em que se enlearam o Decadentismo e o que, entre nós, se designou por Ultra-Romantismo, temática essa muito marcada pelo seu subjetivismo ou por uma muito direta emocionalidade.

O Simbolismo que aqui se valoriza – diga-se desde já! – corresponde ao perfil literário que vem de um Mallarmé, de um Rimbaud ou, no nosso caso, de um António Nobre, um Camilo Passanha, um

Ângelo de Lima; o Romantismo é o de um Novalis, um Hölderlin, um Shelley, um Keats ou o que se entrevê em alguns poemas de Alexandre Herculano, com posteriores derivas nos sonetos de Antero de Quental ou na poesia de Teixeira de Pascoaes. Ficam, assim, separadas as águas. E, tendo isto em vista, não causará surpresa admitir-se que a modernidade irá prosseguir os caminhos que poetas como estes souberam anunciar.

No referido livro de Almada há uma alusão à “sabedoria poética”. Ela reporta-se, em última análise, ao número. Mas aqui o número é a prefiguração de um saber que tende para a criação artística. As formas abstratas, a disposição geométrica para onde as suas obras da última fase enveredaram serão um ponto de chegada. Se se considerar o caso da poesia, Fernando Pessoa vai acabar também por admitir que ela resulta de uma outra forma de cálculo. Ele consiste, relativamente à própria linguagem da poesia, na observância de um princípio organizador, de uma “construção” para se usar uma expressão sua. Afinal, uma outra forma de “sabedoria poética”...

O sentido desta sabedoria acabou por ficar também expresso de uma maneira muito especial num dos auto-retratos de Almada. Nele, servindo de fundo a uma representação do seu rosto enigmáticamente formado por linhas que se cruzam para ganhar um maior relevo nos olhos, podemos ler ou talvez ver a partir desses olhos alguns pensamentos sobre a realidade da arte que são de Delacroix, Picasso, Vitruvius, Platão, Aristóteles, etc. Do primeiro, Delacroix, Almada escolhe esta afirmação: “Homero é nos antigos a nascente donde tudo saiu”. É assim que surge uma cadeia de conhecimentos ou saberes, de sensibilidades ou expressões imaginativas. A tradição, a presença de todo um acerbo de manifestações que corresponde à cultura que nos chega do passado era evocada por um artista que em 1915 muitos viam apenas como um futurista. Mais tarde – portanto num futuro que, afinal, se entrevia já no início do século com a geração do *Orpheu* – ligou-se à palavra cultura um sentido

perturbadoramente negativo. Sobretudo nos anos 60 do século XX, muitos se acolheram à grande sombra que desceu sob a forma de anti-cultura ou, como dizia Jean Dubuffet, de uma “cultura asfixiante”. A palavra *cultura*, acaso julgada como parente pobre do Espírito Absoluto hegeliano, sempre tem levantado alguma irritação e muitas suspeitas. Mas o que mais irrita nela é a possibilidade de a vermos como uma realidade histórica que, paradoxalmente, é vista estaticamente. A cultura reduzir-se-ia a uma sucessão de produtos culturais ou *quadros*, os quais em si mesmos seriam imóveis e, como tal, sofriam um enquistamento que podia ser o do epigonismo ou do academismo.

O aparecimento no século XIX das Ciências Humanas – que, aliás, também se chamam ciências culturais – não resolveu de todo esta situação. E, no entanto, uma opção de natureza filosófica que vinha já do século anterior, mais precisamente dos finais de setecentos, começara a abrir caminho para uma solução possível; trata-se da hermenêutica. Isto far-se-á contrariando aquilo que seria, a partir de Hegel e, mais tarde, de Marx, a triunfante marcha do pensamento em direção ao saber total do sistema ou da teoria, pois, com a hermenêutica, esta marcha passa a fazer-se circularmente. São os riscos inerentes ao chamado círculo hermenêutico. A relação entre a parte e o todo na área do simbólico, dado que se passa de um ao outro e vice-versa, conduz a uma espécie de petição de princípio: partir de um deles exige que se tenha partido antes do outro no ato da sua compreensão através de desenvolvimentos significativos, aos quais se junta, sobretudo no caso da poesia, todo um conjunto de ressonâncias significantes na medida em que estas são inevitáveis suportes de sentido ou, melhor, de sentidos.

Isto implica uma interpretação ou *leitura*, sendo este último termo o que corresponde ao que se há de tornar na duvidosa chave para muita coisa, inclusivamente as interpretações *ad libitum*. Ora é no âmbito do próprio círculo hermenêutico que se vai resolver a

falibilidade de uma interpretação tão radical; o que é falível é sucessivamente corrigível. Scheleiermacher havia já chamado a atenção para a insuspeita importância deste círculo. Se a interpretação é passível de deformação, esta tende a ser ultrapassada pelo progresso na compreensão do que se interpreta.

Consideremos agora o caso da literatura. A compreensão de uma passagem de um texto assenta na compreensão do contexto e deste naquela. Isto, no caso da poesia, não põe em questão as suas possibilidades de natureza polissêmica. Ora, neste caso, a polissemia não vai resultar em arbitrariedade, em interpretações aleatórias; uma interpretação tem que ser consentânea relativamente à composição do texto, à sua textualidade.

É aqui que se dá o encontro entre o autor e o leitor. À primeira vista, parece que a iniciativa é no primeiro que reside. Ele seria o sujeito da obra. Fala-se no paradigma do “sujeito forte”, o que nos vai conduzir a noções como a de génio, ou de inspiração tão em voga em pleno Romantismo. É que o cruzamento do Romantismo com as tendências filosóficas idealistas pós-kantianas concorreu para que se desenvolvesse a ideia de que o sujeito poderia atingir um conhecimento absoluto. A voz autoral confidenciava-nos qual era o sentido efetivo do texto, o que a tornava numa instância da verdade. Este ponto de vista foi alvo de algumas e bem merecidas críticas. Note-se, todavia, que o subsequente recuo do autor (quanto ao texto) não é a perda da subjetividade (no texto). Seria oportuno retomar aqui um ponto de vista de Maurice Blanchot, segundo o qual o sujeito não desaparece, mas sofre uma metamorfose. E através dela poderá falar-se, como veremos, no modo como essa subjetividade é passível de se objetivar.

Nenhum escritor entre nós levantou tão longe esse poder de metamorfose como Fernando Pessoa. Com efeito, o caso de Pessoa ganha um sentido especial, porque a heteronímia afeta e dá sentido à sua obra na sua globalidade. Tendo em vista Álvaro de Campos,

Alberto Caeiro e Ricardo Reis (e muitos outros, não esquecendo que o autor do *Livro do Desassossego*, Bernardo Soares, é apontado como um “semi-heterónimo”), Pessoa considera essas personagens autorais como sendo “minhamente alheias” (embora pudesse também dizer, por contraste, que o referido Bernardo Soares seria “eu alheamente”).

O recurso aos heterónimos consiste, pois, numa passagem da expressão pessoal, isto é, de uma personalidade que seria a do autor, para uma personificação diferente que passa pelo próprio texto. Uma rotação como esta implica múltiplas conseqüências ou levanta múltiplas questões que foram abordadas pelo poeta ou, pelo menos, estão implícitas na noção mesma de heteronímia. Desde logo o papel desempenhado pelo autor, problema que extravasa para outros como o da sinceridade ou autenticidade, o do *fingimento* (expressão que se torna central na sua poética e que o início de um poema seu consagrou: “o poeta é um fingidor”), o do caráter dramático da poesia, o da implícita redução da subjetividade, etc.

A despersonalização ocorrente ganha um sentido que se projeta naturalmente na escrita, criando até uma questão que é de natureza genológica. Com efeito, o recurso aos heterónimos faz-se através de uma expressão que tende a afastar-se da poesia lírica, que seria aquela que estaria mais próxima de uma manifestação da subjetividade ou da personalidade do autor, e aproximar-se de um género que corresponderia à poesia dramática. Num dos apontamentos soltos de Pessoa, há uma expressa dilucidação do que ficou dito. Assim, Pessoa considera, de acordo com Aristóteles, a divisão da poesia em lírica, elegíaca e dramática. Inicialmente, a poesia lírica é aquela “em que o poeta, concentrado no seu sentimento, exprime esse sentimento”. Progressivamente intervêm outros fatores, como a imaginação e o trabalho intelectual, o que se converte num limiar para a despersonalização, a qual traz consigo uma diversificação expressiva: “o mesmo estilo tende a variar”. Como termo dessa

evolução, “teremos um poeta que seja vários poetas, um poeta dramático escrevendo em poesia lírica”.

Há aqui uma dupla metamorfose: a de um gênero ou estilo num gênero ou estilo diferentes e, mediante a heteronímia, a do autor em múltiplos autores. Tudo isto converge num recuo de uma subjetividade a favor de uma maior objetividade que se funda numa realidade textual. Tal objetividade configura um processo de construção ou composição que, sob várias formas, podemos encontrar em poetas como Poe, Rilke, T.S. Eliot ou Fernando Pessoa.

Ora para essa maior objetividade concorre um segundo fator que ganhou particular relevo com a chamada de atenção para a obra de um investigador russo, Mikhaïl Bakhtine, a qual se desenvolveu a partir da primeira metade do século XX em círculos muito restritos, e que só se divulgará nos centros culturais do Ocidente pelos anos 70, isto é, nos anos em que o Estruturalismo ainda dominava. A sua abordagem da literatura pressupõe uma visão integrativa na área das ciências humanas, a qual se reporta à teoria da literatura, à antropologia filosófica, à história e ao que se tem designado por translinguística. Desenvolve-se, assim, um princípio de compreensão em que tais saberes ou conhecimentos dialogam entre si. Foi a introdução de uma metodologia que convoca várias ciências que permitiu ultrapassar o princípio estruturalista que via na linguagem ou, melhor, na linguística, o grande modelo interpretativo. O que caracteriza a criação artística, segundo Bakhtine, é o seu *dialogismo*. Ele pressupõe um cruzamento possível e sempre previsível com outras realizações artísticas ou culturais anteriores. Há, portanto, uma intertextualidade. O tempo e, nele, a própria cultura – aqui entendida como convergência única da história humana ou do tempo no homem – são interiores a um texto que se insere no círculo de outros textos.

Se considerássemos em geral a ação artística, veríamos como ela se distende para uma temporalidade – mas não aquela que provém

de uma interpretação estritamente sociológica ou historicista – em que múltiplas referências convergem para que se torne definitivamente numa criação ou, se se preferir, numa construção em face de outras com as quais se irá encontrar ou, tantas vezes, desencontrar até que, finalmente, seja ela mesma. E este é talvez o *saber* que não só na poesia mas também em toda a arte deve existir. . .

HÁ UM TEMPO PARA OS VERSOS: JOSÉ CUTILEIRO POETA

Fernando J. B. Martinho

Resumo: José Cutileiro (n. 1934) publicou dois livros de poemas, em 1959 e 1961, *O Amor Burguês* e *Versos da Mão Esquerda*, respetivamente. A poesia acabou, no entanto, por ser uma prática de juventude para o autor, que deu depois um rumo completamente diferente à sua vida intelectual. Daí que não se encontrem praticamente referências ao seu nome em obras de história e crítica literárias, ou em dicionários literários, e que seja quase nula a sua presença em antologias poéticas. Nos anos 70, publicou um importante trabalho no campo da antropologia social, *Ricos e Pobres no Alentejo*. Depois de Abril de 1974, deu início a uma brilhante carreira diplomática, sendo essa a imagem que atualmente o identifica junto da opinião pública. Nos começos dos anos 80, iniciou a publicação de textos cronísticos e, mais recentemente, tem repartido a sua intervenção na cena portuguesa pelos obituários que publica no semanário *Expresso* e os comentários sobre política internacional na Antena 1 da RDP. Voltando aos livros de poemas dados à estampa em 1959 e 1961, dada a relevância que lhes atribuo em termos intrínsecos e sob o ponto de vista de contexto cultural, proponho-me estudá-los,

tendo em atenção as leituras que deixam perceber, bem como os nexos que é possível estabelecer com algumas das crónicas de A.B. Kotter.

Palavras-chave: meio-literário português; *Almanaque*; poesia; modernismo; modernismo brasileiro; provincianismo; medo; geração de esquerda.

Abstract: José Cutileiro (b. 1934) published two books of poetry between 1959 and 1961, respectively *O Amor Burguês* and *Versos da Mão Esquerda*. But poetry would prove to be a youthful pursuit for the author, whose intellectual life then followed completely different paths. This explains why his name is absent from literary or critical works, dictionaries and anthologies. In the 1970s, he wrote *Ricos e Pobres no Alentejo*, an important work in the field of social anthropology. After the Revolution in 1974, he took up the brilliant diplomatic career with which his name is still associated. In the early 1980s, he became known as a newspaper columnist, and more recently he has been dividing his journalism between the obituaries in the *Expresso* and commentaries on international politics in Antena 1. I propose to go back to his early poetry, given its intrinsic value and relevance for the cultural context in which it appeared, and I will try to suggest several possible readings and connections with some A.B. Kotter chronicles.

Keywords: Portuguese literary-milieu; *Almanaque*; poetry; modernism; Brazilian modernismo; parochialism; fear; left-wing generation.

José Cutileiro fez parte do conselho de redação da revista *Almanaque*, que se publicou, em Lisboa, entre 1959 e 1961. Estas duas datas são também as que constam nos dois únicos livros de poesia que deu a público, *O amor burguês* e *Versos da mão esquerda*. Foram os referidos volumes incluídos em coleções de poesia que gozavam de justificado prestígio no meio literário português de então, a Coleção “Poesia e Verdade”, da Guimarães Editores, e a “Círculo de Poesia”, da Livraria Morais Editora. A presença, só por si, nestas coleções atesta a boa aceitação que, na altura, tiveram os seus poemas, coisa já sólida e segura, muito para além do meramente promissor em poeta em início de percurso. O mais surpreendente nisto tudo é que, depois de começo tão auspicioso, José Cutileiro tenha abandonado a poesia, ou, pelo menos, a sua publicação em livro. É certo que ele imprimiu um outro rumo ao seus interesses intelectuais e à sua pulsão de escrita, nomeadamente da escrita literária, como, mais tarde, viria a verificar-se.

Em meados dos anos 60, vemo-lo envolvido num trabalho de campo no Sul de Portugal, relacionado com os estudos de antropologia social, que então realiza em Oxford, e de que resultará a tese de doutoramento, aí apresentada em 1970, vinda a público no ano seguinte, sob o título *A Portuguese rural society*. Este trabalho, que se debruça sobre as estruturas sociais rurais do seu Alentejo natal, será objeto de uma primeira tradução portuguesa, com o título *Ricos e pobres no Alentejo*, em 1977; reeditada, acrescente-se, em 2004. Um pouco antes desta reedição, mais concretamente, em 1982, começa Cutileiro a publicar, na imprensa nacional, crónicas em que dá vazão a um agudo sentido de humor, a que não é alheia a tradição britânica com que teve, como vimos, ocasião de contactar mais de perto. Não é, assim, de estranhar que atribua as prosas a um súbdito de Sua Majestade, de sua graça A.B. Kotter, gozando de uma pacata reforma na zona saloia, não muito longe de Lisboa. “Bilhetes de Colares” foi o título que escolheu para as

suas crônicas, cheias de bem-humorada displicência e de não menor acutilância, na observação dos costumes nacionais. A sua última edição, em formato de livro, é de 2007 e foi a Assírio & Alvim que a preparou, com o título *Bilhetes de Colares (1982-1998)*. A atribuição heteronímica, que tem também reflexos a nível da própria tradução dos bilhetes para português, faz parte de um complexo jogo a que o autor recorre para mais livremente se rir e nos fazer rir, não sem uma ponta de “remorso”, da “feira cabisbaixa”, do Portugal que o seu amigo Alexandre O’Neill tão bem radiografou. Ao mesmo tempo, não deixa o disfarce heteronímico de homenagear o cultor máximo entre nós de tais fingimentos e ocultações, Pessoa, e por aí se integra numa respeitável tradição a que o poeta do *Orpheu* deu, entre nós, o impulso decisivo. Depois de Abril de 1974, dera, entretanto, José Cutileiro início a uma brilhante carreira diplomática, que o levou a ocupar postos de grande relevância em representação do País, sendo essa a imagem que, em larga medida, atualmente o identifica junto da opinião pública portuguesa. Mais recentemente, tem ele repartido a sua intervenção na cena cultural ou cívica nacional pelos obituários, muito ao gosto da grande imprensa internacional, que publica semanalmente no *Expresso*, sob o título “In Memoriam”; e pelos comentários que faz sobre um campo que lhe é bem familiar, o da política internacional, na Antena 1 da RDP.

A nota dominante no texto de abertura da revista a que, como vimos, José Cutileiro aparece inicialmente ligado é a ironia, com um toque de irreverência, como pode ver-se por este passo: “[A revista] Vem ao gosto moderno, segundo a ‘linha 1959’, trata por tu o teatro de Beckett e Ionesco, os escritores da Beat Generation, os Pat Boone ou os Georges Brassens, os íntimos de Françoise Sagan e as verdadeiras causas do caso Pasternak. Só não conhece os segredos dos painéis de Nuno Gonçalves, mas há-de chegar lá um dia” (*Almanaque* 1, 1959: 3). Uns anos depois, num livro da autoria

de Liberto Cruz que lhe é dedicado, José Cardoso Pires, chefe de redação de *Almanaque*, resumirá assim o “programa” da publicação: “O programa era simples: ridicularizar os provincianismos culturais, cosmopolitizados ou não, sacudir os bonzos contentes e demonstrar que a austeridade é a capa do medo e da ausência de imaginação” (*apud* Cruz 56). Esclareça-se, entre parênteses, que a “austeridade” a que Cardoso Pires se refere e a que associa o “medo” dominando aqueles tempos de endurecimento do regime salazarista não é a que nos últimos anos, embora não menos sinistra, sobre nós se abateu. . . Voltando ao *Almanaque* (cuja redação era composta, para além do já referido Cardoso Pires, por Augusto Abelaira, Luís Sttau Monteiro, Alexandre O’Neill e José Cutileiro) e ao seu propósito de crítica “irreverente” e demolidora da auto-complacência lusitana, ele também está bem presente no livro de estreia de Cutileiro, e designadamente num poema cujo título ecoa o da colectânea, “As educações burguesas” (1959: 41-44). A exautoração a que o poeta aí procede das “doces educações burguesas, idealistas e mistificadoras” faz com que, inclusivamente, não poupe alguns “bonzos” do cânone literário nacional, apresentados como vítimas das “educações burguesas” e de uma das suas consequências mais notórias, a tendência para o autocomprazimento na dor e na melancolia, ao mesmo tempo que, em contrapartida, enaltece a *sadia perversidade* de famosos libertinos franceses do séc. XVIII: “Meu Marquês de Sade, lido aos catorze anos e meu Laclos um pouco mais tarde – porque é que nenhum português escreveu um livro perverso – um livro verdadeiramente perverso, sadio como *Les liaisons dangereuses*? // Pobre Sá Carneiro, mestre escola dos cinismos frustrados. . . / Pobre Fernando Pessoa. . . / Pobres outros coitados que não fizeram mais que ter pena de si, durante toda a vida e de todas as maneiras que a rima permite, aplicadamente como meninos estudiosos. / – E por favor não me falem do Gil Vicente, / sobretudo não me falem do Gil Vicente!. . .” (*ibidem*: 42).

O livro de José Cutileiro insere-se igualmente no “gosto moderno”, na “linha 1959”, a que alude a nota de abertura de *Almanaque*, como não deixou de observar João Gaspar Simões, na recensão a *O amor burguês*, sublinhando o aproveitamento que o jovem poeta realiza, nos seus textos, dos “tesouros formais acumulados pelas gerações precedentes” (379), em sintonia, de resto, com o período de sedimentação e interiorização da herança modernista que a década de 50 representa, como, com rara perspicácia, o Pe. Manuel Antunes logo observou nos começos desse decénio (179-183). O leque das suas leituras é amplo e delas dão notícia alguns dos poemas, como, por exemplo, aquele que já citámos, com referências a Sade e Laclos; ou um outro, de título francês, “Ma petite existence” (1959: 53-54), em que são convocados os nomes de dois autores que, de diferentes modos, fortemente contribuíram para a consolidação da modernidade poética, Verlaine e Rimbaud, com destaque para este último, de quem, inclusive, se transcrevem, no original, dois versos da célebre “Chanson de la plus haute tour”. No cosmopolitismo da geração de Cutileiro, a literatura de língua francesa ocupa, aliás, um lugar de grande relevo, como pode ver-se ainda pela presença, em *O amor burguês*, de epígrafes em poemas, que estes depois glosam, do St. Exupéry de *Terre des Hommes* (cf. “Convite à guerra – 2”: 27-30) e de Michaux (cf. “Deus fez o mundo e os holandeses a Holanda”: 55-56), poeta que, registe-se, Ramos Rosa traduzirá no n.º 3 das folhas de poesia *Árvore* (edição fac-similada, 2003: 239-243). Mas a leitura de outros poetas contemporâneos, neste caso de outras latitudes, e sem o recurso a qualquer epígrafe, é também sensível em vários textos animados de um desenvolvimento espírito lúdico, que colhe alguma da sua inspiração na libérrima sem-cerimónia de modernistas brasileiros como Manuel Bandeira e Carlos Drummond de Andrade (cf. Cochofel 162-166). Este mesmo crítico chama concretamente a nossa atenção, na recensão que fez ao livro de Cutileiro de 1959, a par de outros

livros de Cesariny e de O'Neill, para a estrofe inicial do poema "Não beijarei a cova do ladrão": "Não beijarei a cova do ladrão / Senão a Teresa. / Só Teresa merece que eu lhe beije / A cova do ladrão" (1959: 59-60). A preferência de que, ao longo da década de 50, beneficiaram aqueles dois representantes do Modernismo brasileiro junto de alguns poetas portugueses começa, de alguma forma, a ser abalada, na passagem dos anos 50 para a década seguinte, pela seca forma de cortar o verso e pelo gosto do concreto e do "prosaico" de um poeta posterior do Brasil, João Cabral de Melo Neto, de cuja aclimação à nossa lírica foram dois dos primeiros responsáveis Alexandre O'Neill (provavelmente autor da nota de apresentação não assinada do poeta brasileiro, que acompanhava, no nº de Maio de 1960 de *Almanaque*, a transcrição de "Cante a Palo Seco" e responsável pela seleção dos seus *Poemas Escolhidos*, vindos a público, em Portugal, em 1963) e José Cutileiro, como se pode ver em diversos poemas do seu segundo livro, *Versos da mão esquerda*, designadamente no que dá o título ao volume (11-13) e em "Requiem" (45-48).

Merecedora de menção especial, entre as três epígrafes que antecedem os poemas de *O amor burguês*, a par de outras razões, pela óbvia relação que estabelece com o título da colectânea, é a que traz, em Cutileiro, a assinatura de Thomas Mann: "Porque se há qualquer coisa capaz de fazer de um literato um poeta, é este meu amor burguês pelo humano, pelo vivo, pelo banal" (1959: 11). A caracterização que João José Cochofel faz, na nota crítica a que já nos referimos, da "intenção" do poeta, ao transcrever as palavras do escritor alemão, como sendo uma "intenção visivelmente satírica" (163), parece-me um tanto excessiva; e a questão não será assim tão simples, como avisa a terceira das epígrafes, proveniente de *Pensées* de Pascal. Nas páginas que dediquei ao livro de estreia de Cutileiro, em *Tendências dominantes da poesia portuguesa da década de 50*, a propósito do significado da escolha

efectuada pelo poeta, eu preferi falar de “distanciamento irónico” e de “ironia” (Martinho 458-462), ideia a que, de resto, o próprio Cochofel aparentemente não se furta, ao assinalar o que chama a existência de uma “situação irónica”, comum aos três poetas cujos livros está a recensear, para além de Cutileiro, Cesariny e O’Neill. Ora a citação de Thomas Mann, que Cutileiro coloca à entrada da sua recolha, pertence a uma das suas mais famosas novelas, “Tonio Kröger” e, concretamente, faz parte da carta que, no termo da narrativa, o protagonista dirige a uma sua amiga, a pintora russa Lisaveta Ivanovna (443-445). Talvez valesse a pena ampliar um pouco a passagem da novela, por cuja brevidade, sem dúvida por óbvias razões de espaço, o poeta optou a fim de tornar mais claro o pensamento da personagem. Antes do passo transcrito, escrevia Tonio as seguintes palavras: “Admiro aqueles que, cheios de orgulho e frieza, ousam aventurar-se pelo caminho da grande e diabólica beleza, desprezar os ‘homens’ – mas não os invejo” (*ibidem*: 444). E, no seguimento da frase citada em epígrafe, dizia: “Daí vem todo o calor, toda a bondade, todo o humor, e quase me inclino a crer que é deste amor que se fala quando se diz que, sem ele, aquele mesmo que falasse todas as línguas dos homens e dos anjos não passaria de um bronze ressoante ou de um símbolo sonoro” (*ibidem*: 445). Já antes, na mesma carta, o protagonista da novela de Thomas Mann se referia a si mesmo como “um burguês que se perdeu nos caminhos da arte, um boémio com saudades da boa educação, um artista com má consciência” (*ibidem*: 444), acrescentando logo a seguir:

É bem a minha consciência burguesa que me faz entrever em toda a arte, em todo o extraordinário e em todo o génio algo de profundamente equívoco, de profundamente suspeito, de profundamente duvidoso, que me enche desta fraqueza enamorada pelo

que é simples, ingénuo, agradavelmente normal, pelo que não é genial, pelo razoável. (*ibidem*: 444)

Tal como Tonio Kröger, debatendo-se, enquanto poeta, “entre dois mundos”, também Cutileiro deixa perceber, nos seus textos, a sua condição de ser contraditório, dividido entre a nostalgia “pelo humano, pelo vivo e pelo banal” e as exigências da arte que cultiva, irremediavelmente distantes, todavia, das que dominaram a estética presencista, obcecada pela condição de excepcionalidade do artista. Lembre-se que “o amor pelo humano” de que fala a personagem de Thomas Mann encontra um equivalente no que era o combate do historiador Marc Bloch por “uma história mais ampla e mais humana”, conforme pode ver-se no texto de dedicatória ao seu companheiro nos *Annales*, Lucien Febvre, de que fez anteceder *Apologie pour l'Histoire ou Métier d'historien*, e de onde foi retirada a epígrafe terminal incluída em *Versos da mão esquerda*: “Nous sommes les vaincus provisoires d'un injuste destin” (61).

A par do poema a que já aludimos e em que se apontam alguns dos malefícios das “doces, idealistas e mistificadoras educações burguesas”, há que colocar um outro (1959: 61-65), epónimo do título do volume e bem ilustrativo de um ingrediente fundamental da lírica de José Cutileiro, a ironia, e da ambivalência em que esta figura assenta. O poema, à semelhança de “As educações burguesas”, recorre aos ritmos mais soltos do verso livre, até pela sua clara opção narrativa. O sujeito poético imagina-se num aeroporto, entregue à observação dos que partem para longe e às fantasias amorosas que nele suscitam duas mulheres, a quem mentalmente se dirige, usando diferentes formas de tratamento (você e tu, respectivamente). A primeira corresponde ao figurino baudelairiano da passante, uma “senhora loira” que se dirige para o avião com um cãozinho de luxo e que leva o sujeito a fantasiar ousadas eróticas, que vão um tanto à frente das sonhadas por uma sua

possível inspiração nacional, o Cesário, seduzido por mulheres loiras do Norte:

Minha senhora loura eu também vou consigo
Na gola do seu fato
Preso nas suas ligas
Dentro dos seus desejos mais profundos
Que o seu marido ignora que o seu amante ignora
Eu vou consigo
O avião vai-nos levar agora
Até aos países mais distantes
E atravessarei os ares do mundo
acariciando a sua branca mão. (1959: 62)

A segunda, tratada de modo mais familiar por “tu”, é um amor inventado, que o sujeito, imaginosa e ironicamente, receia que “outro” venha, afinal, a colher. Há, aqui, todo um jogo mental, feito de imagens de futuros encontros, íntimos jantares, nostalgias da juventude e que, ao mesmo tempo, acaba por não escapar à ambiguidade da relação entre o “eu” que fala e o “outro” que se imagina: “E todo aquele amor inventado por mim / Que ambos vimos crescer tranquilamente / Será dele que sendo como eu não serei eu / . . .” (*ibidem*: 63). O poema passa, depois, por uma decisiva mudança de rumo, ditada pela necessidade de os homens darem “a mão por cima da distância / e de [serem] só [eles] no fim de tudo” (*ibidem*: 64), em face das divisões existentes no mundo. As fantasias, essas, vão “perder-se no azul do rio / Na espuma fresca leve vigorosa / Na brisa da manhã soprando sobre o rio”, e é a “má consciência do artista”, para retomarmos a expressão atribuída a Tonio Kröger por Thomas Mann, que, lembrada das contradições do “tempo maldito”, que então se vive, prevalece e faz por não esquecer os “homens que tudo separa”: “Os que mataram os tiranos e foram esquecidos / Os

que os esqueceram e ergueram estátuas aos tiranos / Os que morreram de fome do lado de lá do mar / Os que do lado de cá do mar deitaram ao mar os stocks de comida / Os que ainda sofrem rezando e pensam que tudo sempre foi assim” (*ibidem*: 64).

Os membros do conselho de redação de *Almanaque* eram gente de esquerda, num contexto histórico, porém, que já não era o da geração de esquerda anterior, que viveu o “romantismo das certezas” (Pires 35) de que se fala num dos romances que melhor reflectem a atmosfera mental de crise dos fins da década de 50, *O Anjo Ancorado* de José Cardoso Pires, ele próprio, como vimos, um dos responsáveis pela orientação daquela revista. O cepticismo, o desencanto desses intelectuais, a que não é alheio o *malaise* a que o existencialismo, então entre nós e noutros lugares, deu, maioritariamente, expressão, fica bem patente no pessimismo que ensombra as estrofes finais do segundo poema de um díptico intitulado “Convite à guerra”, incluído em *O amor burguês*:

“Do que fui nada ficou

Do que amei nada ficou

Do que esperei nada chegou”

O mundo é um longo comboio de emigrados

E todos os Mozart foram assassinados

E de cada lado do profundo rio

Que as parcas governam e leva ao inferno

Desce sobre as margens mais densa e mais fria

A noite de inverno. (30)

A referência, na passagem transcrita, aos *Mozart assassinados* tem a ver com a epígrafe que antecede o poema, oriunda de *Terre des Hommes* de St. Exupéry e situada quase no fecho do livro, onde figura como metáfora dos destinos que a vida, cruel, corta e deixa

por cumprir: “C’est un peu dans chacun de ces hommes, Mozart assassiné”. A violência veiculada por esta imagem está igualmente presente no metaforismo bélico que domina o primeiro poema do díptico (*ibid.*: 25-26), muito típico de textos poéticos nacionais de um período muito marcado pelas incertezas e os temores da Guerra Fria:

Este destino escrito com dê grande
De que agora nos falam os jornais
Estas manhãs monótonas iguais
Feitas de mortos e de propaganda

Este ar semeado de navalhas
A desenhar-nos golpes na garganta
E estas mãos que apenas se levantam
Soltam um cravo e tombam decepadas

Este convite amável disfarçado
Como para um jantar ou um bailado
Vindo num tom de valsa e feito à guerra

E este amor tenaz que em nós persiste
Que contra tudo subterrâneo existe
E procura florir rompendo a terra. (*ibidem*: 25-26)

Assinale-se ainda, no plano da forma da expressão, a modernidade deste soneto, construído com frases que não se completam e que, para o seu completamento, contam com a cumplicidade e a cooperação do leitor de poesia da época, então já, de algum modo, familiarizado com tais procedimentos de assumida hostilidade à frase (cf. Friedrich 216). Pode parecer estranha a presença, em *O amor burguês*, de uma “homenagem” a um artista como o escultor Jorge

Vieira (“Homenagem a Jorge Vieira” 34), inequivocamente situado à esquerda do espectro político e autor de uma maquete premiada, em 1952, num concurso internacional do Monumento ao Preso Político Desconhecido; e de uma *lembrança* do escritor fascista Robert Brasillach (“Morreu Robert Brasilach” 69-70), que afirmava que era preciso “matar os judeus / Queimar os livros comunistas”, segundo regista o próprio poema de Cutileiro que o evoca. Mas é conveniente sublinhar, por um lado, que personalidades acima de qualquer suspeita de simpatia pelas posições políticas do poeta francês se encontravam entre os que solicitaram ao general de Gaulle a comutação da pena de morte a que ele foi condenado em 1945 (cf., a este propósito, um texto não assinado, porventura do próprio Cutileiro, sobre a condenação de Brasillach, incluído na secção “Armazém de letras & diversos” do n.º de Novembro de 1959 de *Almanaque*, sob o título de um seu livro então publicado em Portugal, *Como o Tempo Passa*); e, por outro lado, que o texto do poeta português é de um tempo em que há uma outra largueza de pontos de vista, que rejeita o simplismo do preto e do branco, conforme, de resto, lembra a epígrafe de Pascal, para quem “rien n’est simple de ce qui s’offre à l’âme” (11).

Há, no segundo livro de José Cutileiro, um claro predomínio das formas regulares, mantendo-se, no entanto, a sua poesia fiel à tradição modernista, a qual, desde os seus inícios, esclareça-se, a bem dizer nunca as renegou, fazendo delas, pelo contrário, um dos meios de vincar o seu propósito de permanente inovação e renovação. *Versos da mão esquerda* abre com um poema que dá o título ao volume (11-13) e em que se torna visível o *apport* trazido à poesia portuguesa pela leitura de João Cabral de Melo Neto, que vai favorecer a abertura a novas maneiras de lidar com o verso, com os ritmos, com a exigente concretude do real, de torcer o pescoço à retórica e ao adorno, e de enfrentar a velha oposição *poético/prosaico*. Do poeta português, em diversos poemas do seu segundo

livro, se pode dizer que ele é, para usar a expressão de João Cabral num seu conhecido poema, “*a palo seco*”; e, se emprega “o seco”, como se sublinha no mesmo poema, é “porque é mais contundente” (Melo Neto 203). A *contundência* do poema de abertura do livro faz-se sentir de diferentes modos. Para começar, o poema assume-se como *saudação*, “homenagem”, não a alguém, como é habitual, mas a uma parte do corpo, a mão esquerda. Depois, partindo do adjetivo que, em latim, correspondia a esquerdo, *sinister*, *sinistra*, o poeta dá ao texto uma orientação metalinguística, enumerando várias das aceções em que o adjetivo pode ser utilizado: como “contrário de dextro”, como algo “que é sombrio, propenso a crime”, ou que dá “sua preferência / Ao que chamamos de mal”, ou que associamos ao *noturno*, ou ainda, como substantivo, significando “Desastre, calamidade”. É, como se vê, posta em relevo a conotação negativa do termo, que é, aliás, a que a *doxa* tende a subscrever, esquecendo o primeiro sentido que o Dicionário Houaiss regista: “[Diz-se da pessoa] que usa preferencialmente a mão esquerda”. Há um aspeto em que Cutileiro decididamente se afasta de Melo Neto – no lugar que reserva à ironia, no humor que envolve todo o desenvolvimento *explicativo* do poema, na estrutura falsamente silogística que lhe empresta: “Por isso a saúdo aqui / Por essa sua coragem / Lhe presto, neste momento, / A mais rendida homenagem. // Mas porque sei que, sem ela, / Bem melhor vida teria / Apesar de a estimar tanto / Talvez a adextre um dia” (13). Não por acaso, certamente, não é apontada diretamente a conotação política de esquerda; tal gesto seria, na verdade, desnecessário, uma vez que o leitor da época não deixaria de dar ao título do poema, e, por extensão, do livro, o seu sentido último, como versos feitos por alguém que se situava, politicamente, à esquerda, em oposição ao regime vigente.

É uma das mais temíveis armas usadas pelo regime salazarista para controlar o povo português, o medo, que está em causa

no segundo poema da coletânea (“Os medos” 14). O texto, cujo título pluraliza o medo, assume-se abertamente como tendo sido “plagiado, em parte”, de António Ferreira. “Em parte”, sublinhe-se, porque o *plágio* do poeta renascentista, a bem dizer, só se verifica na primeira quadra do soneto: “É a medo que escrevo. A medo penso, / A medo sofro e empreendo e calo. / A medo peso os termos quando falo. / A medo me renego, me convenço”. Cutileiro toma como ponto de partida do seu poema alguns tercetos da parte inicial da epístola XII de Ferreira a Diogo Bernardes (303), em que o autor dos *Poemas lusitanos* dá conta dos problemas de liberdade de expressão que, então, enfrentaria (cf. comentário de T.F. Earle, *ibidem*: 589). Com o seu gesto, o poeta presta homenagem a um seu colega do Renascimento pouco frequentado, enquanto lírico, pelo leitor moderno, e, assim, lhe empresta alguma visibilidade, mas o que verdadeiramente lhe interessa é chamar a atenção dos que o lêem nos princípios dos anos 60 para as múltiplas faces de um sentimento de todos bem familiar: “A medo guardo confissão, segredo, / Dúvida, fé. A medo. A medo tudo. / Que já me querem cego, surdo e mudo.” (1961: 14). Não por acaso, por outro lado, o soneto é dedicado a Alexandre O’Neill, autor do mais conhecido texto português sobre o tema, “Poema pouco original do medo” (*Tempo de Fantasmas*).

Não é igualmente fortuito que “Lembrança da égua velha” seja, embora por motivos diferentes, um dos mais difundidos poemas de José Cutileiro (1961 33-34). As razões para a preferência concedida a este texto têm a ver com a identificação que o leitor experimenta com o que o sujeito poético sente relativamente à necessidade de manter viva a memória de um animal que lhe foi íntimo e que muito amou. É a ternura com que o sujeito fala da “velha égua”, filtrada pelo realismo da observação, contrário a qualquer assomo de sentimentalidade, que acaba por conferir *pathos* ao texto e leva à forte adesão do leitor, juntamente com

o sortílego fluir dos ritmos, assentes num domínio perfeito das virtualidades da redondilha.

Fica implícito, pela leitura do poema, que a égua a cuja “lembrança” o poeta reiteradamente apela, já está morta. A morte é, pelo contrário, *explicitamente* referida, e está mesmo no centro dos três poemas que constituem o conjunto “Dois ou três mortos” (*ibid.*: 43-51). Para sermos mais exatos, não é tanto a morte que está em causa nestes textos, mas sim, e em sintonia com o gosto do poeta pelo concreto, “dois ou três mortos”, como o título do conjunto lembra, e um verso quase no fim do terceiro poema, de alguma forma, vem reforçar (“Pensar talvez nos mortos, não em morte...”) (*ibidem*: 51). Dos três poemas, apenas o primeiro, que é o mais importante do conjunto e um dos mais notáveis em toda a colectânea, exhibe no seu título uma categoria genológica: “requiem” (*ibid.*: 45-48). Os outros dois, para efeitos de título, recorrem à posição que ocupam no conjunto, “Segundo poema” e “Terceiro poema”. A designação genológica escolhida para o título do poema inaugural do conjunto tem maior incidência no vocabulário da música, para além naturalmente da liturgia, onde, como é sabido, teve origem (é a palavra inicial do intróito da missa dos mortos: “Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine”), mas não deixa de estar presente entre as categorias genológicas da literatura, às vezes, todavia, sem se ter propriamente em conta a natureza religiosa da sua proveniência, como acontece no texto de José Cutileiro, em que é usada em sentido lato de texto motivado pela morte de alguém. O “Segundo poema” orienta-se abertamente no sentido da crítica a uma sociedade dominada pela cobiça e pelo “dinheiro” (palavra obsessivamente repetida ao longo do texto), muito ao jeito de um tema de proveniência bíblica, o da *vanitas*, que move todo o esforço humano e que a morte deixa implacavelmente em evidência: “Tudo isso acabou já: preço nenhum / Marca o que foi um dia o teu perfil” (50). A nota pessimista, se não mesmo de desencantada

ironia, persiste no último texto, o único que segue as vias de uma reflexão geral sobre a morte, conforme, aliás, a hesitação presente no título do conjunto já dava a entender:

Se depois dela, conforme a educação,
O meio, o cromossoma e o destino,
Vais ter o Nada Universal, sais minerais,
Céus ou Infernos vários, o Purgatório ou o Limbo,

Mais não te resta que cruzar os braços,
Pensar talvez nos mortos, não em morte. . .
A nossa idade, filha, é feita de embaraços
E ninguém sabe as linhas com que se cose a sorte. (51)

“Requiem” é um texto fundamentalmente descritivo, em que o enunciador define a sua presença sobretudo através do sentido da visão, do “olhar atento” com que observa “As coisas”. Desde o início do texto que o sujeito afirma a intenção de não falar do “espírito” que “já animou o corpo / . . . capitalmente morto” que tem diante de si. E, no fecho do poema, irá mesmo reiterar a ideia de que deixará de fora “tudo” o que vá além “Do corpo morto que aí está”:

Do coração assassinado
E do resto que se comenta,
De seu futuro sossobrado,
De seu passado quase presente,

Do que a imaginação impúdica
Acrescenta a cada momento,
De tudo quanto não posso hoje
Confirmar com olhar atento,
De tudo quanto sai fora

Do corpo morto que aí está:
Nada dirá a minha boca
Nem a minha mão escreverá. (*ibidem*: 48)

O que o poeta, ao longo do texto, no essencial faz é deter-se na descrição do corpo de uma mulher, que tem início num pequeno detalhe do “cabelo” e termina nas “mãos”, passando pelos “braços”, pelos “seios”, pelo “ventre”, pelos “joelhos”, as “pernas” e os “pés”. Há nessa descrição uma minúcia anatómica, naturalista, própria de alguém que cursou Medicina e que, por esse motivo, teve ocasião de fazer a experiência da observação dos corpos na morgue. Resta, por último, saber se será possível ao sujeito rasurar por completo essa sua condição de sujeito, com afetos ou sentimentos, diante do objeto que observa e descreve, como, de resto, deixa perceber a sua fixação em certos aspetos do corpo descrito.

O desencanto, próprio do momento que experimenta a geração a que José Cutileiro pertence, ilustra-o perfeitamente a sequência de cinco poemas, sob o título de “Algumas alienações da esperança”, com que o volume encerra (53-59). Um conceito chave da teoria crítica do marxismo, o de alienação, é aplicado a um sentimento que fundamentou as certezas da geração de esquerda que antecedeu a sua: a esperança. Os tempos não vão agora de feição para certezas fáceis. Daí o tom duro e cru que assume a lucidez do poeta, que não se consente ilusões e não hesita em recomendar a alguém que solte “a matilha” à esperança para a impedir de “entrar” com os seus enganos. Ou sugere mesmo que a “Esperança” não é mais que nome de mulher, no espantoso poema quarto da sequência que narra, com desapiedada crueza, a história trágica de um dos muitos que a vida trucidou:

Roubou: primeiro por fome depois por gosto
E foi crescendo assim seu corpo triunfal.

Mentiu. Matou. Traiu.
Seu olhar de diamante negro e frio
De tudo ia sabendo. Sua boca
Rasgou as bocas em que se pousava.

. . .

Na vala onde a puseram nem gravaram
O seu nome de Esperança. (58)

Os “triumfos” do “terror”, os *pelourinhos*, são, ademais, coisa de todos os tempos, e a única “herança” que resta ao sujeito e àquela a quem se dirige, no soneto final, é a lucidez, a necessidade de assunção do destino próprio, a insistência no que há de mais fundo e íntimo em si, e, assim, resistir:

Assim foi e será. Mas eu e tu,
Com a parte de dentro posta a nu,
Insistimos em ter segredos, cartas. . .

E quando me levarem, por fim morto,
Fico contigo inteiro embora parta. Quem sabe
Onde começa e onde acaba um corpo. . . (59)

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UMA CASCATA DE METÁFORAS

Alberto Pimenta

Resumo: Problematizando os limites lógico-teóricos de gramaticalidade impostos ao discurso, este ensaio debruça-se sobre diferentes abordagens dos processos de significação e de simbolização. Sendo a metáfora uma funcionalidade da capacidade de simbolização e de representação do espírito humano, não é menos certo que, em toda a língua – que é sempre representação – todo o conhecimento humano assenta inevitavelmente na metáfora. Reconhecê-lo é o momento trágico de autoconhecimento a que a poesia se esforça por dar forma num tempo que nunca permanece.

Palavras-chave: conceito individual; conceito geral; *logofo-rização*; metáfora; metonímia; indizível; fingimento; credibilidade.

Abstract: Problematizing the theoretic and logic limits of a gramaticality imposed on discourse, this essay discusses different approaches to the signifying and the symbolizing processes. Metaphor being a function of the human spirit's capacity to symbolize and represent, it is equally true that in every

language – which is always a representation – the whole of human knowledge is inevitably based on metaphor. The ability to recognise this is the tragic moment of self realization which poetry acknowledges and struggles to give form to in a time that never remains.

Keywords: individual concept; general concept; *logophorization*; metaphor; metonymy; unutterable; pretence; credibility.

Que diferença há entre usar uma casa para habitação, ou então usar para o efeito metade dum andar num prédio dito de condomínio? Alguma há, quer no que respeita à “causa material” e à “causa formal” do lugar escolhido para o fim indicado, quer na diferença que vai dum “domínio” para um “condomínio”. No entanto, o cidadão que habita o seu andar refere-se invariavelmente à “sua casa”.

Parece que aqui estaria um caso exemplar de metáfora segundo a definição de Aristóteles: um “trânsito” duma designação “estranha” ou “imprópria” do género para a espécie, ou da espécie para o género, ou de espécie para espécie, ou ainda por pura analogia. Ora os teorizadores das coisas da língua, neste caso, não falam de metáfora. Porquê? Será também que as categorias de Quintiliano (145) não servem aqui às mil maravilhas? O termo metafórico, diz ele, ou é *necessário*, ou *mais expressivo*, ou *mais decente*.

Quintiliano ocupa-se assim da razão discursiva da metáfora, enquanto os exemplos de Aristóteles ficam obscuramente pela sua qualidade semântica. Assim o “navio parado”, exemplo cuja explicação nos é fornecida dizendo que ele está ancorado mas não parado. . . porque balouça. Nesse caso, dizer que uma ave está parada quando não voa seria também metáfora, porque na sua qualidade de ser animado algum movimento sempre tem. Será que em grego

a instrução semântica aponta mais para algo como imóvel? Mas mesmo assim, e ao fim da viagem, e em relação a ela, não há, no sentido próprio, imobilidade do navio até à viagem seguinte?

“Uma característica notável do pensamento de Aristóteles – como foi justamente observado – é a sua tendência para pedir ao conteúdo da linguagem a revelação de todas as espécies de relações, tanto naturais como morais” (Robin 85). Rossi-Landi (167) é ainda mais radical ao incluir Aristóteles naquele tipo de filósofos que, contentando-se com refletir sobre a língua na própria língua, mostram que são de opinião que isso é suficiente para esclarecer os problemas humanos em geral.

Dentro da perspectiva epistemológica que separa claramente a coisa e o conceito, pode dizer-se que Aristóteles é um dos que inauguram a autoalienação do pensamento (“Ao limitar-se à operação sistemática com meros conceitos, sem tomar em consideração a sua legitimidade material, o pensamento torna-se coisa” [Müller-Strömsdörfer 44]). O que espanta é que a moderna linguística continue em boa parte a proceder deste modo. E isto não se refere apenas ao uso das categorias retóricas, mas aos limites lógico-teóricos de gramaticalidade impostos ao discurso (v. Ian Robinson *passim*).

O exemplo dado de início é geralmente reconhecido como um caso de alargamento dum conceito individual concreto a conceito geral, alargamento que, pelo menos em certos casos pragmáticos, assim estabilizou, quer dizer, se tornou semanticamente estável. O conceito individual adquiriu uma espécie de livre-trânsito para se tomar conceito geral, livre-trânsito esse a que, certos lógicos, chamam *logóforo*.

Mas não é também através de uma logoforização implícita que se dá o alargamento de certos conceitos concretos originariamente muito bem determinados, sejam as “asas” do avião, as “pernas” da mesa ou os “frutos” do trabalho? Não é por se tomarem todos implicitamente conceitos gerais que ficam disponíveis para varia-

das concretizações? Claro que não há nenhum inconveniente em considerar este trânsito um trânsito metafórico, isto é, que vai de conceito concreto para conceito concreto por pura analogia, final, ou formal, ou material. Simplesmente isso, nos casos em questão, além de constituir pura pré-história do conceito, escamoteia o facto de não poder haver classes diversas do mesmo conceito individual, sem que este se subordine explícita ou implicitamente a um conceito geral.

Portanto, em primeiro lugar, parece-me de utilidade separar as metáforas que resultam da formação de novas classes depois da generalização de conceitos individuais concretos dessas outras em que operam transversalidades simbólicas ou semióticas. Porque aqui estamos perante qualquer espécie de fronteira. Quer chamemos a tudo metáfora, quer distingamos, uma diferença há entre o mero alargamento semântico por motivos pragmáticos e o desvio de um campo semântico por motivos simbólicos, normalmente em clara subversão das normas de associação paradigmática. Claro que a distinção de vários tipos de metáfora tem muitos antecedentes. Desde Quintiliano até aos neoclássicos franceses estabelecem-se tipologias circunstanciais, sem grande fundamento filosófico ou linguístico. Assim, por ex., o jogo entre coisas animadas e inanimadas, com as quatro passagens possíveis que a metáfora opera a partir delas. Mas dada a fundamental impossibilidade de saber se os átomos e os astros são animados ou não, a distinção revela-se um mero formalismo.

O primeiro *distinguo* de causa em relação à metáfora e sua natureza partiu de alguns escolásticos (Curtius 6 1967: 228), que tentaram separar as águas entre a metáfora dos poetas (um fingimento para realçar a descrição, portanto, digamos, uma *técnica discursiva*) e a metáfora teológica (uma necessidade para representar aquilo que, em língua humana, não é representável, digamos então, uma *técnica semântica*).

Dentro da distinção, é interessante observar que a metáfora teológica (semântica) seria o lugar-comum, ao contrário da poética (discursiva), essa sim realizadora de transversalidades simbólicas ou semióticas. Tão pragmáticas são as metáforas teológicas que, segundo informa J. A. Millán (10), as missões cristãs traduziram “Cordeiro de Deus” por “Foquinha de Deus” nas línguas da Lapónia. Ou então temos que dizer que o símbolo é devoluto, ou que se satisfaz com as funções do conceito geral. Com as funções do conceito geral parece satisfazer-se a “Cidade de Deus”, e o pó que o homem é e em que se tomará (à parte a *contradictio* em termos de essência e de tempo, pois nada pode tomar-se no que já é) constitui em última análise um *rebus* químico de fácil solução, a menos que se considere que o polo da metáfora está no termo homem, porque o “pó” é o género que transitoriamente se fez a espécie “homem”.

A metáfora poética é doutra natureza, mais complexa: “L’amour est un oiseau rebelle”, canta Carmen na ópera de Bizet, e “Um amigo / é o lugar da terra / onde as maçãs brancas são mais doces” (Eugénio de Andrade 142). Carmen: eu não sou nem deixo de ser rebelde, nem é isso que afirmo ou não afirmo. Então é o amor que é rebelde? Claro que não: o amor (conceito geral do estado sentimental individual de Carmen) também não é rebelde; isso seria psicologicamente uma contradição. Não, o amor é um pássaro (transversalidade não semântica, mas semiótica), e os pássaros, esses sim, são rebeldes, não se deixam normalmente domesticar. É por deslizamentos metonímicos e por um salto semiótico de natureza metafórica que se infere que Carmen é rebelde. A asserção é metafórica, mas a rebeldia é metonímica: é uma questão semiótica, não simbólica.

Este é o caso comum da metáfora poética, que se move na fronteira da metonímia, e na fronteira entre o símbolo e a semiose. Poderá dizer-se: sou rebelde e não sou? Creio que não. Creio que terá de se dizer: sou rebelde, mas afirmo-o transversalmente.

Ora isto é muito diverso do que Weinrich (333) afirma do “barco da nação”. É ou não é um barco?, pergunta ele; e diz: “A resposta não pode deixar de ser: sim e não”. Temos *ad infinitum* uma espécie de *double bind*: sim e não. Sendo assim, esta metáfora seria excelente para o não-comprometimento, mas menos recomendada para o discurso poético. E o exemplo de Eugénio de Andrade mostra-o claramente. É uma cadeia de tal transparência simbólica que a questão do “é e não é” nem se coloca. Não se coloca essa questão nem a do comprometimento ou não-comprometimento. Que diferenças dentro do fenómeno a que se chama metáfora!

Digamos que o discurso de Eugénio de Andrade liga elos antes soltos, estabelece uma cadeia não lexicalmente nem simbolicamente solidária, antes *melodicamente* solidária, no sentido técnico de melodia e no sentido técnico em que a solidariedade é aqui a harmonia das partes componentes. Como na música, opera-se através da metáfora a possibilidade de momentaneamente ouvir o indizível e assim experimentar a experiência de outro. Do outro. A metáfora poética é a comunhão interindividual do não representável em linguagem. Os escolásticos trocaram as coisas, porque esta metáfora é que aproxima a linguagem da divindade.

Bom, e que é que esta metáfora tem que ver com a metáfora do alargamento semântico? Susana R. Rivarola (53-4) recolheu algumas das mais curiosas definições de metáfora, da responsabilidade da moderna ciência da linguagem: “atribuição autocontraditória”, “predicação contraditória” ou “contradeterminação”, afirmação de “algo impossível” de acordo com os significados “usuais” das palavras relacionadas, “não-pertinência semântica”, “quebra da congruência semântica”, “não-solidariedade lexical”, “incompatibilidade semântica”, “combinação de signos apercebida como inusual e anómala”, “forma normalizada de anomalia semântica” ou “quebra da isotopia do discurso”, “distorções do material lexical”, e mesmo “pequenos ‘escândalos’ semânticos”.

Tudo isto é tão perturbante e sinal manifesto da tal autoalienação do pensamento esquecido da sua legitimação material, que a seguinte observação de S. J. Schmidt (1973) se revela lapidarmente pertinente: “. . . expressões com intenção referencial, quer dizer, [que podem ser] usadas para se referirem a correlatos extratextuais, não são signos ou etiquetas para “coisas”, mas instruções. . . A questão da instrução semântica da referência dum expressão não pode ser portanto: Que designa a expressão x?, mas sim: Que instruções dá x ao alocutário no acto de comunicação típico? . . . As velhas distinções entre ‘sentido’ e ‘significação’, ‘conceito’ e ‘significação’, ‘designado’ e ‘significado’, etc, deviam nesta base desaparecer por completo, ou então ser reformuladas” (238).

Todorov (18-19) deu um passo importante no sentido do esclarecimento da questão, ao afirmar: “Si un auteur de l’ époque classique emploie le mot ‘flamme’ dans un sens métaphorique, on ne peut pas affirmer qu’ il veut dire *amour*. Il veut nommer un sens qui ne peut être nommé avec exactitude par aucun autre signifiant. Le mot ‘flamme’ ainsi employé est le moyen le plus direct qui soit de signifier ce qu’il signifie. ‘Flamme’ ne signifie pas *amour*, au sens où ‘amour’ signifie *amour*”.

Todorov procede depois à distinção entre processos de *significação* e de *simbolização*, incluindo por exemplo, nos primeiros, a relação entre o significante “flamme” e o significado “flamme” e, nos segundos, a relação entre o significante “flamme” e o significado “amour”. É uma distinção interessante e subtil, não fosse a significação ser também uma simbolização. Parece que mais exato seria falar de simbolizações de primeiro grau e de segundo grau, e até de terceiro e de quarto grau. Trata-se de uma cadeia infinita e, em cada caso, a escolha do elo parece obedecer aos critérios que S. J. Schmidt assim definiu (1971): “A escolha dum palavra para o lugar vazio dum texto depende da sua capacidade de realização dos valores funcionais ligados a esse espaço (eufónicos, rítmicos, sintácticos e

semânticos)” (124). Schmidt está neste lugar a referir-se ao discurso poético, mas creio que o que diz, e ainda o que acrescenta acerca da impossibilidade de substituir um termo uma vez escolhido para o desempenho duma tarefa discursiva, se pode aplicar a qualquer discurso que obedeça a uma *elocutio* elaborada.

Vistas as coisas assim, a metáfora não se desvia de nenhum grau zero do discurso, nem substitui nenhum termo que seria o próprio: a metáfora é uma funcionalidade da capacidade de simbolização e de representação do espírito humano e, nessa condição, por certo, um dos universais do seu funcionamento. Isto abrange o simples alargamento pragmático de conceitos que estabilizaram na nova função, tanto como o mais subtil discurso poético, passando pela metáfora que abertamente sugere um comprometimento ou não-comprometimento.

Afirmar, p. ex. que um vinho é um “néctar” é uma aliciante forma de não-comprometimento. Afirmar que ele tem “20 anos”, quando porventura os não tem, é uma asserção comprovavelmente falsa, susceptível mesmo de sanção penal. A metáfora (o “néctar”) não obriga: gostos não se discutem.

Quando, no entanto, alguém fala hoje de “escravatura” e, segundo o gosto corrente, acrescenta “entre aspas”, está com isso querendo declarar que usou o termo metaforicamente, isto é, impropriamente, porque a “escravatura” acabou. Nós sabemos que o que acabou foi a licença de uso do termo “escravatura” a conceptualizar certa relação de exploração do trabalho humano. Considerar que a abolição do termo trouxe consigo a abolição do facto da exploração em condições de total dependência económica e moral é pura coisificação da língua; acrescentar as tais “aspas”, eventualmente com os indicadores levantados, é vénia à dita coisificação, isto é, compromisso aberto com ela e implícita renúncia a criticá-la.

Talvez a metáfora demonstre, para além das insuficiências conceptuais e designativas da língua, as próprias insuficiências inerentes ao

conhecimento humano. De facto, todo o conhecimento experimental meramente subjetivo só é suscetível de exprimir-se em termos de conceptualização geral. Daí as metáforas que exprimem sensações reais do sujeito que, no entanto, não têm causa própria objetiva, visível ou material: são as “picadas” nos olhos sem que nada de exterior os pique, é o “peso” nas costas quando não há carga objectiva, é o “ardor” na pele quando nada a queima, etc.

A noção de insuficiência é tão grande que pede-se de empréstimo o termo que define a sensação quando há fenomenologia objectiva a provocá-la. A credibilidade é conseguida por meio dum fingimento. Mas não é esse o próprio papel da língua, ou de toda a representação? Então por que é que se finge que às vezes há fingimento, e às vezes não? Por que é que se fala de propriedade e impropriedade de termos e conceitos, se eles são também viajantes no tempo do discurso?

Onde o termo “metáfora” começa a ser realmente interessante é aqui mesmo, na fronteira do conhecimento, onde este começa por se revelar pura metáfora por entre metáforas. A este respeito, de resto, coincidem as Escrituras e os pensadores e poetas gregos, nos seus mitos fundadores.

Nos resultados a que chega e nos meios que para isso usa, o conhecimento humano é apenas uma metáfora. Exemplarmente o diz Fernando Pessoa, quando diz que com um novo Deus a verdade nem veio nem se foi, apenas o erro mudou.

Os primeiros homens reconheceram que estavam nus (*Génesis* 3, 7). Que espécie de aquisição de saber é esta? Não é um saber da coisa em si, porque antes já estavam nus. É um saber do valor simbólico ou representativo da coisa, é isso. Estavam nus, mas está-lo nada simbolizava. Conhecer é atribuir valor representativo àquilo que simplesmente é. Na sua génese e no seu resultado, o conhecimento é por conseguinte uma metáfora.

Esta metáfora resulta da separação do sujeito em sujeito e objeto de conhecimento, é portanto de natureza reflexiva. Não será

a metáfora sempre uma certa forma de autoconhecimento, ou de projeção do sujeito no mundo? De facto, “o prado ri” porque o sujeito ri de o ver (ou simplesmente ri de satisfação), e “o rio chora” porque o sujeito chora de o ver (ou simplesmente chora de tristeza). A metáfora transpõe para o mundo a consciência subjectiva, desloca-a do conceito para a imagem.

Mas assim como os primeiros homens, no momento do autoconhecimento simbólico, decidem anulá-lo (tapando a nudez), assim a conceptualização do conhecimento humano decide anular o autoconhecimento instaurado pela metáfora, declarando-a um trânsito, um desvio. . . uma metáfora. Declarar que uma nova designação é metafórica é, de certo modo, anulá-la, ou pelo menos desautorizá-la.

Também Édipo, no momento do autoconhecimento, o nega, arrancando os olhos. Quando Weinrich diz que “o barco da nação” é e não é um barco, o que faz é repetir este gesto milenário de alargar e logo negar o conhecimento que se alargou.

A amada é “um anjo”? No próprio momento de o declarar, eis que se nega que o seja. E no entanto (Todorov o disse) não há outra designação que tão exactamente marque o que o amado quer exprimir: a sua consciência de que a amada lhe é superior a nível de manifestação física e espiritual, a sua entrega àquela que poderá ser um guia, como Beatriz no *Paraíso*, um certo pudor em aproximar-se e realizar uma troca humana de sentimentos, etc. Enfim, o indizível não é para ser dito ou, no ato de sê-lo, imediatamente se nega.

No *Frei Luís de Sousa* de Garrett, o conhecimento que vem trazer a catástrofe não se faz imediatamente simbólico, uma vez dito? Não traz consigo várias anulações, todas recolhidas no “Ninguém” do clímax? E a criança, na sua inocência, não se cansa de reiterar esse mesmo valor meramente simbólico dum tal conhecimento? As crianças não distinguem as designações consideradas próprias das metáforas.

Claro que sem esta distinção não há catástrofe, apenas limbo. Neste sentido, pode afirmar-se que as designações correntes constituem um limbo (de espera, de insatisfação), enquanto as metáforas são o conhecimento que augura a catástrofe e, por isso, tratam de autonegar-se por vários modos.

Há uma dimensão que exclui a metáfora, que lhe não deixa lugar possível: o tempo. Com as mudanças que introduz mesmo no que é ou parece ser essência, o tempo é a grande metáfora. É como uma cascata: sempre o mesmo e sempre diferente. Incessantemente flui e se transforma e retoma a forma.

A propósito de poesia concreta, Siegfried J. Schmidt (1971) fala de “Ainda-língua” e “Já-língua”, “Já-sentido” e “Ainda-sentido” (148). Creio que assentaria perfeitamente àquilo a que se chama metáfora, pelo menos no momento da sua criação, porque a passagem do tempo acaba por negá-la duma ou doutra maneira: considerando-a uma falsidade, ou recuperando-a para o lugar-comum das designações.

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SCRIPTS PARA LEITURAS INFINITAS¹

Manuel Portela

Resumo: Ao tratar a Internet como a base de dados para textos programados, a série de obras intitulada *The Readers Project* (2009-2015), de John Cayley e Daniel C. Howe, chama a atenção para a política da linguagem contida na infraestrutura eletrônica e no conjunto dos processos algorítmicos de dadificação dos usos quotidianos da linguagem. Explora as propriedades gerativas da linguagem e a processabilidade em rede do meio digital para interrogar as condições discursivas e materiais de produção de sentido numa cultura medial algorítmica ubíqua. Enquanto exemplo da poética de base de dados, *The Readers Project* constitui uma poderosa reflexão sobre a linguagem como modo de ação social e sobre a política de processamento linguístico na era da recolha massiva de dados.

¹ Este texto resulta da reescrita de uma comunicação originalmente apresentada no encontro “Chercher le Texte: Locating the Text in Electronic Literature” (organizado pela Electronic Literature Organization, na Universidade de Paris VIII, 24-27 de setembro de 2013). Expresso a minha gratidão aos seus organizadores, em especial a Philippe Bootz.

Palavras-chave: literatura eletrônica; leitores programados; geradores textuais; poética de base de dados; “détournement”.

Abstract: Treating the Internet as a database for generating new writings, the series of works titled *The Readers Project* (2009-2015), by John Cayley and Daniel C. Howe, draws attention to the politics of language contained in the electronic infrastructure and in its algorithmic processes for datafying our uses of language. This series explores the generative properties of language and the networked processability of the digital medium to interrogate the discursive and material conditions of meaning production in our pervasive algorithmic media culture. As an example of database poetics, *The Readers Project* contains a powerful reflection on language as a mode of social action and on the politics of language processing in the age of big data.

Keywords: electronic literature; programmed readers; textual generators; database poetics; “détournement”.

1. Escrever (com) a Internet

Investigação recente sobre a literatura eletrônica tem tentado descrever a Internet como um espaço de dados para intervenções literárias. Através da análise de obras que fazem uso da rede como meio de produção poética, estes discursos críticos dirigem a atenção para os modos através dos quais a própria infraestrutura da Internet se tornou constitutiva das nossas práticas linguísticas e sociais (ver, por exemplo, Hayles 2012; Funkhouser 2012; Portela 2013; Emerson 2014; Pressman 2014; e Baldwin 2015). Algumas das criações digitais

analisadas naquelas obras críticas usam e tematizam as novas condições de produção robótica da escrita a dois níveis: em primeiro lugar, adotando elas próprias os algoritmos, protocolos, recursos e interfaces da rede como parte integrante da sua poética material; em segundo lugar, desnaturalizando a transparência comunicacional do meio digital e dirigindo a atenção para o código-fonte, para a retórica específica das ferramentas de software e para as relações económicas incorporadas na tecnologia.²

Em *Reading Writing Interfaces* (2014), Lori Emerson analisa a consciência da interface em vários processos de escrita e em diversos média. A sua abordagem arqueológica à poética medial permite desconstruir a invisibilidade da interface e da ideologia da superfície multitoque “amigável” que se tornou dominante no mundo atual da comunicação mediada por computador e nos paradigmas da engenharia de interação humano-computador. Através da análise literária de uma série de obras, que incluem poesia concreta feita com a máquina de escrever, os fascículos manuscritos de Emily Dickinson e várias obras de literatura eletrónica – de *First Screening* (1984), de bpNichol, à colheita algorítmica na rede levada a cabo por Cayley e Howe em *The Readers Project* (2009-2015) –, Emerson mostra a fricção do material da interface como condição necessária para a expressão. A retroação sugerida entre digital e impresso propõe a intermediação como um processo dinâmico e estratificado, contribuindo para uma redefinição crítica tanto do “eletrónico” como da “interface”.

De particular importância para as obras programadas que são o tema deste artigo é *The Internet Unconscious* (2015), de Sandy Baldwin. Baldwin faz uma leitura literária da Internet enquanto

² Entre os exemplos mais significativos que, ao longo da última década, tematizam as suas condições socioeletrónicas de produção encontram-se obras de Mary-Anne Breeze (MEZ), John Cayley e Daniel C. Howe, Jim Andrews, Angela Ferraiolo, Eugenio Tisselli e Jody Zeller.

espaço de escrita e leitura inabarcável e inapreensível, descrevendo a própria Internet como um conjunto distribuído de práticas (do e-mail às redes sociais ao ASCII ao CAPTCHA ao spam) constitutivas quer da net enquanto “literatura eletrônica”, quer do sujeito da Internet. Esta tentativa de nomear o inconsciente da literacia eletrônica desloca o foco de atenção de uma explicação estritamente funcional ou estética dos processos de escrita e leitura que ocorrem nos e através dos meios digitais, para uma teorização autorreflexiva sobre Internet, não tanto como um espaço de escrita mas enquanto uma nova forma de escrita, ou seja, enquanto uma série de protocolos de escrita que projetam os nossos atos de escrita e os nossos corpos nesse “além” do ecrã e da sua interface gráfica do utilizador.

A autoprojção nessa *escrita-Internet* torna-se assim a introjeção do seu aparelho, ou, por outras palavras, a condição inconsciente da nossa situação telecomunicacional. Colocando retoricamente em primeiro plano o *eu que escreve* e jogando com a divisão entre o *eu que escreve* e o *eu que é escrito* – o “I” recorrente do seu texto realiza-se performativamente como materialização autoconsciente do sujeito escrevente da *escrita-Internet* –, *The Internet Unconscious* é também uma instanciação autoexemplificativa do poder do discurso: “Let me state: I write away, as in wear away, one drifting piece of our inconceivable inhabitation of the net. Writing away through myself and toward myself and in lieu of myself. Writing as weapon and spew and nothing.” (107)

É enquanto mecanismos para observar este “escrever com” e “ser escrito por” algoritmos e processos automáticos e inconscientes da rede que *The Readers Project* (Cayley & Howe, 2009-2015) se torna relevante, na medida em que permite repensar a poética gerativa da base de dados como expressão da condição da linguagem humana na era do processamento automático. A criação literária algorítmica incidiria, por um lado, sobre a crescente dadificação dos usos

quotidianos da linguagem, que privatiza a palavra e a transforma num dispositivo de vigilância e controlo; e, por outro, sobre a possibilidade de revelar, através da automatização, as estruturas da linguagem enquanto modos de ação. No caso de *The Readers Project*, a geração de novas instâncias textuais funciona com base em protocolos de leitura formalizados que reassocia elementos de diversos *corpora* textuais, que vão de um pequeno texto auto-delimitado a pesquisas *n-gram* abertas na base infindável de textos da Internet.

2. Ler (com) a Internet

Writing only exists as it is read; or as function of its virtual, potential, and intermittent readability; or as function of memory, which is simply a special type of transcription within human readers. (Cayley 2013, n.p.)

The Readers Project (2009-2015) de John Cayley e Daniel C. Howe é o título geral de uma série de obras conceituais e processuais programadas, que exploram a dinâmica da escrita e da leitura em bases de dados em rede.³ O ato de encontrar o texto na base de dados é a sua maneira particular de localizar o literário em ambos os lados da performance literária: como um ato de escrita e como um ato de leitura. Com efeito, o entrelaçamento de escrita e de leitura, que ocorre nesta série de obras, performances e instalações, sugere que o literário pode ser uma forma de leitura que escreve e uma forma de escrita que lê. A reflexividade característica da prática

³ Documentação detalhada sobre as várias iterações do projeto – incluindo performances, instalações e publicações – pode ser encontrada em <http://thereadersproject.org/>.

literária poderia então ser descrita como o ciclo de retroalimentação algorítmica entre ler a escrita e escrever a leitura (Cayley 2011; Howe & Cayley 2011).

O título deste artigo – “*scripts* para leituras infinitas” – poderia ser reformulado como “*scripts* para escritas infinitas”, na medida em que cada leitura é iterada como novo ato de escrita. É neste campo de forças de transações e interações que nos inventamos como seres humanos: através de performances literárias, agora alargadas ao processamento robótico e ubíquo da linguagem natural. Todavia, aquilo que é mais singular nas intervenções programadas de Cayley e Howe sobre as bases de dados da linguagem não é a produtividade permutacional e poética dos seus algoritmos por si só, mas as suas implicações políticas e cognitivas, uma das quais é a consciência da natureza algorítmica das práticas de escrita e leitura nos meios programáveis **em rede**. **Nas últimas obras, a sua característica reflexividade algorítmica leitura-escrita e escrita-leitura foi programaticamente desenvolvida como intervenção estética e crítica sobre a própria Internet enquanto infraestrutura de escrita-leitura** (Howe & Cayley 2013; Cayley 2013).

A digitalização massiva da escrita que está em curso ocorre dentro de uma infraestrutura tecnológica e económica que tem sido descrita por Cayley e Howe como um processo de “emparcelamento” e “vectorialização” da linguagem natural e da prática simbólica (Howe & Cayley 2013: 2). Um dos seus objetivos principais, ao fazerem prospeção e recolha nessa gigantesca base de dados da língua inglesa com a ajuda involuntária dos algoritmos de pesquisa da Google, é reivindicar os bens comuns da linguagem escrita contra uma lógica proprietária do discurso. A função das letras minúsculas dos termos de serviço das grandes empresas de dados [“big data”] e de computação em nuvem [“cloud computing”] é naturalizar uma distribuição injusta de recursos no domínio da escrita e das práticas de leitura (Cayley 2013).

Em *How It Is in Common Tongues* (2012) – uma das suas intervenções mais significativas sobre a Internet como infraestrutura linguística –, a lógica do *copyright* no nosso sistema jurídico é posta em causa não apenas enquanto legado da cultura impressa e das anteriores tecnologias dos média, mas também enquanto um já previsível futuro vigiado e emparcelado pelo *copyright*, que está em vias de ser reconstituído e reforçado na cultura eletrónica. Nesta obra, o texto de *How It Is*, de Samuel Beckett, é reproduzido através de uma colagem de citações oriundas de fontes eletrónicas não atribuíveis a Beckett, sugerindo que a apropriação autorral e institucional pode sempre reverter para o fluxo comum da linguagem. Este processo de colagem, por sua vez, é obtido por através do *détournement* e da refuncionalização dos “algorithmic, compositional, and configurative agents of big software’s network services” (Howe & Cayley 2013: 1). Neste caso, Cayley e Howe usam um agente programado de leitura que se move de acordo com o algoritmo da “Expressão Comum Mais Longa” [“Longest-Common Phrase”].⁴

A estratégia do leitor programado é tratar a base de dados como um arquivo da língua em que é possível recuperar ocorrências de

⁴ Veja-se a descrição dos autores: “A Longest-Common Phrase (or LCP) is the longest sequence of words, beginning from a specific point in a text, that can be found on the web, not written by the author or about the text in question. The LCP algorithm is the procedure, generally employed by Phrase-Finding Readers, to locate such phrases via queries to public search engines like Google and Bing. The algorithm begins by doing a search for the first K words of a text, as an exact match (i.e. as a double-quoted string), with the addition of the author’s name and title words of the text excluded. If the search returns no results, one word is trimmed from the end of the string and the search is retried (if a K value of 10 was initially selected, then we search next for an exact match on the first K minus 1, or 9, words). If once again there are no results, the phrase is shortened again by one (to 8 in our example), and the search is repeated. When finally there is a match, the number of results and the list of matching URLs are stored. If for example, the search returns one or more matches for the first 6 words of the text, the next iteration of the algorithm will begin on the seventh word and proceed similarly. The algorithm terminates when the end of the text is reached and all words have thus been included in a matching phrase.” (2013, 2-3)

frases e colocações de palavras que correspondem a uma fonte protegida por *copyright*. A função do motor de busca sequestrado é mediar entre o algoritmo literário da obra e a base de dados geral da língua escrita em inglês. Esta colaboração involuntária mas estruturada, em grandes quantidades de dados, entre algoritmos de busca e um algoritmo de leitura torna-se o princípio de composição da obra de Cayley e Howe, que procura o texto dentro da base de dados da produção verbal em inglês disponível na rede. O processo de prospeção de sequências de palavras idênticas às da matriz culmina na produção de um livro impresso e encadernado em que o texto de Beckett deixa de ser o texto de Beckett, já que a sua voz autoral foi devolvida ao fluxo estocástico e probabilístico da linguagem, agregado roboticamente, a partir de inúmeros servidores da Internet. A definição do *copyright* e do direito de autor, nos séculos XVIII e XIX, resultou na reificação histórica da originalidade como um marcador jurídico para a atribuição de propriedade numa determinada organização da linguagem impressa. O capitalismo cultural desenvolveu-se com base neste reconhecimento da escrita como forma de propriedade e de capital, e no controle e licenciamento da sua reprodução.

how it was I quote¹ before Pim with² Pim after Pim³ how it is
three parts I⁴ say it as I hear it⁵

voice once without⁶ quaqua on all sides⁷ then in me when⁸ the
panting stops⁹ tell me again finish telling me^a invocation

past^b moments old dreams^c back again or fresh like those^d that
pass or^e things things always and^f memories I say them as I¹⁰
hear them murmur¹¹ them in the mud

in¹² me that were without¹³ when the panting stops¹⁴ scraps of
an ancient voice in¹⁵ me not mine

my¹⁶ life last state last version¹⁷ ill-said ill-heard ill-recaptured¹⁸
ill-murmured in the¹⁹ mud brief^{1a} movements of the lower face
losses^{1b} everywhere

recorded^{1c} none the less it's^{1d} preferable somehow^{1e} somewhere

¹www.nytimes.com/books/first/w/wiesel-sea.html (Aug 14, 2012. 1)

²www.cameracellularphone.org/tag/device (id. 1)

³www.kwarmmeud.com/darknesslakorns/?p=1501 (id. 4)

⁴www.youtube.lu/watch?v=MAssdbn_2LM (id. 2) ⁵cucurbite.wordpress.com/ (id. 2620000)

⁶gorwathawarband.guildlaunch.com/forums/viewtopic.php?t=8563276 (id. 2)

⁷pplsorce.com/people/Jim_Quaqu/ (id. 3) ⁸celebrityzap.com/AJ_Langer.html (id. 5)

⁹www.parrothouse.com/hlthcare.html (id. 4290)

¹⁰kindle.amazon.com/work/sample?asin=B002HHLW4M&pr=1&publisher=A3SWXVW6

¹¹sonicliving.com/artist/182670/past (id. 3200) ¹²www.blurb.ca/tags/design

(id. 25) ¹³www.iraised.it/s/web/index.php?page=7&cq=come-back-quotes (id. 3)

¹⁴www.sqlsaturday.com/158/privacypolicy.aspx (id. 7070)

¹⁵[ilovephilosophy.com/viewtopic.php?f=5&ct=142604&start=75](http://www.ilovephilosophy.com/viewtopic.php?f=5&ct=142604&start=75) (id. 1)

¹⁶pulsitemeter.com/military/Past-of-Hear.html (id. 2) ¹⁷www.bartleby.com/84/31.html (id.

29900) ¹⁸www.facebook.com/dctowing (id. 7860) ¹⁹lfpoa.com/headlines/resignation.htm

(id. 68300) ^{1a}www.cioran63.com/archief76.html (id. 9)

^{1b}circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/22333/UBC_1980_A1+M37.pdf?sequence=1 (id. 1)

^{1c}twicisy.com/i/XVig9 (id. 8) ^{1d}garagepunk.ning.com/profile/deuceloesely (id. 1)

^{1e}avevilonaso.com.myr.com/life-in-forsyth-finnegans-wake.php (id. 1) ¹⁹krex.k-state.edu/dspace/bitstream/2097/9824/1/LD2668R41985B72.pdf (id. 1)

^{1a}www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-63262234.html (id. 4430)

^{1b}www.goodreads.com/trivia/submitted/1057191-jason (id. 1)

^{1c}www.ustream.tv/recorded/24228375 (id. 843) ^{1d}www.xula.edu/cpsc/cs/megang/ (id. 19600)

^{1e}socrates.berkeley.edu/~plab/Palmer_Chap-08.pdf (id. 5710)

[7]

Figura 1. John Cayley e Daniel C. Howe, *How It Is in Common Tongues*, p. 7: colher os baldios digitais da linguagem com o algoritmo da Expressão Comum mais Longa.

Como o texto de Beckett foi montado a partir do fluxo de escritas na Internet, *How It Is in Common Tongues* (cf. Figura 1) sugere que o texto existe como uma potencialidade nas permutações da língua (tal como instanciado por esta colagem autoexemplificativa colhida na rede), e que são a própria língua e os nossos usos da língua que se tornaram meios de produção da Internet. Em vez de usar a sua demonstração algorítmica das noções de transclusão e transliteratura de Ted Nelson para reforçar o princípio do *copyright*, *How It Is in Common Tongues* chama a atenção para os modos como a própria Internet, através das grandes empresas de dados e dos seus termos de serviço, determina as práticas de escrita em rede e emparcela os baldios da linguagem.

Este enquadramento da própria rede como uma construção baseada na língua é uma forma poderosa de sustentar um argumento contra a privatização da linguagem e contra a normalização dos desejos humanos como oportunidades de transação. A língua surge revelada como um *capta* invisível da rede – o conjunto de dados fornecidos pelas nossas interações de escrita e de leitura diárias –, que passa a fazer parte da lógica publicitária com fins lucrativos e do sistema de vigilância e controlo por palavra-chave. A obra de Cayley e Howe constitui uma intervenção estética sobre as limitações inerentes aos termos de serviço não-recíprocos e aos algoritmos de busca, que eles cooptaram para as suas transações literárias:

As writers and readers we are forced to consider that our relationship with language and literature will never be the same. If the medium of literary art has significantly migrated to the network, where it is gathered, channeled, and filtered by big software on a massive scale, daily touching the linguistic lives of huge populations, then new practices for reading and writing with and against such services must surely arise and go beyond

any uses that are constrained by the terms of service or use now made unilaterally explicit by contemporary service providers. (Cayley 2013 n.p.)

3. A língua como infraestrutura

Se os princípios libertários de *How It is in Common Tongues* encarnam uma nova prática de leitura e de escrita que aborda a condição algorítmica da linguagem enquanto sequências de dados transacionáveis na era da Internet, *The Readers Project* tem outras implicações importantes para a produção do literário na rede dos média programáveis e para uma compreensão da performatividade do ato de ler na produção do literário. Algumas das instalações mostram agentes programados a fazer percursos de leitura sobre campos textuais de acordo com determinadas estratégias. Embora não estejam a tentar simular uma prática de leitura particular ou o processamento ocular real do texto à medida que os olhos se movem de um ponto para outro, os vários algoritmos de leitura dão ao espetador uma perceção material da natureza dinâmica da leitura. A leitura atravessa um campo de signos e esta travessia vai criando suas próprias constelações lineares e multilineares. Cada vetor de leitura realiza uma iteração de um comportamento ou estratégia de leitura particular e, deste modo, torna-se uma inscrição na superfície textual. Cada uma destas inscrições é o resultado da execução de *scripts* que constituem um determinado código de leitura maquínico (Portela 2013: 345-347).

Estes modos de leitura, que se inscrevem num determinado campo textual de acordo com uma estratégia de leitura programada, são experimentações formais com profundas implicações na localização do literário. Nas diversas iterações de

The Readers Project, o “literário” poderia ser localizado nos seguintes níveis:

1. como a codependência de leitura e escrita: a escrita existe através de uma intervenção que se reinscreve no campo textual de acordo com uma interação corporizada, o que significa que a escrita literária é coproduzida pela leitura literária – a “materialidade performativa” (Drucker 2013) do literário como um modo particular de leitura;
2. como uma instanciação reflexiva do processamento algorítmico da escrita e da leitura em ambientes de rede programados: o algoritmo gerador da obra sustenta uma experiência de leitura-escrita, alimentando-se das bases de dados e dos algoritmos da própria rede – o literário como um modo particular de reescrever a rede e de tornar explícitas as relações contratuais desiguais que regulam o processamento da linguagem cibernética nos atuais sistemas mediais;
3. como uma série de *scripts*, ou seja, como uma série de regras ou procedimentos que podem ser formalmente codificados num programa para gerar novas instâncias da escrita a partir de permutações linguísticas do arquivo da língua escrita – a literatura como a exploração aberta das combinatórias de estruturas da língua mediadas pela memória arquivada da escrita;
4. como “geradores de texto de diferentes escalas” (Montfort 2012) através dos quais os algoritmos de leitura colhem, destacam, sublinham, deformam, remisturam e citam vários sistemas textuais (desde um determinado texto ou obra até ao *corpus* inteiro dos textos pesquisáveis em língua inglesa) de acordo com uma regra formal que produz escrita;
5. como uma “ficção cognitiva” (Tabbi 2002), ou seja, como um sistema de auto-organização que representa os seus

próprios mecanismos; neste caso, o funcionamento dos *loops* estranhos que ligam mediações linguísticas e mediações programadas na rede eletrônica. A alteridade da Internet como um sistema puramente medial é ressignificada como um sistema linguístico dependente da linguagem natural. A linguagem seria assim um dos elementos infraestruturais constitutivos do inconsciente da rede.

Uma vez que estas leituras da máquina são reoferecidas como escritas a leitores humanos (distintos dos leitores maquímicos que percorrem as sequências de caracteres), a escrita da leitura e a leitura como escrita, contida em *The Readers Project*, transformam os leitores em metaleitores obrigados a ler o seu próprio ato de ler a leitura do programa. O movimento de leitura, que é retoricamente encenado dentro da superfície textual através da animação textual, é também uma chamada de atenção perceptual sobre a cinética contida no ato de mover os olhos de letra em letra e de palavra em palavra. Uma vez que os leitores programados dentro do texto oferecem o seu modo particular de ler como mais um exemplo de escrita para ser lida, ainda uma vez mais, por um leitor humano, as leituras propriamente ditas não podem ser espelhadas ou capturadas exatamente pelos leitores programados, apenas podem ser retomadas como encontros renovados com sinais. O modo particular de leitura programado na máquina de leitura e o ato humano de ler esse modo particular de leitura gera uma posição cognitiva. A escrita gerativa automática é apresentada como um ato de leitura que reescreve o texto e o torna disponível para leitura literária.

Os algoritmos de Cayley e Howe para definir os vários vetores de leitura conseguem evitar a entropia de uma seleção de palavras totalmente aleatória, conseguindo ainda assim espaço para associações inesperadas e improváveis. O efeito poético é produto dessa tensão entre todo o *corpus* de palavras no texto escolhido como

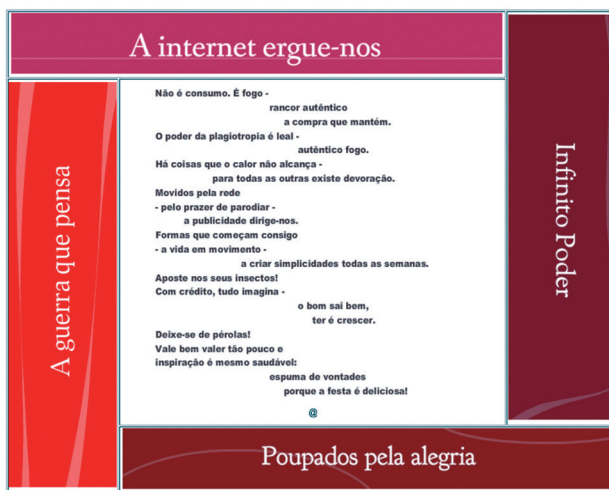
base de dados da obra e as regras de vizinhança que governam leituras particulares. Configurado como uma instalação para ser lida por leitores humanos, o processamento estritamente semiótico, baseado em regras de associação de palavras e executado pela máquina, entra nos processos humanos de substituição simbólica e de apreensão afetiva. O movimento textual, que tem lugar no texto que se lê a si mesmo, entra em conflito com o movimento de leitura que analisa e segmenta o texto ao ritmo de um leitor humano. Uma vez que cada leitura maquínica é também uma nova instância da escrita disponível para um leitor humano, o ato de ler a leitura da máquina torna-se um modelo para a iterabilidade infinita da escrita tal como atualizada por cada ato de leitura. A iterabilidade do código é utilizada para sublinhar o ato de ler como um campo de possibilidades fundadas na iterabilidade e na citabilidade da escrita.

As obras de Cayley e Howe estão baseadas numa interação auto-poiética com a rede como um sistema de notações de grande escala, onde a própria língua natural – e não apenas a infraestrutura de engenharia das comunicações (o seu *hardware* e o seu *software*) – é uma parte essencial dos meios de produção que sustentam a Internet como a rede discursiva e o sistema de notação típico do século XXI. O seu trabalho aponta para este acoplamento quase invisível entre a rede da linguagem natural e a rede de dados codificados. A intervenção de *The Readers Project* sobre a rede programável é uma intervenção sobre a base de dados da língua em rede. A reflexividade dos seus protocolos de leitura-escrita cria um meta-representação da Internet como uma rede linguística. Esta espécie de equivalente eletrónico da metalepse literária permite um movimento de vai e vem entre a linguagem como significado e a linguagem como conjunto de dados. A iteração maquínica dos comportamentos de leitura é um modo de dar forma literária à nossa base de dados de inscrições digitais, uma tentativa de encontrar o texto no funciona-

mento automatizado das atuais redes de média e nas manifestações sintomáticas do inconsciente da Internet.

Não é Água.\$subs_n_s_1 É Castelo\$subs_n_s_2
 Sabor\$subs_m_s_4 Autêntico\$adjs_m_s_1
 A pausa\$subs_f_s_1 que refresca.\$verbs_pres_1
 O poder\$subs_m_s_1 da natureza\$subs_f_s_2 é infinito,\$adjs_m_s_2
 Puro\$adjs_m_s_3 Prazer.\$subs_m_s_2
 Há coisas\$subs_n_p_4 que o dinheiro\$subs_m_s_3 não compra,\$verbs_pres_2
 Para todas as outras existe\$verbs_pres_7 MasterCard.\$subs_n_s_3
 Movidos\$ads_p pela paixão\$subs_f_s_3
 (Pelo prazer de conduzir)\$verbs_inf_1
 A vida\$subs_f_s_4 inspira-nos.\$verbs_pres_3
 Valores\$subs_n_p_1 que crescem\$verbs_pres_p consigo:
 A vida\$subs_f_s_5 em Movimento,
 A criar\$verbs_inf_2 excêntricos\$subs_n_p_2 todas as semanas.
 Aposte\$verbs_imp nos seus sonhos!\$subs_m_p
 Com Flora,\$subs_n_s_4 tudo melhora:\$verbs_pres_4
 O Bom,\$adjs_m_s_4 Sai\$verbs_pres_5 Bem,\$adjs_m_s_5
 Ter\$verbs_inf_3 é poder.\$verbs_inf_4
 Chega\$verbs_ip de lágrimas:\$subs_f_p
 Sabe\$verbs_pres_8 bem pagar\$verbs_inf_5 tão pouco!
 Compal\$subs_n_s_5 é mesmo natural:\$adjs_l
 Campeão de preços.\$subs_n_p_3
 Porque a vida\$subs_f_s_6 é\$verbs_pres_6 agora.

<h2>A vida inspira-nos</h2>	
A pausa que refresca	<p>Não é consumo. É dependência - rancor autêntico a pausa que anula.</p> <p>O poder da plagiotropia é profundo - puro esquecimento.</p> <p>Há coisas que o crédito não alcança - para todas as outras existe devoração.</p> <p>Movidos pela antropofagia - pelo prazer de parodiar - a publicidade inspira-nos.</p> <p>Imagens que crescem consigo - a vida em movimento - a criar excêntricos todas as semanas.</p> <p>Aposte nos seus sonhos! Com crédito, tudo melhora - o bom sai bem, ter é poder.</p> <p>Chega de lamúrias! Sabe bem pagar tão pouco e inspiração é mesmo natural: espuma de preços porque a vida é agora!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">@</p>
	Puro Prazer
<h2>Movidos pela paixão</h2>	



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MURILO MENDES: CATOLICISMO PRIMITIVO / MENTALIDADE MODERNA

Silviano Santiago

Resumo: Abordando a conversão ao catolicismo do poeta brasileiro Murilo Mendes, este ensaio debruça-se sobre as anotações do poeta e do seu amigo pintor Ismael Nery encontradas no livro *Pèlerinages franciscains* do escritor dinamarquês J. Joergensen. Aqui entendido como livro-relíquia (um livro dentro do livro), dele se parte para explorar relações intertextuais com a poética muriliana, que toma como sua base o desenvolvimento do sentido poético da vida, bem como o modelo franciscano de participação político-social cristã.

Palavras-chave: Murilo Mendes; catolicismo; conversão; anotações; S. Francisco de Assis; preocupação estética; preocupação teológica.

Abstract: An approach to the conversion to Catholicism of the Brazilian poet Murilo Mendes, this essay reads across the marginalia written by Murilo himself and his friend, the painter Ismael Nery, in the book *Pèlerinages franciscains* by Danish writer J. Joergensen. Taken as a relic-book (a book within a book), these marginalia lead to the exploration of

intertextual relations to the poetics of Murilo, which stands on crucial questions such as the development of life's poetic meaning and the Franciscan model of Christian social and political involvement.

Keywords: Murilo Mendes; Catholicism; conversion; Saint Francis of Assis; aesthetic concerns; theological concerns.

A época em que [Ismael Nery] viveu era muito desfavorável ao catolicismo no Brasil. Os intelectuais eram, na grande maioria, agnósticos, comunistas ou comunizantes. Mesmo muitos com tendências espiritualistas disfarçavam-nas, por respeito humano. A religião aparecia-nos como qualquer coisa de obsoleto, definitivamente ultrapassada. O catolicismo era sinônimo de obscurantismo, servindo só para a base de reação.

Murilo Mendes,

Recordações de Ismael Nery, I (1948)

Perseverança e acaso favorecem a redação destas anotações sobre o poeta Murilo Mendes nos primórdios da sua brilhante carreira.

Sempre julguei que a crítica literária, ao ler e analisar a poesia de Murilo Mendes, passava ao largo da importância da conversão do poeta ao cristianismo. Refiro-me à conversão no sentido cristão do termo¹ e não à inquietação religiosa, comum a outros poetas

¹ Em 1919, quando as enciclopédias religiosas ainda não listavam o verbete *conversão*, “o convertido Joseph Odelin não hesita ao reservar à fé cristã a palavra *conversão*”. Define: “O que é uma conversão? *Cum vertere*: virar, mudar, passar de uma falsa religião à verdadeira, da incredulidade à fé; passar da apostasia à vida cristã” (*apud* Gugelot).

brasileiros e muitos, entre eles Mário de Andrade e Jorge de Lima. Vale dizer que os críticos e os historiadores não abordavam a originalidade maior da sua poesia dentro do primeiro Modernismo brasileiro.

Na verdade, Murilo deslocava o centro de atenção da ruptura estética insuflada pelos manifestos futuristas de Filippo Marinetti e pela vanguarda europeia que encaminhavam a literatura e as artes brasileiras modernas a uma postura construtivista e minimalista. Ao deslocar o fulcro do interesse pelo moderno no Brasil, Murilo o reorientava para dar-lhe forma inspirada na tradição do penitente medieval² e no ideário político-social de São Francisco de Assis. Murilo difundia uma poética pessoal e única. Nela, a “fusão do catolicismo primitivo com a mentalidade moderna” (nos termos dele) dava origem a sintaxe inesperada e imagens complementares, paradoxais ou contraditórias.

Como não havia etiqueta vanguardista disponível para compreender os poemas comprometidos com a tradição medieval (em tempos onde domina a noção de ruptura estética) e com a visão cristã/franciscana fusional (em tempos leigos), dizia-se que eles beiravam o ideário surrealista, embora este não servisse para explicá-los totalmente. E fiquei à espera.

O acaso colocou-me nas mãos o levantamento do acervo do poeta feito por Júlio Castañon Guimarães. Abro uma janela na listagem feita por ele e cito suas palavras: “Há casos curiosos [no acervo], como uma edição de 1922 de um livro intitulado *Pèlerinages franciscains [Peregrinações franciscanas]* (Joergensen),³ que apresenta anotações de duas pessoas, as de Murilo Mendes e as de seu grande amigo, o pintor Ismael Nery”. Consta ainda do acervo, acrescenta

² Na época, penitente é o que, para seguir o Cristo, vendia seus bens e adotava como modo de vida a reza, o jejum, a ajuda à igreja e a caridade.

³ As traduções ao português são de minha responsabilidade.

Júlio, “um desenho de Ismael Nery para a capa do primeiro livro de Murilo Mendes [*Poemas*], desenho que não chegou a ser usado”. No livro lido por quatro olhos, cujas páginas estão sublinhadas por quatro mãos, descubro com espanto as palavras que Murilo deixou escritas:

Este livro contém à pgs. 175, 176 e 240, anotações de Ismael Nery e as suas iniciais autógrafas. // É um livro-relíquia. // Rio, 6.4.1934. // M.M.⁴

A condição de relíquia – preservada pelo convertido no dia exato da morte do Amigo – livra a escrita das peregrinações franciscanas dos golpes assassinos do tempo. *Relíquia* – informa-nos o *Dicionário Houaiss* – é “o que resta do corpo do santo”, é “o nome dado aos objetos que pertenceram a um santo ou que tiveram contato com seu corpo”.

Ao ter a persistência presenteada pelo acaso, resolvo intervir na bibliografia muriliana canônica, inaugurada de maneira auspiciosa por Mário de Andrade no célebre ensaio “A poesia em 1930”,⁵ no qual o poeta juiz-de-forano sobressai como “surrealista” no grupo de quatro poetas, um experiente (Manuel Bandeira) e três estreantes (Carlos Drummond, Augusto Frederico Schmidt e Murilo). Em virtude de o livro de estreia de Murilo, *Poemas*, ser exemplo de dicção poética que escapa de modo surpreendente ao padrão imposto e legitimado pelos partidários da Semana de Arte Moderna (1922) é que Mário talvez o considere “historicamente o mais importante dos livros do ano”.

⁴ Tive acesso ao volume de *Pèlerinages franciscains* graças à gentileza da professora Nícea Nogueira, atual Diretora do Museu de Arte, em Juiz de Fora, e aos préstimos do colega e amigo Alexandre Faria. Meus agradecimentos.

⁵ Inserido posteriormente na coleção de ensaios intitulada *Aspectos da literatura brasileira*, hoje publicada pela Editora Itatiaia.

O livro seguinte de Murilo, *História do Brasil* (1932), corrobora pelo avesso minha análise. Murilo se equivocou poeticamente ao querer deixar de ser seu contemporâneo para ser contemporâneo dos pares modernistas. *História do Brasil* apresenta poemas com dicção e temas tomados de empréstimo, por exemplo, da coleção *Poesia Pau-Brasil* (1924) e do *Manifesto Antropófago* (1928), ambos de Oswald de Andrade. Por decisão do autor, o livro de poemas publicado em 1932 não será republicado durante sua vida. Foi sumariamente excluído do volume que apresentava ao público sua obra poética reunida, *Poesias – 1925-1955* (Mendes, 1959). Na “Advertência” que precede o conjunto dos livros até então esparsos, Murilo justifica o gesto radical:

Excluí as poesias satíricas e humorísticas que compõem a *História do Brasil*, pois, a meu ver, destoam do conjunto da minha obra; sua publicação aqui *desequilibraria* [grifo meu] o livro. O que se chamou de minha “fase brasileira” e “carioca” está suficientemente representado em algumas partes dos *Poemas* e em *Bumba-meu-boi*.

Não foi Murilo quem nos legou esta máxima: “A Igreja Católica é tão necessariamente verdadeira que eu preferiria errar com ela a acertar com os seus adversários”?

Hoje, quando o acervo pessoal de Murilo Mendes está depositado no Museu de Arte que leva o nome do poeta, localizado na cidade natal, Juiz de Fora, e dele dispomos para consulta, faz-se urgente contrabalançar o julgamento de Mário e retomar páginas de Sérgio Milliet no *Diário crítico*, datadas de 7 de fevereiro de 1942 (Milliet, 1981). Naquele dia, tendo por quadro a temática ampla da morte, Milliet elabora a busca do “anseio de unidade” que é entregue pela poesia de Murilo a todo e qualquer leitor. Segundo o crítico, o anseio de unidade leva o poeta “a voltar à fonte de vida porque dela

fomos expulsos numa tremenda multiplicação”. E acrescenta: “como um paleontologista que reconstitui o animal pelo osso encontrado, o poeta, com cada um dos fragmentos catados em sua caminhada, reforma a unidade primeira e primordial”.

Apesar de não respaldar com exemplo o tratamento crítico do poeta como paleontólogo, Sérgio Milliet não poderia estar se referindo, entre outros, ao poema “A flecha” (*Metamorfozes* – 1938-1941)? Já o título do poema – transformado em metáfora (a flecha do tempo) – não traduziria e questionaria a evolução humana numa perspectiva linear? Naquele poema, em evidente delito contra o lugar-comum hegeliano, lemos: “Eis-me sentado à beira do tempo / Olhando o meu esqueleto / Que me olha recém-nascido”. E seus versos finais não insistem no eterno-retorno *sem* diferença: “Na pedra que não se move / O motor do mundo avança”? Nas suas observações, Sérgio Milliet não estaria renunciando “Ofício humano”, belo poema de *Poesia liberdade?* Citemos: “As harpas da manhã vibram suaves e róseas. / O poeta abre seu arquivo – o mundo –, / Vai retirando dele alegria e sofrimento / Para que todas as coisas passando pelo seu coração / Sejam reajustadas na unidade”. Tudo isso não nos faz lembrar outro aforismo de Murilo: “O comunismo é revolucionário diante do capitalismo, e conservador diante do cristianismo”?

Escrito por Joergensen, o livro das peregrinações pela Itália franciscana é relíquia do amigo e artista Ismael Nery, falecido prematuramente de tuberculose no dia 6 de abril de 1934, assim como o é o poema “Meu novo olhar”, escrito por Murilo Mendes e incluído no livro *Tempo e eternidade* (1934). Lemos nesse poema o sucedâneo da anotação aposta ao livro de Joergensen:

Meu novo olhar é o de quem assistiu à paixão e morte do Amigo,
Poeta para toda a eternidade segundo a ordem de Jesus Cristo,
E aquele que mudou a direção de meu olhar;

É o de quem já vê se desenrolar sua própria paixão e morte,
Esperando a integração do próprio ser definitivo
Sob o olhar fixo e incompreensível de Deus.⁶

Durante os poucos anos de vida, Ismael foi também pródigo em homenagens ao poeta. Legou-nos o óleo *Retrato de Murilo*, a aguada *Retrato do artista com Murilo* e, possivelmente, o nanquim *Composição surrealista*.

A leitura do relato de viagem assinado por Joergensen e o poema “Meu novo olhar” atestam a conversão – “o novo olhar” – de Murilo por obra e graça de Ismael Nery, enterrado vestindo o hábito de terceiro-franciscano (é bom salientar) numa homenagem dos frades do Convento de Santo Antônio à sua ardente fé católica.

Em carta a Laís Correa de Araújo (1972), datada de 6 de abril de 1970, Alceu de Amoroso Lima (também conhecido pelo pseudônimo Tristão de Athayde) alerta para o equívoco perpetrado pela tradição historiográfica no tocante à conversão de Murilo e direciona o facho de luz da biógrafa e crítica mineira para a verdadeira atuação de cada um dos principais membros do grupo católico carioca. Salienta que o trabalho lento de conversão de Murilo à fé cristã foi provocado e apressado por Ismael Nery e informado pela preocupação estética (e não teológica). Murilo viera a conhecer o amigo em fins do ano de 1921 na seção de arquitetura e topografia do Patrimônio Nacional (Ministério da Fazenda). Escreve Alceu em 1970:

Gostaria muito de atender à sua solicitação quanto à circunstância da conversão do nosso Murilo Mendes. Acontece, porém, que essa conversão, creio eu, ocorreu antes do nosso primeiro

⁶ Ler ainda o poema “Ismael Nery”, em *Tempo e eternidade*, bem como as 17 crônicas escritas por Murilo sobre a amizade, hoje reunidas em *Recordações de Ismael Nery* (Mendes, 1995).

encontro. Esse encontro, aliás, foi por assim dizer anônimo. . . .
Creio que foi o seu convívio com Ismael Nery que provocou ou pelo menos apressou a conversão definitiva de Murilo. . . . Leonel Franca,⁷ creio eu, também teve influência na conversão de Murilo, que foi profunda e extremamente meditada. Não creio que tivesse tido nenhuma “iluminação” do tipo de [André] Frossard ou de [Paul] Claudel, mas um trabalho lento do tipo de [John Henry] Newman, embora do ponto de vista estético, sempre fundamental em Murilo, e não teológico. (Araújo 189-190)

O acaso é pródigo em associações reveladoras e, no presente caso, se alicerçado arqueológica e racionalmente no “livro-reliquia”, ele nos fornece pistas para se chegar a um modelo europeu de metamorfose religiosa com vistas, por um lado, ao “desenvolvimento do sentido poético da vida” (*apud O discípulo de Emaús*, 1944, § 170)⁸ e, pelo outro, a modelo franciscano de participação político-social cristã. A solidariedade cristã, que “jamais fecha ao pobre o olhar e a bolsa” (v. *A idade do serrote*, 1968), era vetor desconhecido dos intelectuais e artistas modernistas brasileiros inclinados à esquerda. Como diz a epígrafe deste posfácio, julgavam o catolicismo como mero obscurantismo. Ao elencar a opção pelo legado franciscano, o modelo de conversão muriliano era também desconhecido da maioria dos católicos brasileiros que, na década de 1930, estarão por detrás

⁷ Leonel Franca (1893-1948), jesuíta, professor no Colégio Santo Inácio, foi um dos fundadores da Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro e seu primeiro reitor.

⁸ Se não for abuso da minha parte, há um trabalho a ser feito entre as relações entre Murilo Mendes e o historiador Jaime Cortesão (pai de sua esposa) por ocasião da sua passagem pelo Brasil no tocante a seus escritos “franciscanos” sobre os descobrimentos.

dos valores elitistas e conservadores que norteiam o agrupamento Ação Católica, no Rio de Janeiro.⁹

A leitura do livro-relíquia traz para a cena carioca dois dinamarqueses convertidos, alguns escritores franceses e, principalmente, a tradição católica na arte italiana. Sob o efeito do solvente São Francisco de Assis (associado por Jorgensen a Santa Clara e a Santa Ângela de Foligno), os três elementos díspares precipitam na sala do Ministério da Fazenda, então localizado no Rio de Janeiro, e alimentam a sensibilidade fraterna e cristã dos dois brasileiros nos seus anos de formação. São Francisco de Assis é o diferencial. É a porta de entrada para modelo de conversão distinto do francês, que se alicerça mais no retiro espiritual e menos na peregrinação.¹⁰ Também extrapola o credo predominante no Brasil, derivado do ensino feito sob a responsabilidade das ordens dos jesuítas, dominicanos, etc.

Pode-se tentar rastrear o aparecimento do livro *Pèlerinages franciscains* no universo de Ismael e Murilo. Se não for de todo falsa a hipótese que levanto, ele surge nos primeiros anos da década de 1920 e representa o desassossego existencial que, como larvas, fiam vários casulos. Nestes, as “inquietações religiosas” (*apud* Alceu) – comuns a vários artistas e intelectuais extraviados do caminho de Cristo – atuam como crisálidas que maturam o momento definitivo da afirmação subjetiva pela verdade. Se não for falsa a hipótese, o livro teria a ver com as duas viagens de estudo de Ismael a Paris, em particular com a primeira, devido ao fato de o jovem pintor ter-se matriculado em 1920 na Académie Julian, fundada pelo pintor

⁹ Para melhor conhecimento da matéria, aconselha-se a leitura do notável ensaio de Francisco Iglésias “Estudo sobre o pensamento reacionário de Jackson de Figueiredo” (1971). No tocante às manifestações literárias modernistas de teor cristão, consultar o livro *Festa*, de Neusa Pinsard Caccese (1971).

¹⁰ Para a distinção, seria útil a leitura de Gugelot, *La Conversion des intellectuels*.

Rodolphe Julian,¹¹ e de ter convivido com importantes artistas franceses e estrangeiros que lá aprimoravam sua arte.

Naquela Academia Ismael teve acesso à tradição pós-impressionista de vanguarda, representada desde os fins de 1880 pelos fundadores do grupo Nabis,¹² que tinham em Gauguin o verdadeiro mestre. Nabis vem do hebreu *navi*, que significa profeta ou vidente e indicia o fato de que o grupo de artistas se exprimia pelo caráter sagrado da pintura. Na Academia, graças à projeção no meio artístico francês da arte italiana e do exemplo de São Francisco de Assis, Ismael pôde ter tido acesso a uma série de vidas modelares de convertidos franceses e estrangeiros. À p. 128 do livro-relíquia, lemos esta bela amostragem de proselitismo de Joergensen a favor da vida intelectual italiana e franciscana,¹³ então apreciada na França apenas pelos escritores que se reuniam em torno da *Nouvelle Revue Française*:

Ah! Itália, minha Itália. Cara Itália, como te vejo e te sinto e te amo! Será que conseguirei levar os compatriotas a compartilhar meu interesse por ti, a te compreender e a te amar como eu! De há muito a Alemanha ganhou seu lugar na nossa vida intelectual. Mais tarde, a França e a Inglaterra se aproximaram de nós. Mas

¹¹ Muitos estrangeiros se inscreveram na Academia. Entre os brasileiros, destaque para Georgina Albuquerque, Rodolfo Amoedo, Eliseu Visconti, Nicolina Vaz de Assis e Tarsila do Amaral, contemporânea de Ismael Nery na Academia. Em virtude de aceitar desde 1897 (ou 1873, segundo outras fontes) mulheres que pintavam a partir de nus masculinos, a Academia ganhou bons estudos nas últimas décadas. Seria bom que algum estudioso da arte brasileira desenhasse essa genealogia.

¹² No grupo Nabis, destacam-se Pierre Bonnard, Maurice Denis, Édouard Vuillard, Félix Vallotton e o escultor Aristide Maillol. Costumavam terminar suas cartas com as iniciais *E. T. P. M. V. et M. P.* (Em ta paume, mon verbe et ma pensée – na palma da tua mão meu verbo e meu pensamento).

¹³ Contrastem-se a Itália do Futurismo e a de São Francisco. Em resposta à enquete “O mês modernista” (15/12/1925), Sérgio Milliet afirma: “O grito de Marinetti foi um alívio. O Ipiranga da literatura é na Itália”. Lá também ouve-se o grito de alforria de Murilo.

será que durante nossa vida não haverá um espaço livre para a Itália, para essa autêntica, real, simples e profunda Itália que, noutro dia, no mosteiro de Fonte-Colombo,¹⁴ chamei de Itália franciscana! E será que me engano quando imagino que minha missão em vida consiste exclusivamente em levar meus compatriotas a conhecer essa Itália?

Naquela Academia, Ismael talvez tenha tomado conhecimento da intensa amizade entre o escritor dinamarquês Johannes Joergensen (1866-1956), autor do livro-relíquia, e um antigo estagiário na Académie Julian, Mogens Ballin (1871-1914), filho de importante família judia dinamarquesa, escultor e ourives especializado em prata e estanho que, no passado, tinha tomado aulas de pintura com a conterrânea Mette Sophie Gad, futura esposa de Gauguin, mestre dos Nabis. No ano de 1892, Ballin faz longa viagem à Itália e se converte ao catolicismo. No mês de janeiro de 1893, ele é batizado em Fiésole, na Toscana. Sabe-se que o encontro de Joergensen com o artista judeu convertido representa um marco na vida de ambos.

Embora fosse poeta e também tradutor de Charles Baudelaire e de Paul Verlaine, Joergensen, de família luterana, não tinha encontrado até então nas literaturas estrangeiras a profundidade espiritual que sua alma de artista buscava. Em 1894, por sugestão do seu amigo Mogens Ballin, decide visitar a Itália pela primeira vez. Os dois param na cidade de Assis. Fascinado pela forte impressão causada pelo encontro com a arquitetura e a arte italiana de fundo religioso e principalmente pelas leituras de e sobre São Francisco de Assis – como está dito na passagem que escolhemos para citar acima –, Joergensen se converte também ao cristianismo e abraça o amigo

¹⁴ No Santuário de Fonte Colombo, São Francisco de Assis recebeu de Jesus, em 1223, a confirmação da ordem franciscana.

recém-convertido. Daquele ano data sua devoção à vida e à obra de São Francisco de Assis.

Joergensen virá a narrar sua própria conversão em *Livre de route* (1898), inspirado no livro *En route* (1895), onde o romancista francês J.-K. Huysmans¹⁵ descreve sua própria conversão ao catolicismo ortodoxo, tendo como cenário o monastério da Trappe de Notre-Dame-d'Igny (França), fundado por São Bernardo em 1127. Leia-se, em particular, o quarto capítulo do livro de Huysmans.¹⁶ Em 1903, Joergensen será autor das *Peregrinações franciscanas*, cuja edição francesa é lida e anotada pelo artista Ismael e pelo poeta Murilo talvez no mesmo ano da Semana de Arte Moderna. A partir de 1915 Joergensen fixará residência na pequena cidade de Assis.

As páginas do exemplar de *Pèlerinages franciscains* trazem muitas das margens sublinhadas com linha vertical simples ou dupla, à esquerda ou à direita do texto. A linha vertical duplicada insiste na importância maior do trecho, como será o caso das sucessivas páginas consagradas à leitura por Joergensen da conversão de Santa Ângela de Foligno, tal como narrada pela penitente ao padre-confessor, Irmão Arnaud (pp. 184-189).¹⁷ O exemplar traz ainda

¹⁵ Numa simples consulta à biblioteca de Murilo, hoje no Museu de Arte, constata-se a presença de quatro dos títulos do famoso romancista de *À rebours* (*Às avessas*, traduzido por José Paulo Paes).

¹⁶ A descrição por Huysmans do ato de comunhão na Trappe guarda um deslizamento estranho e muriliano do sagrado para o profano, e vice-versa, como está em “O poeta na igreja” (*Poemas*). Vale a pena reproduzir o parágrafo: “A alma sofreu uma verdadeira síncope, perdeu a lucidez; e quando ela voltou a si, ele se espantou por não ter sentido uma comoção desconhecida de alegria; em seguida, ele ficou longo tempo a ruminar uma lembrança incômoda, todo o lado demasiadamente humano da deglutição de um deus; a hóstia recebida colou no céu da boca e, com a ajuda da língua, ele teve de procurá-la e enrolá-la como a uma panqueca para engoli-la”. De Murilo lembre-se este aforismo: “Pelos cinco sentidos também se vai a Deus”.

¹⁷ A propósito da conversão de Santa Ângela, leia-se a audiência em seu louvor feita pelo Papa Bento XVI no dia 13 de outubro de 2010 na Praça de São Pedro, em Roma. Vídeo disponível em: <<http://vod.vatican.va/udienza13102010.mov>>. Recentemente Santa Ângela volta ao contexto brasileiro, agora pela vontade do Papa

inúmeros parágrafos sublinhados com linha horizontal. O conjunto dos sublinhados verticais e horizontais fascina e nos garante a escolha impulsiva, pertinente, delicada, amorosa ou reflexiva de certas passagens por Ismael e por Murilo. Como a assinatura de Ismael aparece apenas em três páginas, somos levados a crer que o substantivo das marcas de leitura pertence quantitativamente a Murilo. Nossa leitura não será, por sua vez, do livro assinado pelo escritor dinamarquês, cujos dados relevantes já foram fornecidos; será antes leitura-de-uma-leitura, *leitura de livro dentro do livro*. Leitura duma espécie de pequeno livro extraído do maior, que o consulente poderá imprimir para uso próprio caso some as páginas sublinhadas em vertical com as outras em que os parágrafos estão sublinhados em horizontal.

Leiamos Joergensen por uma das páginas sublinhadas por Ismael Nery, a de número 240. Ele sintoniza com o dinamarquês na cidade italiana de Cortona, no momento em que o peregrino visita o mosteiro de Celle. Lá, em 1221, São Francisco converte algumas figuras proeminentes, dentre elas Guido Vagnotelli, jovem rico e poderoso, que se dispõe a dar suas posses aos pobres. A conversão de Guido estará retratada no 37º *fioretti*, que Joergensen lê em Cortona e Ismael admira e sublinha no Rio de Janeiro.¹⁸

A dupla leitura do *fioretti* salienta que Guido recebe o santo e seu companheiro “com grandíssima cortesia”: “tinha abraçado e beijado amigavelmente o santo, e depois lhe havia lavado os pés e acendido um grande fogo e preparado a mesa com muito boas iguarias e, enquanto os dois companheiros comiam, os servia com um rosto cheio de alegria”.

Francisco I. A canonização de Anchieta – chamada “equivalente”, pois não se conhece milagre do beato jesuíta – tem a santa de Foligno como antecessora e garantia.

¹⁸ Leia-se o *fioretti* “Como Jesus Cristo bendito, a pedido de S. Francisco, fez converter-se um rico e gentil cavaleiro a fazer-se frade, o qual tinha feito grande honra e oferendas a S. Francisco”.

Vendo tanta cortesia e afabilidade, São Francisco concebe tal amor que o leva a julgar que o cavaleiro ganhou o direito de entrar para a Ordem. São Francisco justifica: Guido “é tão grato e reconhecido para com Deus e tão amável e cortês para com o próximo e os pobres”.

Aparece como inevitável o elogio da cortesia por São Francisco: “a cortesia é uma das propriedades de Deus, o qual dá seu sol e sua chuva aos justos e aos injustos por cortesia, e a cortesia é irmã da caridade, a qual extingue o ódio e conserva o amor”.¹⁹

Sublinhada por Ismael, a passagem talvez tenha sido um dos fios condutores da leitura de Murilo. Insisto nessa hipótese porque a cortesia – tal como descrita e expressa no *fioretti* e é comentada por Joergensen e sublinhada por Ismael – é o valor religioso maior que retém e engloba muitas das qualidades sublinhadas por Murilo que se tornaram indispensáveis para que a vontade própria alavancasse o movimento radical da sua conversão.

Remeto o interessado à leitura de *Pèlerinages franciscains* e, por isso, apenas enumero, resumindo, os valores franciscanos sublinhados por Murilo no texto.

O direito de ser pobre se fortalece num mundo em que a luta universal tem por objeto a riqueza e numa sociedade em que o valor do homem é julgado pelo ouro que possui. Talvez seja pelos ensinamentos de Santa Clara de Assis, fundadora das Damas Pobres (ou Clarissas), que Giotto tenha figurado a pobreza com a imagem duma mulher. A humildade extrai sua força do amor espiritual. Nos últimos dois séculos o mundo se tornou mais cristão, apesar de ter sido tomado pelas ideias iluministas. Maior se tornou o desejo de realizar o programa social de Jesus Cristo. O espírito franciscano

¹⁹ Na décima-primeira crônica de *Recordações de Ismael Nery*, escrita em 1948, Murilo comentará a leitura por Ismael do livro de Joergensen. *Nem autor nem título do livro são mencionados, apenas a passagem acima rereferida*. A edição moderna das recordações comportaria pelo menos essa nota explicativa.

é essencialmente e antes de tudo o espírito de respeito à vida e a tudo que lhe é útil. Exemplo: por deferência, um homem tirava o chapéu quando passava pelo campo de trigo. A tristeza é um vício babilônico: elogio da alegria do espírito, da alegria espiritual. Contra os excessos: os do prazer e os da abstinência. De nada vale distribuir aos pobres sua riqueza sem o sentimento de amor. O amor suporta tudo, crê tudo, espera tudo, aceita tudo. Do ódio santo contra o mal nasce sempre o amor, não o amor dito em belas frases, mas o amor real que ardia no coração de São Francisco. Todos os homens devem ser irmãos. Por fome e por sede, clamar por Deus. Por fome de bondade e sede de santidade. Somos destinados à vida, à luz e ao céu. Verdade e amor. A salvação está na verdade, que se confunde com o amor. “Verdade e amor, nunca me abandonem”.

Se a cortesia está no cerne do ideário franciscano de Ismael, talvez o pecado seja a figura religiosa mais visível na perspectiva tomada por Murilo. Leiam-se, por exemplo, as páginas 184-189, todas sublinhadas à margem por linhas verticais duplas. Nelas, Joergensen, tendo tomado assento diante do túmulo de Santa Ângela de Foligno, resume cuidadosamente a Via Crúcis de Jesus Cristo que – pelo avesso sofrido e doloroso – se enlaça erótica e místicamente, se me permitem os advérbios, à vida vaidosa e pecadora da futura convertida. Joergensen lê então a longa passagem do livro *A vida de Santa Ângela de Foligno*, tal como escrita pelo irmão Arnaud. No trecho sublinhado, o pecado é motivo das orações e das lágrimas de Santa Ângela, por ter sido ele a principal causa da morte de Jesus. O pecado é sinal da ingratidão humana e se transforma em evidente e incontornável força do mal no momento em que Ângela vê o corpo crucificado de Jesus.

Não há dúvida que o contraste fulgurante e iluminador entre o mundano, obrigatoriamente pecaminoso no universo da convertida, e o espiritual, meta da Vida em Cristo, é também um dos temas

maiores da poesia de Murilo²⁰ e não haverá exemplo mais concreto do caminho a ser percorrido pelo convertido que a leitura do caso de Santa Ângela tal como narrado por ela ao padre confessor. Joergensen nos transmite o ardor da convertida que chega a sentir nos ossos e juntas do próprio corpo todo o flagelo da paixão de Cristo. Murilo talvez tenha também ficado impressionado com a alta voltagem poética da linguagem de Santa Ângela, pois a ela retorna, agora em estudo publicado por Louis Lecleve, que ainda está na biblioteca de Murilo (Lecleve, 1936).

Pela comparação das partes do corpo humano e as do corpo espiritual de Jesus é que a questão conflitiva do pecado entra no texto da confissão e da conversão de Ângela. Despedaçadas como num tratado de anatomia,²¹ as partes do corpo feminino vaidoso se sucedem e são contrastadas com a versão paralela, sofrida e dilacerada, do corpo masculino de Cristo crucificado. O texto da futura convertida se organiza como que pelo paralelo entre duas planchas anatômicas. A medicina que minha metáfora invoca não é gratuita, já que, no texto, Cristo é o médico, o “médico espiritual”. Ele é o portador do remédio (*contrepoison*, no texto) que, por sua vez, se confunde com seu próprio sangue derramado.²² Corpo e sangue de Cristo, a comunhão que resgata o pecado.

²⁰ Como exemplo do contraste entre o corpo humano e o espiritual, leia-se “O poeta na igreja” e “Vidas opostas de Cristo e dum homem”, em *Poemas*, ou “Poema espiritual”, em *A poesia em pânico*. Na poesia de Murilo, muitas vezes o humano é o “mundo das formas” e o espiritual, “transparência”. Vale a pena uma consulta ao repositório de imagens que representam Santa Ângela em êxtase, cuja ambiguidade semântica pode ser objeto de estudo.

²¹ Belo exemplo retórico de despedaçamento do corpo está em “Corte transversal do poema” (*Poemas*): “Meu pensamento desloca uma perna, / o ouvido esquerdo do céu não ouve a queixa dos namorados. / Eu sou o olho dum marinheiro morto na Índia, / um olho, andando com duas pernas. / O sexo da vizinha espera a noite se dilatar, a força do homem. / A outra metade da noite foge do mundo, empinando os seios”. Já o corpo feminino despedaçado fundamenta o poema “Jandira”, em *O visionário*.

²² Cf. “Car il ne faut rien d'autre pour le salut que ce que le médecin exige du malade [. . .] mon âme acquit la compréhension du contrepoison qui réside dans

O *rosto* mundano e maquiado de Ângela, que visava ao favor dos homens, se reflete no rosto santo de Cristo, escarrado, desfigurado e socado pelos homens. Os *olhos* vaidosos de Ângela contrastam com os olhos de Cristo que se cegaram pelas lágrimas e depois pelo sangue coagulado. As *orelhas* de Ângela, que se alegravam com a graça da vida fútil e inútil, são comparadas às orelhas divinas, que se calaram diante de acusações falsas, injúrias, sarcasmos. Ouviram em silêncio a sentença injusta de morte e, principalmente, o lamento da própria mãe. A *boca* de Ângela, que privou dos prazeres da mesa, se contrapõe à boca faminta e seca na cruz, aplacada com vinagre e fel. As imagens do corpo humano se estendem pelo texto, sempre em contraste: *ombros* que carregam a cruz, cravos nas *mãos* e nos *pés*, o *coração* trespassado por uma lança. Elas fulguram um corpo nu, como tinha saído do seio da Virgem. Às imagens do corpo se sucedem à imagem da dama que tudo teve e a de Jesus que sempre fora pobre.

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ANA LUÍSA AMARAL, SENHORA DE VOZES

Jorge Fernandes da Silveira

Resumo: O sentido do Amor nos poemas de Ana Luísa Amaral pode ser resumido em duas direções: 1) bem versada nos artifícios clássicos do erotismo masculino à portuguesa, apreendidos em forma de cantigas e de sonetos, a poetisa deles se apropria para transformá-los em matéria de um canto novo, em que, agora, são elas, as mulheres, em interlocução, as vozes do discurso amoroso outro; 2) bem formada nas teorias contemporâneas da liberdade amorosa, pelo exercício do magistério, a poetisa junta a sua voz à de outras mulheres igualmente valerosas (Maria Irene Ramalho, Paula Morão, Rosa Maria Martelo, por exemplo) na reivindicação de uma revolucionária *gênese do amor*.

Palavras-chave: Ana Luísa Amaral; poesias e poéticas de mulheres; revolucionária gênese do amor.

Abstract: The meaning of love in Ana Luísa Amaral's poetry is twofold: 1) well versed in the traditional artifice of Portuguese masculine eroticism, acquired via old lyrical songs and sonnets, the woman poet appropriates and transforms them into objects of a new poetics where women now intervene as interlocutors, voices of a love discourse which is an Other; 2) well educated, by virtue

of her teaching, in contemporary theories on free love, this poet's voice joins the voice of other valiant women (such as Maria Irene Ramalho, Paula Morão and Rosa Maria Martelo) in their claim for a revolutionary *genesis of love*.

Keywords: Ana Luísa Amaral; women's poetry and poetics; revolutionary *genesis of love*.

para vós oh para vós me volto
voz transposta a quanto de mim liberto
vós trabalhos mortais
voz da mais aberta entrada

Luiza Neto Jorge,
"O Seu a Seu Tempo"

"A identidade está longe de ser uma entidade fixa"; ela será antes "uma rede fluida de relações que se oferece como um *espectáculo* em que da mesma forma participam os espectadores."

Maria Irene Ramalho
apud Ana Luísa Amaral

Voices, de Ana Luísa Amaral, 2011, é um livro dividido em seis seções. 1) "A impossível Sarça", cujos poemas de implicações bibliográficas exigem redobrada atenção à leitura, como, por exemplo, "Salomé revisitada", a concluir a seção; 2) "Breve Exercício em Três Vozes", em que a interlocução com Rilke, Camões e Bocage registra a sua atenção à autoria masculina na formação do Cânone Ocidental; 3) "Trovas de Memória", voltas intra e intertextuais ao

diálogo entre os gêneros na lírica de tradição medieval e clássica, os *amores-inês*, em que a obra mais concertada é *A Gênese do Amor*, 2005; 4) “Escrito à Régua”, apuradíssima reflexão sobre o trabalho poético em suas implicações estéticas e éticas, em que destaco o poema “A Vitória de Samotrácia”; 5) “Outras Rotações: Cinco Andamentos”, variações matemáticas à volta de Galileu na sua torre à luz das estrelas que apontam novos sentidos à “máquina do mundo”; 6) “Outras Vozes”, a palavra chave multiplicada num coro, um sexteto, o número de seções do volume, em que a nota mais sonora é a História de Portugal revisitada de costas para o mar, ou melhor, de volta à terra, da Epopeia (Camões) à Crônica (“Ora esguardae”, Fernão Lopes e Olga Gonçalves), num “andamento” ao “avesso”, *Metamorfoses* (Sena) da *Mensagem* (Pessoa) de que a “planície” ainda anseia ser contada e/ou cantada. Um *conto de fados*.

Note-se que os poemas de abertura (“*silêncios*”) e conclusão (“*vozes*”) do livro não estão propriamente fora do “Índice”, mas por evidentes sinais é como se estivessem à margem do volume, já que não fazem parte das suas seis seções. E isto, mais que uma observação, é um princípio de leitura importante. Importa, então, repetir: dar *vozes* ao *silêncio* implica *saber* entre gêneros – o lírico e o dramático, Ana Luísa escreve para o teatro; o masculino e o feminino, Ana Luísa investiga a teoria *queer* – o lugar de quem, à margem do *índice*, faz lembrar outro *index* de triste memória. Logo, em se tratando de mais um livro de poemas de escritora e pesquisadora com entradas e saídas no Cânone, a interlocução entre eu tu, ele, e entre eu tu, ela, apresenta expressivos sinais de inversão da ordem no que respeita às relações entre Vida e Obra.

Maria Irene Ramalho Santos, extraordinária leitora e intérprete pioneira da Obra da autora de *E Todavia*, 2015, considera “the motif of reverse”, numa poesia, reunida pela segunda vez, em 2010, com o título *Inversos*.

The reverse of the tradition or the tradition on the wrong side, whether upside down or inside out, is thus the chosen strategy of this Portuguese woman poet who knows what we might call the observe of the tradition only too well. Hades, Orpheus, Dante. To plunge down into the dark unscathed from the other side of the unknown. (20)

Como estratégia de leitura, sugiro que o ponto de intermediação entre *silêncios* e *vozes* assim dispostos seja o poema “Biografia (Curtíssima)”, na abertura da primeira seção, “A Impossível Sarça”, por tudo o que nele há de matéria ambivalente a ser explorada neste breve ensaio. Por exemplo: o uso do superlativo, já tão sintomático no poema “*vozes*”, é uma maneira de dizer que na generosidade do canto também se contam palavras por subtração, uma advertência de que a *equivocatio* em língua portuguesa (“tua mãe equívoca”)¹, desde os Cancioneiros Medievais, é um recurso nobre e clássico, cuja riqueza propaga que o mundo para ser vivido em termos de igualdade (amor), com o outro, tem de ser experimentado igualmente do avesso (escárnio), contra o outro.²

¹ Fiama Hasse Pais Brandão. “Teoria da Realidade, Tratando-a por Tu”, *Cenas Vivas*, 2000, p. 122.

² Sobre o poema “Topografias em Quase Dicionário”, com o rigor que a distingue, afirma Paula Morão no “Prólogo” à edição brasileira de *A Gênese do Amor*: “Este poema avança pelo jogo entre duas vozes (uma em redondo, outra em itálico) não atribuídas a interlocutores nomeados – e assim o que passa para o primeiro plano é a encenação da fala, uma fala anônima que busca ser ouvida pelo Outro a quem se dirige. É como se esta reversibilidade especular fosse a evidência de que quem fala não são dois, um *eu* e um *tu*, mas antes as duas faces de um mesmo sujeito; ou, dito de outro modo, é como se o sujeito do poema fosse um Narciso quebrado, em sisífica busca da sua metade perdida, da alma gêmea de quem nem conhece a existência, mero eco, sopro ou ‘vento’ – motivo, aliás, central neste poema e em todo o volume, metaforizando a própria poesia”. (VIII). Na mesma edição, sobre o mesmo poema, questiona Rosa Maria Martelo, leitora rigorosa: “Voltam assim Dante e Beatriz, Petrarca e Laura, Camões e Natércia, ou Catarina. Poetas e musas, desde sempre presos no transporte amoroso que os levou de uns para os outros, vivos ainda nas palavras de o dizer, são eles, afinal, a gênese do amor que apenas por palavras pode dispensar-se da palavra? . . . Lutando contra a palavra, mas apenas por ela sobrevividos, são eles a gênese do amor?” (IV).

Para tornar mais breve uma biografia que se diz ela mesma curtíssima, o campo semântico das cebolas, esse “órgão vegetal subterrâneo ou aéreo”, luminoso, em composição no primeiro poema do livro de estreia, 1990, tem aqui, 2011, uns versos bem temperados:

Biografia (curtíssima)

Ah, quando eu escrevia
de beijos que não tinha
e cebolas em quase perfeição!

Os beijos que eu não tinha:
subentendidos, debaixo
das cebolas

(mas hoje penso
que se não fossem
os beijos que eu não tinha,
não havia poema)

Depois, quando os já tinha,
de vez em quando
cumpria uma cebola:

pérola rara, diamante
em sangue e riso,
desentendido de razão

Agora, sem contar:
beijo ou cebolas?

O que eu não tenho
(ou tudo): diário
surdo e cego:

vestidos por tirar,
camadas por cumprir:

e mais: imperfeição.³ (Amaral 2011: 13-14)

De início, registre-se na primeira estrofe uma dupla leitura possível. A primeira, obediente à ordem descendente dos versos: uma boca solitária sem beijos na vida, como que compensada pelas cebolas em camadas solidárias entre o trabalho doméstico e o trabalho poético. A segunda leitura possível pode subverter a primeira: *Ab, quando eu escrevia, em quase perfeição, de beijos que não tinha e cebolas. . . que não tinha*. Nesta, a cebola, em trança ao longo de toda a obra, pode mostrar agora outra camada: carência nova, subentendida entre a cozinha e a secretária, é ela a imagem da “imperfeição”.

Da leitura ambivalente proposta, sem exclusões, portanto, já se sabe, agora e desde o início, tratar-se de mulher em modo infinitivo: “O que eu não tenho / . . . // **vestidos por tirar, / camadas por cumprir**”. Sujeito inscrito numa lei de amor injusta e soberana, deseducada na própria carne pela grosseira prática masculina de desfolhar a margarida e/ou despetalar a rosa, dela mesma apreende anos a fio a sua desejada maneira de despelar uma cebola, uma forma da expressão (e insisto) de pôr na mesa de trabalho, na cozinha ou no escritório, ou mesmo no quarto de dormir, um sentido novo para o desfloramento da matéria amorosa, dado comumente de bandeja ao homem. Os versos agora são de poema ainda da primeira seção, “Nem Diálogo, ou Quase”: “Estão impressas na memória,/ as pala-

³ Ver leitura do poema por Maria Irene Ramalho Santos 2011: 191-199.

vras,/ mas era aqui que um verso do avesso, / sons transparentes,
/ haver bolhas de sons” (27). “Nem Diálogo, ou Quase”, sim, título
de poema em que um modo de mulher de ser no infinitivo, para
os interesses desta leitura, às voltas com véus por tirar, parece, “do
avesso”, estar a *virgular-se sem medo*, estar a *alastrar-se num espasmo sem segredo*; imagens sinestésicas que, não por caso, lembram
versos do primeiro quarteto da “Salomé”, soneto de *Indícios de Oiro*,
1937, do seu bem despido, *deslido*, Sá-Carneiro:

Salomé

Insónia roxa. A luz a virgular-se em medo,
Luz morta de luar, mais Alma do que a lua. . .
Ela dança, ela range. A carne, álcool de nua,
Alastra-se pra mim num espasmo de segredo. . . (58)

Como cumprir uma cebola? São muitas as receitas, literalmente,
de poemas da mesma (t)rama, de que copio as duas mais antigas:
“Digo: espaço/ ou uma receita qualquer/ que seja em vez” (Amaral
2010: 19); “É num tom desses que eu me sei mover: / no intermédio
cruzamento / dos portões do real, / nas despensas do mundo //
Essas em que guardo o resto dos temperos, / um ou outro feitiço
/ no Livro de Receitas –” (Amaral 2007: 101), ou seja, receitas em
que se nota e se anota o travessão aberto ao diálogo, com um
forte travo agridoce na “Receita de Mulher”. São versos de poe-
mas emblemáticos, “Terra de Ninguém” e “Ovelhas e Bibliotecas:
Sofrimentos”, em livros seminiais, *Minha Senhora de Quê*, 1990, o
primeiro, e *Entre Dois Rios e Outras Noites*, 2007, um dos últimos,
já que neles se lavra a origem da cebola, a sua imagem na poesia
de Ana Luísa Amaral.

Como cumprir uma mulher? Uma mulher pelada tal qual uma
cebola? O hábito de vesti-la, velando-a em verso e prosa por mão

de homem, tem hoje já clássica versão transgressora em poema de Maria Teresa Horta, “Segredo”: “Não contes do meu / vestido / que tiro pela cabeça” (40). O poema está num livro cujo título é já uma extraordinária súplica de nove séculos de opressão lírico-amorosa, uma espécie de nova carta às mal amadas mulheres portuguesas: *Minha Senhora de Mim*, 1971.

“Que os utensílios criem / o novo utensílio capaz / de tudo dizer de si.” (Jorge 1966: 58). *O Seu a Seu Tempo*, repito eu com outra grande mulher poeta, Luiza Neto Jorge. Se se misturam neste contexto as imagens de cebolas e vestidos que, como coisas em camadas revestidas, se tiram à faca ou à mão, e se, sobretudo, se chama a atenção para o título de lançamento de Ana Luísa Amaral, *Minha Senhora de Quê*, com mais distinção se distingue a sua homenagem a uma Senhora de Si, Maria Teresa Horta. O *striptease* verbal, possessivo, subjetivado, objetivo e poderoso, de uma, *Minha Senhora de Mim*, desnuda na intimidade dos seus termos a alteridade poética da outra, *Minha Senhora de Quê*. Essa que guarda “qualquer coisa de intermédio”, outro segredo, legível, a meu ver, em fragmento (“166”) anti-Penélope de *Da Rosa Fixa*, 1978, de Maria Velho da Costa: “Não escolhi a nocturna astúcia e altitude destas câmaras. Toda, toda a potência é condenação” (209). Ou em versos seus: “Um espaço a sério / ou terra de ninguém / que não me chega / o conquistado à custa / de silêncios, armários / e cebolas perturbantes” (Amaral 2010: 19); “O mesmo se passa com a minha cozinha, ou / um livro, ou uma emoção: / um assado bem feito pode superar / qualquer capítulo bem anotado, / o cheiro das cebolas é às vezes / mais transcendente / do que tantos caracteres / a que falta sal” (Amaral 2007: 100).

Destes versos, em que à sua maneira o aroma das cebolas endoidece, perturba, “Biografia (Curtíssima)”, *pièce de résistance* desta leitura breve, é a versão corrigida e atualizada em 21 anos de produção poética.

La piel que habito – em suma, diria essa mulher, *Senhora de Vozes* – tem muitos estratos de sons e sentidos. Cebolas por cumprir, vestidos por tirar de armários por abrir, avesso por vestir, numa palavra, as peles onde habito põem à mostra a desejada “imperfeição” da sexualidade em que o menos é mais.

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