ANGLO SAXONICA

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III **N. 11** 2016

ULICES • CEAUL
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa

ANGLO SAXONICA

REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III N. 11 2016

ULICES • CEAUL
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies
Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa

ANGLO SAXONICA

SER. III N. 11 2016

EDIÇÃO Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies

DESIGN, PAGINAÇÃO E ARTE FINAL Inês Mateus

IMPRESSÃO E ACABAMENTO

SerSilito

TIRAGEM 150 exemplares

ISSN 0873-0628

DEPÓSITO LEGAL 86 102/95

FCT Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

Este trabalho é financiado por Fundos Nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia no âmbito do projeto PEst-OE/ELT/UI0114/2013

To the Memory of Laura Fernanda Bulger /
À Memória de Laura Fernanda Bulger
(23rd May 1939–25th February 2015)

Introductory note

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N.11 2016

Introductory note

This issue is dedicated to Laura Fernanda Bulger as a tribute to her life and work and in appreciation of her lifelong commitment to fostering mutual knowledge and understanding across the Atlantic, particularly between her native and her adopted country, respectively Portugal and Canada.

Born in Lisbon on 23rd May 1939, Laura Fernanda Bulger spent her childhood and youth in her native city, before moving to Toronto with her Canadian husband, John Bulger, and returning to Portugal thirty years later, living first in Porto and Vila Real and returning later to her birthplace where she spent her later years and died on 25th February 2015. A citizen of the world, her attachment to Lisbon's charms, its hills and streets, light and river, was laced with childhood memories of neutral wartime Lisbon and with youthful memories of the parochial atmosphere of the capital of the empire that Salazar held on to against all odds. These early memories, absorbed with a child's keen attention to sounds, silences and gazes, to the said as much as to the unsaid, and her adult exposure to the "new world" of Canada and North America, found a way into her intellectual curiosity and academic interests.

Having completed her secondary education in 1962, during the next three years Laura studied English and German Philology at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon. Married in 1966, Laura and John Bulger settled in Toronto, Ontario, where she proceeded with her studies at the University of Toronto and obtained her B.A. in 1970 and her M.A. in 1976. In 1989 she earned her Ph.D. from the University of Porto, Portugal, with an influential thesis on the work of the Portuguese writer Agustina Bessa Luís, subsequently published as *A Sibila: Uma superação inconclusa* [*The Sybil: An Inconclusive Overcoming*], and awarded the Eça de Queiroz Literature Prize for essay. In the late 1980s, the Bulgers settled in

northern Portugal, and Laura took up a post as Assistant Professor at the University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real. She embraced this new stage of her life with renewed energy and commitment and would earn her Habilitation in 2003. While in Canada she had assisted the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture in drafting the curriculum on Multiculturalism and had been involved in promoting Portuguese language and culture, both by collaborating in setting up Portuguese Studies at York University, and by liaising between Portuguese and Canadian entities to organize countless events showcasing Portuguese literature and cinema. Back in Portugal Laura Bulger not only continued to bring her insight into contemporary Portuguese literature, but also took it upon her to make Canadian literature and culture better known among us. In the process, she brought her experience of living between cultures to bear on her reflections on multiculturalism and postcolonialism, and her interest in literary theory stretched to include intermediality, as indicated by her Habilitation and later publications.

Indeed, Laura Bulger's transplantation from Salazar's Portugal to Pierre Trudeau's Canada must have proven as challenging as it was liberating, and it expanded her horizons in unexpected ways: not only was she exposed to the sheer vastness, as well as the linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity of Canada, but her involvement with the Portuguese community in Ontario, which at the time largely came from remote and impoverished areas in the Azores islands or inland Portugal, also faced her with bleak aspects of their shared native country that the urban Laura had so far been spared. Canada thus added vastness, nuance, and depth to her understanding of home and the challenges of belonging, and plunged her in the midst of debates on multiculturalism and how to negotiate the multiple legacies of colonialism and immigration. These concerns with in-betweenness would find their way into her academic writing as well as into her fiction, namely her short-story collection *Vaivém* (1986), translated into English as *Paradise on Hold* (1987).

In her later years, Laura Fernanda Bulger moved back to Lisbon and participated with zest in its civic and intellectual life. After her retirement in 2010, her curiosity unabated, she continued to read, write, and attend conferences, and generously accepted our invitations to share her knowledge of Canadian literature and culture with graduate and

undergraduate students and staff at the University of Lisbon. The two unpublished papers included in this issue were presented on two such occasions: the first, "Em Homenagem a Alice Munro, Prémio Nobel da Literatura 2013" is a tribute to Alice Munro and was delivered at *Alice Munro's Houses: Round-table and reading. A Tribute to Alice Munro*, organized by ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies in December 2013 to mark Alice Munro's Nobel Literature Prize; the second, "'This Will Never Be Where I Belong'—Richard Ford's *Canada*," was presented at *RHOME – Representations of Home in English-speaking Literatures and Cultures*, a symposium held in November 2014, and is the very last paper she wrote.

Strikingly, in her tribute to Alice Munro, Laura Bulger chose to talk about "Dear Life," the last story in Munro's eponymous volume. The story is indeed the last of the group of four stories that feature in a section entitled "Finale" and are preceded by Munro's following note: "*The final four works in this book are not quite stories. They form a separate unit, one that is autobiographical in feeling, though not, sometimes, entirely so in fact. I believe they are both the first and last—and the closest—things I have to say about my own life*" (255). The "closest Munro has to say about her own life" seems to have stirred "autobiographical feeling" in Laura Bulger, who humbly and candidly concedes, "The narrator's self-examining musings in the last paragraph of 'Dear Life' unsettle us and make us think about what we have or should have done, a reflection we tend to procrastinate until perhaps we find ourselves clinging less to 'dear life.'"

Teresa Casal

Work Cited

Munro, Alice. *Dear Life*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2012.

CONTENTS / ÍNDICE

TO THE MEMORY OF LAURA FERNANDA BULGER / À MEMÓRIA DE LAURA FERNANDA BULGER

INTRODUCTORY NOTE
Teresa Casal 7

CURRICULUM VITAE 17

EM HOMENAGEM A ALICE MUNRO, PRÉMIO NOBEL DE LITERATURA 2013
Laura Fernanda Bulge 29

"THIS WILL NEVER BE WHERE I BELONG"—RICHARD FORD'S *CANADA*
Laura Fernanda Bulger 35

ESSAYS/ESTUDOS

BORN IN 1812: EDWARD LEAR, ROBERT BROWNING AND CHARLES DICKENS. A READER'S STORY
Marijke Boucherie 45

JIMI SOLANKE: TOWARDS AN AFRICAN FOLK TRADITION MODEL OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
Oluwole Coker 69

MODERN DAY SLAVERY: A READING OF ORWELL'S *ANIMAL FARM*
Pedro Tiago Ferreira 89

MEDIA GÓTICO: O CRIME E SEU DUPLO FICCIONAL NA LITERATURA, TV E CINEMA
Maria Antónia Lima
António Lopes 111

SHELLS, TRENCHES AND MEMORY: WORLD WAR I POETS AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Ricardo Namora 133

SHOVING GOD INTO THE BACKSEAT: THE EROSION OF THE DIVINE AS LOSS OF ETHNIC IDENTITY IN PORTUGUESE AMERICAN LITERATURE
Reinaldo Francisco Silva 155

REVIEWS / RELEITURAS

EMRON ESPLIN AND MARGARIDA VALE DE GATO, EDS.. *TRANSLATED POE*. BETHLEHEM, PA.: LEHIGH UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014
Teresa Seruya 187

OTHER VOICES/ OUTRAS VOZES

TRÊS POEMAS DE MANNY IGREJAS TRADUZIDOS POR ANA-MARIA CHAVES
Margarida Vale de Gato 195

Notes on Contributors / Notas sobre os Colaboradores 205

TO THE MEMORY OF LAURA FERNANDA BULGER / À MEMÓRIA DE LAURA FERNANDA BULGER (23rd May 1939–25th February 2015)

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Curriculum Vitae

Laura Fernanda Bulger
Lisbon, 23 May 1939—Lisbon, 25 February 2015

Education

1962-1965 Studies in English and German Philology, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

1970 Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Toronto, Canada.

1976 Master of Arts, University of Toronto.

1976 Bachelor of Education, University of Toronto.

1987 Master of Arts – Equivalence conferred by the Arts Faculty, University of Porto.

1989 PhD (Summa cum laude), University of Porto.

2003 Habilitation, University of Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Vila Real, Portugal.

Grants and Awards:

1962-1965 Grantee of Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon.

1971 Literature Award, University of Toronto.

1990 Eça de Queiroz Literature Prize (essay), Lisbon City Council.

Associations:

Associação Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada / Portuguese Association of Comparative Literature.

Associação Portuguesa de Escritores / Portuguese Writers' Association.

Employment:

1966-1969 Secondary School teacher–The Etobicoke Board of Education, Toronto, Canada.

1971-1972 Monitor, University of Toronto.

1972-1974 Tutor, University of Toronto.

1973-1974 Teacher of Translation Techniques (Portuguese/English), The George Brown College of Applied Arts and Technology, Toronto.

1974-1980 Member of the curricular commission for the implementation of Portuguese Studies (Secondary education), Ontario Ministry of Education, Toronto.

Teacher of Portuguese language and culture, The Toronto Board of Education, Toronto.

1978-1979 Teacher of Applied Pedagogy, Faculty of Education, University of Toronto, Toronto.

1980-1984 Senior Tutor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Toronto, Toronto.

1983 Guest lecturer, Pedagogy Applied to the Teaching of Foreign Languages, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada.

1984 Associate Lecturer, Glendon College, York University, Toronto.

1986 Tenured Lecturer, York University, Toronto.

1986-1988 Member of the Senate, York University, Toronto.

1987-1990 Guest lecturer, Summer course for Foreigners, Arts Faculty, University of Porto.

1990-1991 Lecturer in Portuguese Culture, 20th cent., University Portucalense, Porto.

1991 Assistant Professor, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real.

2003 Assistant Professor with Habilitation, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real.

1994-2000 Collaboration with the Porto branch of Universidade Aberta (accumulation regime).

1996-1997 Guest lecturer at the University of Madeira, Funchal (accumulation regime).

Courses taught at university level:

Introduction to Literary Studies, Department of Letters, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real.

Literary Theory, Department of Letters, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real.

English Literature (B.A. and M.A. levels), Department of Letters, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro, Vila Real.

M.A. in Inter-cultural Relations—Politics and Strategies for Portuguese Culture, Universidade Aberta.

Areas of scientific activity:

Literary Theory; English Literature; Comparative Literature; Cultural Studies.

Specialisation:

Literary Theory; English Literature; Comparative Literature; Cultural Studies. Specific aims in her later career included exploring the relationship between Literature and other areas of knowledge, as well as the new technologies, namely those related to the audiovisual, cinema, television, etc.

Publications:

Books

2009 *A respeito da crítica literária e não só* [On Literary Criticism and Other Things], Vila Real: Centro de Estudos em Letras, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro.

2007 *O ângulo crítico do entendimento do mundo—Estudos em torno da obra de Agustina* [The Critical Angle for Understanding the World: Studies on Agustina's Oeuvre]. Preface by Eduardo Lourenço. Lisboa: Colibri.

2004 *A imagem da escrita no pequeno ecrã* [Writing on the Small Screen]. Introduction by Carlos Reis. Coimbra: Minerva.

1998 *As Máscaras da memória: Estudos em torno da obra de Agustina* [The Masks of Memory: Studies on Agustina Bessa Luís]. Lisboa: Guimarães Editores.

1990 *A Sibila: Uma superação inconclusa* [The Sybil: An Inconclusive Overcoming], Lisboa Guimarães Editores. Eça de Queirós Literature Prize (essay), Lisbon City Council.

Articles/Book chapters

2012 ""McEwan's and Wright's Flight from Dunkirk." *Via Panorâmica: Revista Electrónica de Estudos Anglo-Americanos / An Anglo-American Studies Journal*. 3rd series. 1 (2012): 146-161. ISSN: 1646-4728. Web: http://ler.letras.up.pt/

2011 "From Alice Munro's Sowesto: Not so Much Happiness After All." *Anglo Saxonica*, Ser. III N.º 2, pp. 117-132.

2011 "In and Out of Place – Uprooting, Re-rooting and Rerouting in Alice Munro's 'Who Do You Think You Are' and 'The View from Castle Rock'." *Dedalus – Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*, "Cross Traveling," N.º 14-15, pp. 329-340.

2011 "Out of the Remains of an Old World – The British at War in Novels by Kazuo Ishiguro and Ian McEwan," In *Transformations of the European Landscape: Encounters Between the Self and the Other*. Vilnius, Lithuania: Vilnius Pedagogy University, pp. 209-222.

2010 "'We are no longer mega' in *England, England* by Julian Barnes." In *JoLIE, Journal of Linguistics and Intercultural Education*. Special Issue: *Humour that Divides; Humour that Unites*, Vol. 2. N.º 2: 51-58.

2010 "Breaking Through in a Canadian Way." In *Gávea-Brown*, *A Bilingual Journal of Portuguese-American Studies*, vol. XXX-XXXI: 5-10.

2010 "The Legacy of the British Empire." In *Conflict, Memory Transfers and the Reshaping of Europe*, eds. Helena Gonçalves da Silva *et al.*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, pp. 206-217.

2009 "Cultural and Fictional Crossroads: A Portrait of V.S. Naipaul as An Artist." In *Dedalus – Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*, "Poéticas de Persuação," N.º 13, pp. 23-40.

2009 "From 'QandA' to 'Slumdog Millionaire'—It's Written." *Comunicação e Cultura*. Lisboa. ISSN 1646-4877. N.º 8 (Autumn-Winter 2009) 161-172.

2008 "The Enigma of The Baroness from Madalena do Mar." *Dedalus – Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*, "The Island and the Cultural Maps," N.º 11/12, pp. 407-417.

2006 "Por cá, são brandos os costumes e os sonhos": O Universo Duriense na Ficção de Agustina Bessa-Luís." In *Saberes Partilhados—O Lugar da Utopia na Cultura Portuguesa*, ed. Fátima Vieira. Vila Nova de Famalicão: Quasi.

2006 "Looking at the Written Text on Television: Jane Eyre." In *Writing and Seeing: Essays on Word and Image*, eds. Rui Carvalho Homem and Maria de Fatima Lambert. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, pp. 315-22.

2004 "As várias histórias da História Literária." In *Actas do Colóquio Internacional sobre História e Literatura*. Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, Vol. I, pp. 91-96.

2003 "God também é Deus." In *Vária Escrita*, Econtro Internacional Vergílio Ferreira. Sintra: Cadernos de Estudos Arquivísticos, Históricos e Documentais da Câmara Municipal de Sintra, pp. 49-62.

2003 "The Importance of Being Fradique." In *Actas do 1º Congresso Internacional de Estudos Anglo-Portugueses*. Lisboa: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, pp. 413-427.

2002 "Agustina Bessa-Luís." Entry in *Dicionário da Literatura*. Porto: Figueirinhas, pp. 131-33.

2002 "The Stone Angels: from Manawaka to Port Ticonderoga." In *IV Congresso da Associação Portugesa de Literatura Comparada*. Évora: Universidade de Évora, 2002.

2001 "O tempo desencontrado da História Literária e o tempo reencontrado nos "murmúrios" e nas linguagens de Babel." In *Histórias Literárias Comparadas*, eds. Maria Lin Moniz and Teresa Seruya. Lisboa: Universidade Católica Portuguesa e Colibri, 2001.

2001 "Agustina, a contista." *O Escritor*, N.º 15/16/17, March.

2001 "O tempo desencontrado da História Literária e o tempo reencontrado nos "murmúrios" e nas linguagens de Babel." In *Histórias Literárias Comparadas*, Lisboa: Colibri.

1998 Review of "*Tudo o que não escrevi*, por Eduardo Prado Coelho." *O Escritor*, Associação Portuguesa de Escritores.

1997 "A história das personagens e as personagens da História—de Eça a Agustina." *Varia Escrita*, N.º 4. Sintra: Fundação Eça de Queiroz e Câmara Municipal de Sintra.

1997 "Literary Studies: from poetics to ideology." In *Actas do Congresso Internacional de Literatura Comparada / Proceedings of the International Conference of Comparative Studies*. Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto.

1997 "*A jangada de pedra*, de José Saramago—viagem em busca de um futuro, de um tempo, de um destino." *Literatura de Viagens, Narrativa, História e Mito*. Lisboa: Edições Cosmos.

1996 "Histórias da Montanha: um modo de encarar a terra." Estudos Transmontanos. *Revista do Arquivo Distrital de Vila Real*.

1996 "*Em Nome da Terra*, o tempo do desassossego." *Actas do Colóquio Internacional sobre a Obra de Vergílio Ferreira*. Porto: Fundação António José de Almeida.

1995 "De cartas a *letters* queirosianas – *a glow* ou simplesmente *a*

glimmer?" In *Dedalus – Revista Portuguesa de Literatura Comparada*, N.º 5.

1994 "*Em Nome da Terra*, o tempo do desassossego." *O Escritor*. Associação Portuguesa de Escritores, N.º 4.

1994 "Configurações e transfigurações em «Vale Abraão," de Agustina Bessa-Luís." In *Revista Colóquio/Letras*. Notas e Comentários, Nº 131, Jan., pp. 178-190.

1994 "*Fanny Owen* – a perversidade da história ficcionada." *Actas do Congresso Internacional de Estudos Camilianos*. Coimbra: Comissão Nacional das Comemorações Camilianas e Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra.

1994 "Reflexões sobre *História da Bela Fria.*" *O Escritor.* Associação Portuguesa de Escritores, N.º 3.

1994 "O enigma do feminino nos textos de Antero." In *Antero de Quental e o destino de uma geração—Actas do Colóquio Internacional da Morte de Antero de Quental.* Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto e Edições Asa.

1992 "Pistas e leituras em torno da construção ficcional emigrante." *Razão*, N.º 31, Abril/Maio/Junho.

1991 "Reflections in a *Cat's Eye Marble*—an Attempt for Survival?" *Actas do XII Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos*. Braga: Universidade do Minho.

1991 Traduções ao vivo em Mateus, Vila Real," *Jornal de Letras*, Ano XI, N.º 483, 8.10.91.

1991 "Ainda à volta do mistério de *A confissão*." Dossier sobre Mário de Sá Carneiro, *Letras e Letras*, N.º 41, Fevereiro.

1990 "The Memorialist Narrator—Agustina Bessa-Luís and Margaret Laurence." *Actas do Simpósio Internacional de Literatura Comparada*. Lisboa: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa.

1989 "Jonathan Culler e a reconstrução caótica do discurso da crítica." In *Letras e Letras*, N.º 18, Junho.

1988 "Interferência linguística: o uso do adjectivo em português." *Actas do Congresso sobre a Situação Actual da Língua Portuguesa no Mundo*. Lisboa: ICALP.

1987 "Carta do Canadá / Margaret Laurence: uma jornada solitária." *Revista Colóquio/Letras*. Cartas, N.º 97, Maio, pp. 89-91.

1986 "*Canadianos ou étnicos?—Em busca de uma identidade*." Porto: Secretaria de Estado das Comunidades e Centro de Estudos.

1986 Review of *Stella Manhattan*, by Silvano Santiago, Nova Fronteira, Rio de Janeiro, 1985. In *World Literature Today*, Fall.

1986 "A problemática da mulher migrante numa sociedade pluralista." In collaboration with Maria Helena Guerreiro-Klinosky (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture). 1.º Encontro de Portuguesas Migrantes no Associativismo e no Jornalismo. Porto: Secretaria de Estado das Comunidades e Centro de Estudos.

1985 "Toronto na Literatura Canadiana de expressão inglesa." In *Nova Renascença*, Julho/Setembro.

1984 «O Cais das Merendas» de Lídia Jorge: uma identidade cultural perdida?" In *Revista Colóquio/Letras*. Ensaio, N.º 82, Nov., pp. 51-57.

1984 "O ensino do Português num país de língua inglesa—problemas de interferência linguística." In *Palavras*, Nov.

1981 Review of "Falando … Lendo … Escrevendo … Português: Um Curso para Estrangeiros," São Paulo, Editora Pedagódica e Universidade Lda., 1981, pp. XIII-303. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, vol. 39, p. 910.

1980 *Camoens and His Times* (ed.). In collaboration with Kurt Levy and Ricardo Sternberg (University of Toronto). Ed. of works presented by Peter Fothergill-Payne, António José Saraiva, Harold Livermore, Stephen Reckert, António A. Cirurgião, Manuel dos Santos Lima, Florian Smieja, Alfred Hower, Eduardo Mayonne Dias, David Mourão-Ferreira, António Soares Amora. International Conference on the 4th Centenary of Camoens' Death. Toronto: University of Toronto.

1979 Review of "Contributions to Applied Linguistics III, Cristoph Gutnecht (ed.), Frankfurt am Main, Bern, Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1979, 131 pp., *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, vol. 38, pp. 371-72.

Fiction

1995 "*The Letter*," in *Breaking Free*, *A Cross-Cultural Anthology* (for English-language secondary education in Canada), John Borovilos (ed.), Scarborough, Prentice Hall Canada Inc..

1990 "Input," and "Vaivém," in *Breaking Through*, *A Canadian Literary Mosaic*, Scarborough, Ontario, Prentice-Hall, Canada, Inc.

1989/1990 "The Letter" and "At the Doctor's," in *New Canadian Review*, Montreal, Canada, Vol. 2, Winter.

1987 "Input" in *Gavea-Brown*, Providence, Brown University, Volumes V-VIII.

1987 *Paradise on Hold*, Toronto, Bramble House.

1986 *Vaivém*, (contos), Lisboa: Vega.

Translation

1997 *The Tower—A short story*, by Agustina Bessa Luís, Lisbon: Guimarães Editores.

Guest lectures / seminars:

2014 "'This Will Never Be Where I Belong'—Richard Ford's *Canada*." Symposium *RHOME—Representations of Home in English-speaking Literatures and Cultures*. Lisbon: University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies, Nov..

2013 "Em Homenagem a Alice Munro, Prémio Nobel da Literatura 2013." *Alice Munro's Houses: Round-table and reading. Tribute to Alice Munro*. Lisbon: University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies. Dec.

2013 "Re-Routing Traditional Notions of Colonialism, Post-Colonialism and Nationalism in Canada." Lecture on "Contemporary Themes," hosted by Eduardo Cintra Torres. Lisbon: Catholic University, Nov.

2013 "Cultural and Literary Border Lines in a Complex Cross-Border Relationship between Canada and the United States of America." Lisbon: University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies. May.

2008 "*Slumdog Millionaire*: Da literatura para o cinema." Conference series "Choque de Comunicações." Lisbon: Catholic University, April.

2006 "The Enigma of the Baroness from Madalena do Mar," A Ilha e os Mapas Culturais / The Island and the Cultural Maps. International conference, University of Madeira, Sept.

2005 "Literature by English-speaking authors: Literary Trends in English-speaking Canada" M.A. Seminar. Aveiro: University of Aveiro, May.

2005 "Cultural and Fictional Crossroads: A Portrait of V.S. Naipaul as an Artist." The Dialects of The Tribe. Florence, Sept.

2004 "As assimetrias dos espíritos." Homenagem a Agustina Bessa Luís. Porto: Universidade Católica, Universidade do Porto, Câmara Municipal do Porto, December.

2004 "Seminário Queirosiano: Intertextualidades, o discurso literário no pequeno ecrã." Curso de Verão / Summer course. Tormes: Fundação Eça de Queirós, July.

2004 M.A. seminar on the oeuvre of Agustina Bessa-Luís. Lisbon, Arts Faculty, University of Lisbon, May.

2003 "Agustina, a mediadora da História." Introduction to the author's work at a tribute organized by the Alumni Association of the University of Coimbra. Dec.

2002 "Agustina Bessa-Luís." Tribute to the Writer at Lisbon's Book Fair. Lisbon: City Council, May.

2002 "The Stone Angels: from Manawaka to Port Ticonderoga." IV Conference of the Portuguese Association of Comparative Literature. University of Évora.

2001 "God também é Deus." Encontro Internacional Vergílio Ferreira / International Conference on Vergílio Ferreira. Sintra: City Council, Oct.

2001 "Agustina Bessa-Luís." Introduction of the author. Porto: Biblioteca Almeida Garrett, Jun.

2000 "The Importance of Being Fradique or a Trivial Biography for a Serious Reader." Eça de Queirós Astride The Millenia, Points of View. Bristol: Instituto Camões and University of Bristol, Nov.

1996 Seminars on Portuguese Literature and Culture presented at universities in South Africa. Guest lecturer of the Embassy of Portugal (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Camoens Institute and Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation). Oct.

1996 Seminars for secondary school teachers: "O texto queirosiano como texto produtor," Vila Nova de Gaia: Vila Nova de Gaia City Council.

1996 Talk on the work of Agustina Bessa Luís. Tribute to Jacinto do Prado Coelho. Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Jan.

1995 Presentation of *O Diário de C*, by António Pires Cabral. Vila Real: Vila Real City Council, Dec.

1995 "A história das personagens e as personagens da História – de Eça a Agustina." International Conference on Eça de Queiroz. Sintra: Eça de Queiroz Foundation and Sintra City Council, 22-25 Nov.

1995 Seminars on Portuguese literature and culture for the academic communities of Queen's University, Belfast, University of Manchester, and University of Newcastle, United Kingdom. Org. Camoens Institute, Nov.

1995 Seminar in *Jornadas Queirosianas*, with Carlos Reis, Maria Isabel Pires de Lima, and Luís Fagundes Duarte. Póvoa de Varzim: City Council, May.

1994 "British Studies in Portugal." British Studies Symposium, Porto: University of Porto, Jan.

1993 "Este cidadão tão 'exemplarmente' europeu." Introducing Eduardo

Lourenço. Vila Real: Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Nov.

1993 "*Em Nome da Terra*, o tempo do desassossego." Colóquio Internacional sobre a obra de Vergílio Ferreira [International Symposium on Vergílio Ferreira's Oeuvre]. Porto: Arts Faculty, University of Porto, Jan.

1992 "De cartas a *letters* queirosianas – *a glow* ou simplesmente *a glimmer*?" II Encontro Internacional de Queirosianos. Coimbra: Arts Faculty, University of Coimbra, Jul.

1992 "Tão poeticamente dizendo …." Introduction of David Mourão-Ferreira. Porto: Portucalense University, Apr.

1986 "A problemática da segunda geração migrante." Summer seminar. Secretaria de Estado das Comunidades Portuguesas: University of Évora and University of Porto, Jul.

1983 "O ensino do português na província de Ontário." Congresso sobre Uma Cultura a Preservar. Porto: Secretaria de Estado da Emigração.

1981 "An Inherited Culture." Professional Activity Day for Language Instructors. Toronto: The Toronto Board of Education, Nov.

Em homenagem a Alice Munro, Prémio Nobel de Literatura 2013

Laura Fernanda Bulger
Centro de Estudos em Letras, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N.11 2016

Em homenagem a Alice Munro, Prémio Nobel de Literatura 2013

Dear Life, *Amada Vida* na tradução portuguesa da Relógio d'Agua, é uma colectânea de histórias, ou "ficções curtas," como se diz agora, publicada por McClelland and Stewart, de Toronto, em 2012. As últimas quatro são precedidas por umas cinco linhas em itálico, onde a autora chama a atenção para o carácter semi-autobiográfico das histórias que vai contar, indicando também que não voltará a escrever sobre "a sua própria vida."[1] O facto é que Alice Munro continua a fazer aqui o que sempre tem feito, isto é, escrever ficção imitando a realidade ou a realidade da "sua própria vida," como acontece em obras anteriores, entre elas, *Who Do You Think You Are?*, de 1978, cujas personagens e situações surgem como que reinventadas neste "Finale" supostamente autobiográfico. A interdependência do realismo narrativo e da narração subjectivada pelo recordar da memória é evidente, por exemplo, em "Dear Life," a história que dá o nome à colectânea, onde não faltam as habituais interrupções, digressões e desvios inesperados ou "turnabouts," como lhes chama a autora, assinalando a imprevisibilidade ou irracionalidade do que acontece dentro e fora dos mundos possíveis da ficção. A narração, feita por um eu feminino que regressa ao passado da sua infância e adolescência, começa por descrever a região a norte do rio Maitland, detendo-se depois no local da velha mercearia abandonada que servia de escola numa pequena comunidade ou "small-town," situada em Huron County, no sudoeste da província de Ontario, o referente espacial privilegiado na ficção de Munro.

---

[1] "The final works in this book are not quite stories, /They form a separate unit, one that is autobiographical/ in feeling, though not, sometimes, entirely so in fact. I/believe they are the first and last—and the closest—/ things I have to say about my own life."

A sociedade semi-rural que retrata é marcada pela moral Presbiteriana dos primeiros colonos vindos das Ilhas Britânicas para se fixarem no então Domínio do Canadá, onde a maioria se iria dedicar à agricultura e ao negócio lucrativo das peles. Os referenciais históricos e sociais na ficção de Munro, há muito desaparecidos, servem de enquadramento a grandes e pequenos dramas humanos recriados a partir dos que se vivem neste mundo dito *real*. Voltando de novo à narradora, cujo nome próprio nunca é mencionado, sabe-se que nasceu em 1931, por alturas da Grande Depressão económica que antecedeu a Segunda Grande Guerra Mundial. Da escola degradada, onde foi vítima de várias formas de *bullyin*g, ela só recorda Diana, que prometeu ensinar-lhe uns passos de dança escocesa. Mas, nunca chegaria a dançar *the Highdance fling* porque, entretanto, a mãe proíbe-a de voltar a casa da amiga por esta ser filha de uma prostituta. Diana terá de abandonar a escola e procurar trabalho na grande cidade, Toronto, onde provavelmente seguirá a mesma profissão da mãe. As personagens de Alice Munro, na sua maioria mais *loosers* do que *winners*, são diferenciadas também pelo género, como fica claro em "Dear Life." O pai, homem com pouca escolaridade e dado a excessos de violência, espanca a filha brutalmente sempre que a mãe se queixa da maneira atrevida como a rapariga lhe responde. Ele, que contava enriquecer com o negócio das peles, é uma das muitas vítimas da Grande Depressão. Terá de se desfazer da casa, das terras, do gado e do espaço onde os animais em cativeiro eram esfolados ainda com vida. Arranja trabalho numa fábrica de fogões, onde faz os turnos da noite, ocupação mal remunerada, mas que dá para o sustento da família. A mãe, que tinha completado a escola normal e ensinado na província de Alberta, sempre tivera aspirações de ser mais do que mãe e dona de casa. Veste-se de maneira diferente das outras mulheres do seu meio e usa uma linguagem rebuscada que ninguém entende. O comportamento da mãe dá nas vistas, o que não agrada à filha, que se mostra mais tolerante para com o pai, apesar das tareias e humilhações a que ele a submete. O pai não pretende ser mais do que é e, por isso, ninguém repara nele. Aos quarenta anos, a mãe é diagnosticada com doença de Parkinson e, desde então, é a filha quem cuida da casa e prepara as refeições. À noite, estuda para os exames e embrenha-se na leitura de livros difíceis de compreender, como *À procura do tempo perdido*, de Proust, e *A Montanha Mágica*, de Mann. Consegue terminar os estudos secundários, ao contrário

da maioria das raparigas do seu tempo, já casadas e com filhos. Em "Dear Life" também não falta o acontecimento insólito a tocar o gótico, como durante a evocação da visita de Mrs. Netterfield. Segundo contava a mãe, era uma viúva meio tresloucada, que tentou agredir com um machado o rapaz que entregava as compras ao domicílio por suspeitar que ele se tinha esquecido de lhe trazer a manteiga. Um dia, a mãe avistou Mrs. Netterfield a caminhar em direcção à casa onde viviam e, assustada com a aparição da velha, agarrou a filha, ainda de colo, com quantas forças tinha ou, como dizia a mãe, *for dear life*, escondendo-se com a criança num lugar escuro da casa donde podia ver a louca a espreitar pelas janelas. Só saíram do esconderijo depois de a mãe ter a certeza de que a velha se tinha ido embora de vez. Soube-se depois que a tinham levado dali para que não morresse só e abandonada. Mas, qual não é o espanto da narradora quando, anos mais tarde, já casada e a viver em Vancouver, encontra uns poemas escritos por alguém residente em Portland, Oregon, cujo nome de solteira é Netterfield. Os poemas, inspirados na paisagem da região a norte do rio Maitland, indicam que a autora também é oriunda daquelas paragens. Descobre-se ainda que a mulher vivera na mesma casa em que a própria narradora tinha vivido. O facto de a mãe desconhecer que a casa tinha pertencido antes aos Netterfields estaria na origem do equívoco. A louca teria vindo não para fazer mal a ninguém, mas à procura da filha poeta, naquela altura já emigrada para outras paragens distantes. Ela não poderá esclarecer o equívoco com a mãe, entretanto falecida, tendo de viver com esse e com outros pesos na consciência, como o de não ter deixado os filhos e o marido sozinhos em Vancouver para estar com a mãe nos seus últimos dias de vida e depois assistir ao funeral. Daí, a necessidade de rever o passado como forma de expiar os erros cometidos, sabendo, no entanto, que para alguns deles não há redenção possível, a menos que a misericórdia divina os venha a perdoar, o que é imprevisível nesta vida. As considerações da narradora, feitas a modo de exame de consciência, no último parágrafo de "Dear Life," causam um certo desassossego e obrigam-nos a pensar no que fizemos ou no que deveríamos ter feito, uma reflexão que vamos sempre adiando até nos sentirmos talvez menos agarrados à vida. Quem havia de dizer que uma história cujo título sugere como que uma celebração da vida poderia suscitar pensamentos tão sombrios? Mas, deixando por instantes esta fantasia perturbadora, como tantas que a autora tem forjado ao longo dos anos,

também não passaria pela cabeça de ninguém, pelo menos até há bem pouco tempo, que estaríamos reunidos hoje, aqui, neste lado do mar Atlântico, para celebrar a atribuição do Nobel de Literatura a Alice Munro, ela que, à semelhança da narradora da história, sempre evitou dar nas vistas. Parece ser mais um daqueles "turnabouts" saído das suas muitas ficções e que nos leva a pensar que a autora tem motivos de sobra para se sentir ainda agarrada à vida.

Comunicação lida durante o tributo a Alice Munro, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa.
9 de Dezembro de 2013.

Obras Citadas

Munro, Alice. *Dear Life*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2012.

___. *Amada Vida*. Trad. José Miguel Silva. Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 2013.

"This Will Never Be Where I Belong" – Richard Ford's *Canada*

Laura Fernanda Bulger
Center for the Studies in Letters, University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

"This Will Never Be Where I Belong" — Richard Ford's *Canada*[1]

Before discussing Richard Ford's *Canada*, a few comments may be in order regarding the general theme of this Symposium. In a globalized world like the one we live in, where, paraphrasing Homi K. Bhabha, "exiles and émigrés and refugees" (291) gather along shifting borders, the traditional meanings of "home," "homeland" and "sense of belonging" appear to be lost. Therefore, literary representations of "home" and "homeland" are also problematic. Never before were we confronted with so many refugee camps scattered all over, or with migrations of people who attempt to reach European shores and cross the continent in the hope of disappearing in the dark alleys of an European city. Thousands drown in the Mediterranean, which does not seem to discourage new waves of migrants from trying the risky crossing. Postcolonial theory and critique, centred mainly on the liberation of the colonial condition under imperial rule, could hardly foresee that among the refugees fleeing from war, hunger and persecutions are people whose countries of origin were former colonies. In Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*, the narrator-chronicler refers to the last century post-colonial migrations as "the century of strangers, brown, yellow, and white" (271), and to the ongoing dialectic among different cultures, religions, races and ethnicities. Under the threat of terrorism, the West has become less receptive to cultural pluralism and diversity, and xenophobia is on the rise in many parts of the globe. In many instances,

---

[1] Paper presented at the Symposium *RHOME—Representations of Home in English-speaking Literatures and Cultures*, organised by ULICES—University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies, and held at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, on 13th-14th November 2014.

the reawakening of dormant nationalisms, or of hegemonic conceptions of identity can be regarded as ways of resisting the hybridity of today's world and, in Europe, as a reaction against the dismantling of the nation-state. In our century, which might be called the age of the displaced and the homelessness, nostalgic narratives of "imaginary homelands" (Rushdie) are likely to become alternatives for the new emergent identities who long for a "home," the national *heimat*, nowhere to be found.

In *Canada*, published in 2012, American novelist Richard Ford challenges the traditional notion of "home" and deals with issues like integration and assimilation as policies fostered by governments to make the immigrant, or "boundary crosser," generally a non-English speaker, be part of a homogenised society, or nation. In Ford's novel, the "boundary crosser" happens to be an English-speaker refugee, probably the most vulnerable of all the exiles, who becomes the "transgressor," the term used by Sneja Gunew to designate the immigrant who arrived in Australia during and after the Second World War, always a "new" Australian "in the eyes of those" who had arrived before them (Gunew 111). The same distinction between "older" and "new" Canadians exists in Canada.

As a kind of aside, one may always ask why the creator of Frank Bascombe, lately resurrected in *Let Me Be Frank With You*, picked Canada as the title of his novel. In an interview to *The Globe and Mail*, Ford, known for his fascination with words and style, praises the "plush suppleness" of the word Canada, with its "three softened 'a' sounds" and "staccato'd consonants." He does not elaborate, however, on the use of Canada or, rather, the Canadian prairie, as the backdrop of his almost plotless novel. The fact that Canada assumes such an important role in American fiction can only flatter Canadians, not used to being noticed by their neighbours south of the border except perhaps for the clichéd images of Mounties, snow and bears created by Hollywood.

In Part I of Ford's novel, the first-person narrator, Dell Parsons, a retired teacher in his 60s living with his Canadian wife in Windsor, Ontario, looks back at his past in Great Falls, Montana, where he led, in his own words a "completely normal life" until his parents committed a bank robbery to pay for their debts. Dell, who is "blessed with memory," depicts what life was like in America during the 1960's and how he and his twin sister Berner were affected by the mismatched union of their all

American father, Bev Parsons, a former GI born in Alabama, from Scotch-Irish stock, and their Jewish mother, Keeva Kemper (short for Geneva), a woman with intellectual interests and refined manners regarded by her son as a "bohemian."[2] In our paper, close attention will be paid not to Part I but to Parts II and III, where Ford's protagonist tells of his struggle to survive in Canada's inhospitable land.

After their parents' arrest and subsequent imprisonment, fifteen-year-old Dell and his twin sister Berner are left on their own, no one responsible for their welfare. Berner runs away, as the reader learns later, to join a hippie community in San Francisco, while Dell is driven north by his mother's friend, Mildred, and smuggled into Canada, more exactly, Southern Saskatchewan. The American youngster finds himself living with strangers in the middle of nowhere, a non-person supposedly in the care of Mildred's brother, Arthur Remlinger, who owns a hotel in a small prairie town. Originally from Michigan, Arthur Remlinger passes for one of those American intellectuals "disenchanted" with their country who move up north to start a new life in Canada following the example of the draft dodgers, or even the Loyalists who, once across the border, helped Canadians build the Canadian nation. Dell is impressed by his guardian's charm and elegant suits and sees in him a substitute father. He does not

---

[2] In fact, nothing appears to be "normal" in the lives of Dell and Berner, who were not allowed to "assimilate" into the American way of life despite their all American father, Bev Parsons, the son of an Alabama lumberjack from Scotch-Irish stock. Their Jewish mother, Keeva Kemper, whose cultivated immigrant parents were refugees from Poland, tried to keep the children away from the "market-town mentality" (8) prevailing in America. Keeva was a "tiny, intense bespectacled" (3) woman with intellectual interests and refined manners. She spoke French, read French poets, and used such sophisticated expressions like "physical ennui" (36). Dell describes their mother as a "bohemian" (4) and contrasts her with their tall, handsome, outgoing father, their union obviously a "mismatched" one (5). A bombardier during World War Two, Bev Parsons left the Air Force at the age of 37 and after some unsuccessful experiences, settled in Great Falls, where he hoped to "get ahead" in life. He made some bad decisions, though, like associating himself with the Indians who ran an illegal beef business. They threatened to kill him and probably his family if he did not pay them on time, which triggered the thoughts about the bank robbery.

listen to Charley Quarters, a Canadian Métis known as Remlinger's "all-around man" (268) who claims that Arthur is no gentleman but a ruthless violent type capable of leading "a person to peril" (404). Actually, Remlinger treats Dell like a servant, not like a son, or even as the "nephew from (…) Toronto" (285), a lie Arthur is prepared to tell the RCMP if they find out that an illegal immigrant is working in his hotel. Not only that, Remlinger forces the terrified youngster to watch him murder two Americans and then help bury their bodies. The two Americans had come to Saskatchewan to take Arthur across the border and arrest him for a crime he committed in Detroit fifteen years before. Dell, an involuntary accomplice of Arthur's crime, has to live with his guilt for the rest of his life, as if it were not enough to carry the stigma of being the son of two bank robbers, or of being Jewish on his mother's side, a secret the twins keep to themselves. It all ends well in Part Two, when Arthur's girl friend, Florence le Blanc, a painter, takes an interest in the boy and sends him to a Catholic school in Winnipeg where he receives a Canadian education.[3]

In Part III, 66-year-old Dell, now a naturalised Canadian, crosses the border once more to meet his twin sister in Minneapolis. A drinker and drug user, Berner is dying. During their last meeting, the twins discuss their mother's suicide while in prison in North Dakota. She left a chronicle, where she described her life with their father, the man she should have never married. What might have happened to him after having served his term in prison, they did not know. Berner, who has adopted her father's name, Bev Parsons, keeps her usual hauteur and mocks Dell for speaking as a Canadian. She feels that her brother has given up "a lot" by remaining in Canada, in her view, a "nondescript" country (491). In other words, Dell, unlike her, is no longer a real American. Berner dies a week after the American Thanksgiving, in 2010, her death triggering Dell's "reverse thinking" about his own life.

---

[3] Till then, all he knew was that Canada, a country "covered with ice most of the time" (264), was governed by the Queen of England, or that Canadians, whose English was different from the English spoken in America, also spoke French, and used different dollars.

Richard Ford's novel, considered by most critics as an American classic, explores the political, cultural, social, psychological even linguistic boundaries between the US and Canada. It also tackles the question of assimilation from the perspective of the American "new comer," Dell, forced against his will to seek refuge in a country so much "alike" and yet so "different" from his own, as he keeps reminding the reader all along: "It was Canada there. Indistinguishable. Same sky. Same daylight. Same air. But different" (260). Dell Parsons, who still talks "like a Yank," is proud of his "forsaken Americanness" (484), his "choice" accepted by Canadians, supposedly tolerant and understanding people: "It's well and long accepted that I'm American, though I've been naturalized and have held a passport for thirty-five years" (484). He sees himself as "barely" Canadian, or a Canadian on paper, as people say these days to distinguish between citizenship and nationalism. He is free to cross the border and return to Oscoda, his birthplace, or to Great Falls. Yet, he has never done it, and probably never will, afraid perhaps of finding out that he may no longer identify with the America remembered in his thoughts. Like the Turk in Bhabha's essay, Dell remains in the borderline living the "life of the double" (Bhabha 316). His ambivalent identity is not that different from the "in-between-ness" lived by most so-called "ethnics," among them Italian-Canadians, a question analysed by Jim Zucchero in his essay on Nino Ricci's novels (252-267). About to retire, childless Dell's main concern is to define a "life concept" to pass on as a legacy to his Canadian students. It is based on his own experience and inspired by the novels that he teaches in his classes, among them *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, by Thomas Hardy.[4]

---

[4] Consider the opening paragraphs of Part Three: "I have always counselled my students to think on the long life of Thomas Hardy. Born, 1840. Died, 1928. To think of all he saw, the changes his life comprehended over such a period. I try to encourage in them the development of a 'life concept'; to enlist their imaginations; to think of their existence on the planet not as just a catalog of random events endlessly unspooling, but as *life*—both abstract and finite. This, as a way of taking account.

I teach them books that to me seem secretly about my young life—*The Heart of Darkness*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Sheltering Sky*, *The Nick Adams Stories*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. A mission into the void. Abandonment. A *figure*, possibly mysterious, but finally not. (These books aren't taught now to high school students

Above all, Dell Parsons wants them to understand that life has "no hidden meanings" and that "you have a better chance in life—of survival—if you tolerate loss well" (511). One may call it acceptance, resignation or even fatalism but, in the end, Dell comes to terms with the loss of his homeland by reinventing it in his thoughts, managing not to become "a cynic through it all" (511); or, at least, he tries.

Works Cited

Bhabha, Homi K. "DisseminNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 291-322.

Ford, Richard. *Canada*. 2012. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

Ford, Richard. "Why I Called my New Novel 'Canada.'" *The Globe and Mail*. May 19, 2012. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/richard-ford-why-i-called-my-new-novel-canada/article4186807/

Gunew, Sneja. "Denaturalizing Cultural Nationalisms: Multicultural Readings of 'Australia.'" *Nation and Narration*. Ed. Homi K. Bhabha. London: Routledge, 1990. 99-120.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. 1991. London: Penguin, 1992.

Smith, Zadie. *White Teeth*. 2000. London: Penguin, 2001.

Urquhart, Jane. "Borderline Greatness." Rev. of *Canada*, by Richard Ford. *The Globe and Mail*. May 25, 2012. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/canada-by-richard-ford/article4209620/

Zucchero, Jim. "What's Immigration Got to Do with It?." *Is Canada Postcolonial? Unsettling Canadian Literature*. Ed. Laura Moss. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2003. 252-267.

---

in Canada. Who knows why?) My conceit is always 'crossing a border'; adaptation, development from a way of living that doesn't work toward one that does. It can be about crossing a line and never being able to come back" (Ford 483).

ESSAYS
ESTUDOS

Born in 1812: Edward Lear, Robert Browning and Charles Dickens. A Reader's Story

Marijke Boucherie
University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Born in 1812: Edward Lear, Robert Browning and Charles Dickens. A Reader's Story

The year 2012 saw a series of anniversaries in English Literature that uncannily coincide with the diamond jubilee of the Queen of England, Elizabeth II: 2012 is the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Dickens (1812-1870) and of his contemporaries Robert Browning (1812-1889) and Edward Lear (1812-1888). At the same time, two modernist works in the English language have become so important that it is not inappropriate to include in the celebrations of 2012 the ninetieth year of the date of their publication: "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) first published in *The Criterion* in 1922 and *Ulysses* (1922) by James Joyce (1882-1941). What follows is not so much an attempt to indicate points of connection between the authors just mentioned, but rather an account of how my readings and re-readings of Charles Dickens made me aware of those connections. Therefore, my essay is not meant as a theoretical account of influences, inspired, say, by Harold Bloom but rather a revisiting of authors whose books have nourished my life as a woman, a reader and a researcher.

My narrative starts with the Poetry of Romanticism, and with William Wordsworth as a case in point. "In the beginning" one wants to say, there was a poetry that grew out of the premise that words and things are connected in a "natural" way. According to this view, explained by Wordsworth in "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" (1800, 1802), language is not a representation of reality sanctioned by convention but an expression of a godlike Nature and thus analogous to it. As such, poetry is the universal language of humankind: "Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing (…) its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; (…) Poetry is the image of man and nature" (Wordsworth 603).

As high priest of the universal language of the heart, Wordsworth's poet has only one restriction "to pay homage (…) to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves" (605). "Pleasure" (the word occurs about forty times in only twenty-four pages) is poetry's powerful energy capable of healing inner divisions and of restoring the person back to himself as a sensuous, knowing, feeling and spiritual being.

1. Edward Lear (1812-1888)

The first to experience the more than human requirements made of poetry were the Romantics themselves, especially Wordsworth (1770-1850) whose eloquent poem "Ode. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1802) conceives of poetry as the difficult work of memory in search for a lost unity. The text shows man as united to an original plenitude before he "falls" into incarnation and gradually forgets the fullness of being from whence he came. Poetry or the language of memory—"emotion *re*collected in tranquillity" (Wordsworth, "Preface" 611)[1]—remains the royal way to recapture glimpses of the fullness experienced in childhood which is—the poem says—almost eagerly abandoned when lured by the pleasures of the immanent world.

Under the influence of the Romantics, the subsequent era of Victorianism becomes obsessed with an idea of happiness linked to a regressive movement that turns back, nostalgically, to a supposed purity connected with childhood. Thus, while the nineteenth century moves forward to the rhythm and reality of the Industrial Revolution, the rift between an early dream of innocence and the needs of material progress widens. The growing impossibility of integrating opposite demands becomes the great challenge of the Victorian poets who are asked to reconcile the inherited ideal of language as a means of unification with the awareness of language as "a difference" that reveals the strangeness of self and the disenchantment of the world. The idea of absence increasingly haunts the nineteenth century poet and one of the ways to look at the

[1] Emphasis mine.

literature of the time is to follow the traces of language that try to say what is "not" there. It is precisely here, in the celebration of what "is not" that the literature of "nonsense" is born with Edward Lear as "the Poet Laureate of Nonsense."

Edward Lear (1812-1888) was a landscape painter who spent his life travelling in the south of Europe and the Middle East, writing and illustrating travel books. Almost by accident, he started to amuse the children of an aristocratic household where he was employed with sketches and short poems. First published in 1846 under the title *A Book of Nonsense*, these drawings and poems were received with enthusiasm, especially after the second edition of 1861.[2] Other "Books of Nonsense" followed which made humorous play with language fashionable and created a fad of "nonsense" literature, also for adults. By the end of the nineteenth century, and due to the success of Edward Lear's poetry, the word "nonsense" meaning absurd and humorous poetry became an accepted general category for literature for children and humorous verse in general. This is the reason, accidentally, why Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), intended as a fairy-tale, was later re-appropriated as a work of "nonsense."

In the twentieth century, in part because of the acceptance of Lewis Carroll by French Surrealism, the critical term "nonsense" spread geographically and historically and became a universal category for denoting a kind of absurdity that keeps pointing towards an ideal of innocence. In retrospect, a great many authors and entertainers belonging to the history of literature and the visual arts received the label of "authors of nonsense": François Villon, Shakespeare, Rabelais, Kafka, Woody Allen, Monty Python, among others (Benayoun).[3] Furthermore, the paradoxical nature of "nonsense" also became useful when talking of philosophy, mathematics and psychoanalysis as "*a certain register of expression and thought*" (*Dictionnaire des Anglicisme* 622; my translation). Thus, a word that, historically, had had the function to distinguish unimportant and frivolous

---

[2] For a study of the evolution of the meaning of "nonsense" from its common use towards "humorous verse" and critical term, see Petzold.

[3] See Tarantino (ed.) and www.nonsenselit.org.

word play from "'serious' literature" expanded in the second half of the nineteenth century towards a critical term denoting a universal category with a positive meaning. However vague the use of "nonsense" may be when used as a critical term, it points to a negation as positive category.[4] Playfully conveying a kind of absurdity, "nonsense" exists as a dissolving agent between a negative and a positive pole, a humorous play with absence, and paves the way to the literature of the absurd and other modernist expressions.[5]

Whereas the mainstream Victorian poet is increasingly confronted by the resistance that language exercises against the appropriation of meaning (the tortured rhythms and syntax of Hopkins come to mind here), Lear turns his back to the tension between words and meanings and jumps with hilarity into mere rhythm and sound. The contextual frame of the books promoting "childhood innocence" (= "nonsense") provides Lear with the protection that exempts him of taking the responsibility towards meaning so that his poetry becomes a kind of *écriture automatique avant la lettre* that allows for private obsessions to surface. It is therefore no surprise that the literary critic and psychoanalyst Adam Phillips views the literature of "nonsense" as the English equivalent of surrealism.[6] And indeed, the strength of Lear's line-drawings clearly pre-figure twentieth-century expressionist art and—when considered outside the frame of playful intent—the limericks enact scenes of violence, mutilation and death.[7] In more than one sense, the limericks and drawings of Edward Lear are

---

[4] That is the reason, accidentally, why G. K. Chesterton equated the poetry of "Nonsense" with religious belief. Interestingly, negation and negativity as being an intrinsic part of the (religious) experience of living is defended by the contemporary theologian Lytta Bassett.

[5] For the evolution from nineteenth-century literature towards the modernisms of the twentieth century as a movement from negation towards deletion, see Kurrik.

[6] "There has never been a strong surrealist tradition in England but there has been, of course, a unique tradition of nonsense. And though Winnicott sounds like no one else in the psychoanalytical tradition, he can often sound curiously like Lewis Carroll" (Phillips 14).

[7] Cf. my close analysis of all limericks of Edward Lear's first *Book of Nonsense* in Mendes.

reminiscent of Goya's *Caprichos* and *Disparates*, those "code-books of hell" as the twentieth-century English poet Stevie Smith calls them.[8] In both cases, the message of the title creates a positive space for the representation of what is negated in the realms of a world governed by reason (Goya) and by good common sense (Lear).

Edward Lear's personal life forced him to voluntary exile. He was compelled to speak the language of nonsense because there were, as yet, no words available in which to express the isolation forced on him by epilepsy (at the time related to sexual perversion) and the torment of rage. Unlike mainstream poets of the time whose work tries to engage with the contradictions of the time, the high Laureate of "Nonsense" makes a bonfire with all that must be expelled from accepted discourses in order to prevail and preserves the Romantic premise of unity and analogy by reducing them to absurdities. Maurice Bowra synthesizes the relationship between Edward Lear and Romanticism when he writes:

> Lear's nonsense poetry is literally a *reductio ad absurdum* of Romantic methods, and especially the belief in vagueness. He differs from his grave models not in his means but in his end. (…) With him the Romantic indefiniteness passes beautifully into absurdity, and his own inchoate sorrows vanish in the divine light of nonsense. (…) Lear showed how close Romantic vagueness was to nonsense, and exploited it for his own purposes. The result is outside all literary canons, but none the less miraculous and magical. (279-80)

2. Robert Browning (1812-1889)

In the contemporary novel, *The Whirlpool* (1986) of the Canadian author Jane Urquhart, the setting is the nineteenth-century village of Niagara Falls where a group of characters tries to find ways to connect with the experience of a new country. The main narrative of the novel is framed by

---

[8] "Some Impediments to Christian Commitment," *Me Again* 153-170. "I looked at Goya's pictures. I saw the terrible pictures Goya made in the prisons of the Inquisition that have such strange elliptic titles, like a code-book in hell" (158).

an introduction and an epilogue set in 1889 Venice telling of the last days of the life of the English poet Robert Browning. In the novel, Browning is haunted by Shelley, the poet he worships and would like to emulate. Feeling incapable of thrusting the spirit towards the absolute like his Romantic forebear, Urquhart's Browning finds no peace in the acknowledgement of his own fame as a Victorian poet.

The main character of the novel proper is a woman living in the village of Niagara Falls, Canada, obsessed with Browning who, in turn, is spied upon by an Englishman in love with Wordsworth. At the end, the protagonist mysteriously disappears from the story and the reader is induced to believe that she went away in search of a language (room?) of her own, capable of holding her new identity as a young Canadian woman. Browning, Urquhart's novel suggests, is the link between the ideals of Romanticism and a new world, where nature is not idyllic but hostile, threatening the human being with an otherness for which, as yet, there is no language.

Inside the canon of Victorian poetry, Robert Browning is the poet who explored the relation between world and word through a departure from the confessional stance of the Romantics. Exploring the dramatic positioning of the speaker in order to probe the many faces of identity, Browning prepares the modernist aesthetic of the impersonal.

The dramatic monologue developed by Browning "establishes itself as discourse-in-situation, as speech of an individual placed in circumstances of time and space that determine the relationships he establishes with others and with himself. The final result obtained translates itself in the discovery of one's own identity, or, at least, in an oblique and even undesired self-revelation" ("Prefácio" 14-15; my translation from the Portuguese). Instead of an "I" that is present to itself in total transparency, Browning's poetry explores what escapes self-appropriation and becomes the poetry of what is "outside," "different" and "unknown." As the poetry of "otherness," Browning's verse will influence the modernists Pound (who is known to have confessed "Ich stamm aus Browning") and T. S. Eliot who, in turn, dedicated "The Waste Land" to Pound (61).[9] The aesthetic of Eliot's poem

---

[9] "For Ezra Pound, *Il Miglior Fabbro* 'The Waste Land'" in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*.

of 1922 and his assertion about poetry as "the escape from emotion" (15-16) as opposed to Wordsworth's "emotion recollected in tranquillity"[10] must take into account "the poetry of experience" of Robert Browning and the latter's exploration of the dramatic subject in situation.[11]

In retrospect, one sees Tennyson and Browning standing side by side as the giant Victorian inheritors of both the language of transcendent loss of the Romantics (Tennyson) and of the exploration of identity as the workings of desire immanently realized in time and space (Browning). Browning seems to look more to the future, a direction taken up by the modernists that succeed him. But both work through the challenges of the Romantic poets concerning the possibilities of the poetic subject. Has the poet a unifying capacity to gather in a net of words the myriad dimensions of experience or does the poet fall through the mazes of the net when confronted with the necessary estrangement that language form imposes upon inner experience? Can the poet still nurture the illusion to be a "man speaking to men" or is he forced to recognize the hidden dimensions of both himself and others, so that—in Freudian (and Learian?) premonition —language grows out of the control of the speaker and is capable of revealing what was not intended or understood by the speaker himself.[12] Taking up Humpty Dumpty's question about who is to be the master, whether the poet or the language, Browning points to a poetry that grows in awareness of how form determines meaning and he thus foreshadows the interminable "wrestle with words and meanings" (23) that T. S. Eliot will invoke in the twentieth century.[13]

---

[10] Cf. note 7.

[11] "Tradition and the Individual Talent" in *The Sacred Wood* (1921): "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality," http://www.bartleby.com/200/sw4.html/ (accessed 17 July 2012). The expression "poetry of experience" refers to Langbaum.

[12] Cf. Edward Lear: "Why did I take the lodgings I have got/ Where all I don't want is— all I want not?" "Growling Eclogue," Noakes, ed. 234.

[13] T. S. Eliot, "East Coker Burnt Norton" in *Four Quartets*: *Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle/ With words and meanings*.

3. T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922)

Impersonal, then, poetry has to be, a juxtaposition ("montage") of voices, speech rhythms and allusions in order to build a support for "a heap of broken images" (63) in the fissures of which the voice of the poet murmurs, sings, stammers and conveys haunting visions of ruin and decay.[14] In "The Waste Land" (1922) T. S. Eliot creates a new and powerful form that wards off interior appropriation and requires a new audience, capable of reading in a spatial rather than in a temporal way. One could argue that the form imposes itself on the reader who must become simultaneously a listener, a viewer and an erudite capable of recognizing the echoes of the cultural and literary tradition which are the building blocks of the text. And if the reader is not able to do so, the poet will teach him by including footnotes with references to the allusions woven into the tapestry of the poem. The poem creates the reader that it requires, imposing its vision, leaving no space for interpellation or dialogue. It is an elitist art, not so much because of the erudition, the fragmentation, the mixture of echoes and allusions, but because the poem is formally "what it is," the meaning godlike coinciding with its verbal tissue, as if Romantic vagueness had been transfigured into the solidity of word matter. The form is the master, as it is with Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922) a book that greatly influenced T. S. Eliot who read the original drafts of Joyce's novel when he was assistant editor of the *Little Review*.

Is it a mere coincidence that T. S. Eliot was born in 1888, the year that Edward Lear died? The modernist poet recognized his debt to Lear, both in his critical writing[15] and his poetry. "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" (1939) is a direct inheritor of Lear as is, of course the poem, "*Lines for Cuscuscaraway and Mirza Murad Ali Beg*":

---

[14] T. S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," verse 22 in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*.

[15] T. S. Eliot, "Edward Lear's non-sense is not vacuity of sense: it is the parody of sense and that is the sense of it. *The Jumblies* (…) *The Younghy-Bongy Bo* and *The Dong with a Luminous Nose* are poems of unrequited passion—'blues' in fact," "The Music of Poetry" in *On Poetry and Poets* 29.

How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!
With his features of clerical cut,
And his brow so grim
And his mouth so prim
And his conversation, so nicely
Restricted to What Precisely
And If and Perhaps and But…. (151)[16]

Which is a parody of Edward Lear's "How Pleasant to know Mr Lear":

How pleasant to know Mr Lear
Who has written such volumes of stuff!
Some think him ill-tempered and queer,
But a few think him pleasant enough…..
……..(428-29)[17]

Just as for Lear, the ebullience of light verse was a way of covering up what he could not bring himself to say openly, for T. S. Eliot, "to play the possum" (to pretend, to feign) by hiding behind "a persona" were lessons learned from both Browning and Edward Lear.

It is a documented fact that originally Eliot had intended as title for "The Waste Land" a line borrowed from Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend*: "He do the Police in different voices." In Dickens's novel, the line belongs to a secondary character called Betty who cannot read herself but has a friend called Sloppy who reads the newspaper to her: "You mightn't think it" [Betty says], "but Sloppy is a good reader of a newspaper. He can do the police in many voices" (198).

As is clear from the context, Betty refers to Sloppy's dramatic gifts as a reader, capable as he is to impersonate the police in various forms, situations and contexts. Thus, the intended title, "he does the police in many voices," not only points towards the aesthetic of impersonality of

---

[16] T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* For the relationship between Eliot and Lear see Boucherie 281-288.

[17] Edward Lear, *The Complete Nonsense*.

"The Waste Land" but also to the composition of the poem where separate pieces of texts stand side by side in a display analogous to juxtaposed news items on the page of a daily paper. It highlights the fragmentary nature of experience and the absence of a narrative flow that connects the separate pieces into a timeline that gives them direction/sense. The Dickensian resonance also emphasizes the different kinds of discourse that make up Eliot's poem: echoes from venerated poets of World Literature, but also from limericks, jazz music and everyday speech. Like in a Dickens's novel, there is room for everything, albeit in a different way. Moreover, and reading the last great novels by Dickens, *Bleak House* (1853), *Little Dorrit* (1855) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865), there are passages and images that *verbatim* anticipate the future modernists. This assertion needs detailed demonstration but not proof because the proof is everywhere scattered on the pages of Dickens and open for any reader to see. Suffice it here to quote Michael Cotsell who, in the "Introduction" to the Oxford edition of *Our Mutual Friend*, writes: "T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* (…) drew its first title and perhaps aspects of its symbolic organization from Dickens's novel. [… *Our Mutual Friend* is] *closer to the creativity of Joyce's Ulysses than to the cold eye of Gissing's fiction. In it, Dickens anticipates the rich linguistic textuality of modernist writing*" (xxi).

4. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (Paris, 1922)

"Rich textuality" (as opposed to Romantic indefiniteness) is the expression with which Cotsell defines modernist art. Joyce makes this true in the creation of a word-world—an ocean of allusion, parody, neologisms, word-play, melody, rhythm—where the totality of world literature reverberates. A first reading experience of *Ulysses* is like plunging into language itself, a sensual and sensuous voyage that reveals the world as an infinite space of ever receding horizons, a tossing on verbal waves that opens up mind and body (mindbody or bodymind) towards a feel of life as infinite joy.

In a recent article of *The New York Review of Books*, the writer Michael Chabon speaks of Joyce's "The Dead" and *Ulysses* as works that "(b)etween them (…) managed to say everything a pitying heart and a pitiless intellect could say about death and sex and love and literature, loss and desire, friendship and animosity, talk and silence, mourning and

dread" (45).[18] And Philippe Sollers, an ardent lover of Joyce, sees Joyce's art as «une remise en forme," «a formal reset» in an absolute positive mode: «Ulysse et *Finnigans Wake*, qu'est-ce que c'est, sinon la traversée du temps, des apparences, du langage, pour une remise en forme qui soit absolument positive et avec un tremblement de joie dans toute l'épaisseur du langage? Oui ou non? Oui! (…) Aucune trace de nihilisme dans toutes ces œuvres!» (224).

Speaking of *Ulysses*, Sollers writes: "il est de plus en plus difficile de rencontrer quelqu'un qui a lu le livre" ("it is becoming increasingly difficult to find someone who has read the book" (529). I did, though, and I do, because reading Joyce means to be eager to touch words, to smell and savour them, to see and hear them turned upside down, crushed, taken apart and put back together in flowing cadences that allow the reader to soar and be free, surfing through all the works of Western Literary Traditions, embracing the span of life itself.[19] Chabon speaks of

> Joyce's helplessness in the face of language, his glossolalia, the untrammelled riverine flow of words and wordplay in which Joyce plunged, and swam, and drowned; the compulsive neologism that echoes, typifies, and indeed in a clinical sense accounts, genetically, for the schizophrenia (…) that afflicted his daughter, Lucia. (47)

Chabon relates Joyce's glossolalia to the English tradition of "nonsense," speaking of passages of "the Spike-Milligan-meets-Edward Lear-prose" (48) in *Finnegans Wake* that can become cumbersome (25). The reference to Lear clearly opposes Lear—like nonsense formations with the lifesaving neologisms of Joyce. Yet, what has changed between Lear and Joyce is not

---

[18] Michael Chaubon's article arrived in the post at the moment I was writing the passage about Joyce and I feel compelled to acknowledge the coincidence.

[19] I read *Ulysses* twice and intend to read it again. And I read one (ONE) page of *Finnegans Wake*, as a challenge to myself many years ago. Before the internet and having at hand only the reference books of my personal library, it took me about 6 hours to "read" one page. The effort was rewarding, but I do not feel inclined to repeat it unless I catch the F. W. fever like Michael Chabon (cited above) whose report of a year reading *Finnegans Wake* is a wonderful love story between a reader and a text.

so much the technical pirouettes with words, but the context. Whatever his secret reasons, Lear unhinges words in order to better enhance the rules of common language/sense. The Joycean new language does not depend on a negative term, but "is" in its absoluteness—"*une remise en forme qui soit absolument positive*," "another" and "new" language that makes no concession to the reader who must grow to the heights of the text, while the artist, godlike, has disappeared behind his new creation: "the artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails" (Joyce, *Portrait of the Artist*).

The encounter between Dickens and Joyce happens naturally: one is reading Dickens, unencumbered by Literary Criticism or Literary tradition, in turns astounded and ravished with what the popular Victorian novelist does with language, and suddenly up springs Molly Bloom, in the full blossom of one of Flora Finching's long diatribes in *Little Dorrit*:

> "And now pray tell me something all you know,"said Flora, drawing her chair near to his, "about the good dear quiet little thing and all the changes of her fortunes carriages people now no doubt and horses without number most romantic, a coat of arms of course and wild beasts on their hind legs showing it as if it was a copy they had done with mouths from ear to ear good gracious, and has she her health which is the first consideration after all for what is wealth without it as Mr F himself so often saying when his twinges came that sixpence a-day and find yourself and no gout so much preferable, not that he could have lived on anything like it being the last man or that precious little thing though far too familiar an expression now had any tendency of that sort much too slight and small but looked so fragile bless her!" (*Our Mutual Friend* 513)[20]

---

[20] For another echo of Joyce in Dickens: *Our Mutual Friend*, I read on page 14: "Reflects Veneering; forty, *wavy-haired*, dark, tending to corpulence, sly, mysterious, (…). Reflects Mrs Veneering; fair, *acquilline-nosed* and *fingered* (..)." and I hear Joyce in *Finnegans Wake*: "a squad of urchins, *snifflynosed*, *goslingnecked*, *clothyheaded*, tangled in your lacings, tingled in your pants, etsiteraw etcicero" (*The Restored Finnegans Wake* 121).

The unexpected meeting of a twenty-century author (Joyce) in a "popular" Victorian novelist (Dickens) disparaged as "sensationalist" by an eminent fellow writer of the time (George Eliot), and not deemed a serious artist by the critic who promoted the novel to an art form (Cotsell ix and James) works like an epiphany. For the academic that I also am, the guilty pleasure of reading Dickens becomes respectable: after all, I am in good company, among the right sort of people. The first consequence of the discovery is of meeting fellow critics who have seen the presence of modernist writers in Dickens like Matthew J. Bolton or who have read "Joycean stream-of-consciousness" in other Dickens characters, like Simon Callow.[21] Then and inevitably, Charles Dickens "suddenly" (a moment of revelation made possible by years of reading and rereading the author) reveals himself as "another" writer" and to the background recedes Dickens the entertainer, Dickens the social commentator, Dickens the humorist, Dickens the caricaturist, Dickens the (melo)dramatist, Dickens the reformer, Dickens the script writer of future films, and centre stage stands the wordsmith, Charles Dickens the poet.

5. Charles Dickens (1812-1870)

The facts about Charles Dickens are what they are: Charles Dickens is born in a middle-class family in 1812. His scholarly education is average and short. At the age of twelve, the boy Dickens is forced to fend for himself as a labourer in London while his father and the rest of the family spend some time in the Marshalsea, a debtor's prison. He is lively, sensitive and determined never to be humiliated again. He is ambitious and works ferociously in order to make it in the world, first as a clerk, then as a stenographer and a journalist and then, almost by accident, as a writer of short sketches, and a novelist. *The Sketches of Boz* (1836), *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-7), *Oliver Twist* (1838) and *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9) follow each other at an impossible speed in two years' time. Their success is so enormous, that, at the age of twenty-four, Dickens has become an inimitable phenomenon. To read about Charles Dickens's prodigious

[21] "Mrs Nickleby's chatter has become a Joycean stream-of-consciousness (…)" (296).

activity as novelist, editor, journalist, dramatist, actor, theatre director, friend, husband, father (he has nine children) and lover makes for almost unbelievable reading: some of the biographies of Dickens are (almost) as impressive as the novels he wrote.[22]

Dickens contains all worlds (like Whitman who wrote of Dickens's "democratic" writing[23]). His novels preserve life itself, creating a verbal energy that connects all beings, be they human, animal, vegetal, mineral or inanimate. They are parallel universes with intimations of infinite space where "everything" can exist and where everything is related to everything. Dickens himself speaks of his prodigious imagination which makes him see things in terms of something else as an "infirmity": "I think it is my infirmity to fancy and perceive relations in things which are not apparent generally. Also, I have such an inexpressible enjoyment of what I see in a droll light, that I dare say I pet it as f I were a spoilt child" (Letter to Bulwer Lytton, 28 November 1865, in *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens* 397). In other words, and thinking of Wordsworth's pleasure principle and poetry as the universal language of the heart-mind-body, Dickens's writing irradiates a receptive energy where the reader feels accepted, welcomed, acknowledged and understood. As G. K. Chesterton writes: "Charles Dickens did not write what people wanted, he wanted what people wanted" (Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* 46).

The universal appeal of Charles Dickens has first of all to do with the kind of relationship he establishes with his reading public. Charles Dickens wrote to make a living and he wrote to be loved, acceptance and economic success being equivalent. His art is informed by Dickens's extraordinary imagination and dramatic gifts, but the tradition that feeds

---

[22] Cf. Ackroyd, *Dickens* (1990) and Slater, *Charles Dickens* (2009). In 2011, three new biographies appeared: Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, *Becoming Dickens. The Invention of a Novelist*; Claire Tomalin, *Charles Dickens. A Life*; Simon Callow, *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World*. The most impressive is Ackroyd's; the one that best contextualises Dickens's art is Douglas-Fairhurts's and the one that best reveals Dickens is Simon Callow's.

[23] See also, Douglas-Fairhurst 307 for the analogy between Dickens, Whitman, Rimbaud and the split of the poetic "I."

Dickens are the "novels" of the eighteenth century that arose with the growth of the middle class before the Romantics come along with "intimations of immortality": they are stories of men and women speaking to men and women, stories about common wishes and aspirations, adventures and anxieties, dreams and wonders. From *The Arabian Nights* to *Robinson Crusoe*[24] Dickens has learned the power of stories, their spell binding energy and mesmerizing power. He becomes the most un-platonic of writers, shamelessly seducing his audience and doing it marvellously, putting the reader straight into the urban landscape of the time. Stylistic devices abound that bind narrator to reader (and at the end of Dickens's life, the public reader to his audience), devices that grow out of the author's "joy" and genius in weaving his tales. [25] The seemingly spontaneous nature of the storytelling is one of Dickens's triumphs, the reader nestling, as it were in the comfort of the narrator's voice ready to meet the most extraordinary characters: young, innocent, sweet, violent, evil, grotesque, mad and frightening. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst writes: "One way of summarizing his fiction would be to say that he attempted to show how many private worlds are contained in the public world we share —his writing is an unflagging celebration of the unique, the freakish, the stubbornly eccentric—while also reminding us of what we have in common" (182).

The multitude of characters that swarm Dickens's novels, the verbal exuberance that brings them to life on the page and the patterns and plots through which they collide make for a spatial as well as for a linear reading

---

[24] These are the novels quoted in *David Copperfield* (which is Dickens's version of *A Portrait of the Artist as Young Man*): "From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, The Vicar of Wakefield, Dom Quixote, Gil Blas, and Robinson Crusoe, came out, a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and hope of something beyond that place of time, — they and The Arabian Nights, and the Tales of the Genii," in *David Copperfield* 59-60.

[25] "The erotic triangle here, the peculiarly intense and intensely peculiar triangle of characters/readers/author, is one of the things which make Charles Dickens World Literature while some more responsible and intelligent novelists (George Eliot, for instance) remain English literature" (Lambert 117).

and thus announce the future art of modernism.[26] As spaces to live in and to love, the novels of Charles Dickens seem to possess a transcendence that does not come from above or beyond, but that resides in the concreteness of the characters and the places they inhabit. In Dickens, all that is ordinary becomes extra-ordinary because minutely observed, so that dull, monotonous, everyday life is transformed in a glorious, wild, grotesque and emphatic manner and each separate character becomes a universal "everyman." A non-mimetic quality pervades Dickens, not only because of the melodramatic and the fairy-tale elements of his work, but because of the spaciousness of the novels, the great variety of characters and tones, and, especially in the last great novels, an increasingly symbolic structuring: the fog and suffocating atmosphere of the Chancery in *Bleak House*, the confinement of the prison in *Litlle Dorrit* and the emotional waste land of a society governed by money in *Our Mutual Friend*. The expansiveness of the novels allows for the myriad elements of the composition to float in space and to collide at random, as it were, conveying a feel of "a world in which the soul can live" (Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* 43). Dickens "transfigures the commonplace" and, like all true poets, creates a new universe. To quote Servotte on Dickens:

> paradoxically, the detailed description of the visible world does not lead to an increasing realism, but to the transformation of the visible world (…). In the same manner the reader of Dickens meets Dickensian characters, not because they are there but because Dickens makes him look in a special way to people. It is as if not Dickens imitates reality, but as if reality imitates Dickens. Better said, between ourselves and the world of our experience moves the imaginary world of Dickens. He makes us see" (42).[27]

---

[26] "'Dickens was a pure modernist', John Ruskin wrote in 1870,—and he had no understanding of antiquity except a sort of jackdaw sentiment for cathedral towers'" (Douglas-Fairhurst 169).

[27] My translation of "Paradoxaal genoeg leidt de gedetailleerde beschrijving niet to meer realisme, maar tot een transformatie van de zichtbare wereld;" and p. 44: "Op dezelfde manier ontmoet de lezer van Dickens Dickensiaanse karakters, niet omdat die er zijn, maar omdat Dickens hem op een bezondere manier naar de mensen leert kijken. Het

*

Dickens's work is **not** *une remise en forme qui soit absolument positive* —not a Joycean transubstantiation of life into art (Kearny 103)[28] —but a bulk of magnificent words that creates a living world full of dark places and sombre spots, a parallel universe that fills one with wonder and nourishment. In Dickens, the sense of insubstantiality that lurks behind the scenes of human experience is not transfigured but seeps through the pages and enhances the bright colours of his art. Instead of overpowering the reader with language made object, Dickens leaves him breathing space and a never-ending sense of wonder. Applying Dr Johnson's words about literature in general to Charles Dickens, one can say that Dickens "enables readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it."[29]

6. Postscript

The saying of Dr Johnson just mentioned is quoted by Christopher Ricks in a review that also begins with a recall of literary anniversaries, in this case anniversaries related to the year 1922: "The year 1922 famously saw the birth of High Modernism, mewling and puking as well as shining and sighing in *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land*. 1922 also saw the birth, in Coventry on August 9, of Phillip Arthur Larkin. For a poet of his lineage (…), most High Modernism would in due course expose itself as mystification and outrage." (*ibidem*) As Christopher Ricks's words make clear, to observe how new writers react to their literary forebears is a never-ending story that can go on indefinitely, as do the re-readings of the tradition in

---

is alsof niet Dickens de werkelijkheid maar de werkelijkheid Dickens imiteert. Beter gezegd, tussen ons en de wereld van onze ervaring schuift zich de verbeeldingswereld van Dickens. Hij doet zien."

[28] For a conversation between Joyce and his brother where Joyce compares his art to the transubstantiation of the Mass: "Don't you think (…) there is a certain resemblance between the mastery of the Mass and what I am trying to do?"

[29] "The only end of writing is to enable readers better to enjoy life, or better to endure it," Dr Johnson quoted in Ricks 42.

the light of authors that are still to come. Charles Dickens is the richer for standing in the company of his contemporaries Lear and Browning. Read in the light of modernism, the three Victorian authors acquire a different resonance and tell us how avant-garde they are.[30]

Works Cited

Ackroyd, Peter. *Dickens*. London: Minerva Press, 1990.

Lytta Bassett. *La Joie Imprenable*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2004.

Benayoun, Robert. *Le Nonsense. De Lewis Carroll à Woody Allen*. Paris: Balland, 1977.

Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry*. Oxford: OUP, 1973.

Bolton, Michael. "Charles Dickens, James Joyce and the Origins of Modernism." *Critical Insights: Charles Dickens.* Ed. Eugene Goodheart. Hackensack. NJ: Salem Press: 2010.

Boucherie, Marijke. "T. S. Eliot e 'Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats.'" *Miscelânea de Estudos dedicados a Irene de Albuquerque*. Lisboa: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, 1988.

Bowra, Maurice. *The Romantic Imagination.*1950. Oxford: OUP, 1980.

Browning, Robert. *Monologos dramáticos por Robert Browning*. Prefácio, selecção e versão portuguesa de João Almeida Flor. Lisboa: Na Regra do Jogo, 1980.

Callow, Simon. *Charles Dickens and the Great Theatre of the World*. London: Harper Press, 2011.

Chesterton, G. K., "A Defence of Nonsense." *The Defendant* (1901). May 3, 2004. Web. http://www.gutenberg.org/files/12245/12245-h/12245-h.htm

___. *Charles Dickens*. London: House of Stratus, 2001.

Chabon, Michael. "What to make of Finnegans Wake?" *The New York Review of Books* LIX.12 (2012): 45-48.

---

[30] I want to thank Manuel Vieira da Cruz who suggested the outline of this essay to me.

Cotsell, Michael. "Introduction." *Our Mutual Friend*. Charles Dickens. Oxford: OUP, 1989.

Dictionnaire des Anglicisme. Paris: Les Usuels de Robert, 1982.

Dickens, Charles. *David Copperfield*. 1850. Introd. Jeremy Tambling. London: Penguin Books, 1996.

___. *Little Dorrit*. 1857. Eds. Stephen Wall and Helen Small. London: Penguin, 1998.

___. *Our Mutual Friend*. 1865. Introd. Michael Cotsell. Oxford: OUP, 1989.

___. *The Selected Letters of Charles Dickens*. Ed. Jenny Hartley. Oxford: OUP, 2012.

Douglas-Fairhurst, Robert. *Becoming Dickens. The Invention of a Novelist*. Cambridge MA, London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2011.

Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems 1909-1962*. London: Faber and Faber, London, 1963.

___. *Four Quartets*. 1944. London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1991.

___. *On Poetry and Poets*. London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1979.

Gill, Stephen, ed. *William Wordsworth*, *The Major Works*. Oxford: OUP, 1984.

James, Henry. *The Limitations of Dickens. A Review of Our Mutual Friend*. New York: n.p., 1865. *The Project Gutenberg*. Sept. 14, 2011. www.gutenberg.org/files/37424/37424-h/37424h.htm#THE_LIMITATIONS_OF_DICKENS.

Joyce, James. *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967.

___. *The Restored Finnegans Wake*. Eds. Danis Rose and John O'Hanlon. London: Penguin Classics, 2010.

Kearny, Richard. *Anatheism*, {*Returning to God After God*}. New York: Columbia UP, 2011.

Lambert, Marc. *Dickens and the Suspended Quotation.* New Haven, London: Yale UP, 1981.

Langbaum, Robert. *The Poerty of Experience. The Dramatic Monogue in Modern Literary Tradition*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1957.

Lear, Edward. *The Complete Verse and Other Nonsense*. Ed. Vivien Noakes. London: Penguin, 2001.

Kurrik, Maire Jaanus. *Literature and Negation*. New York: Columbia UP, 1979.

Mendes, M. J. G. A. Boucherie. *O sem-sentido em A Book of Nonsense de Edward Lear.* Dissertação de Mestrado, Faculdade de Letras, Lisboa, 1985.

Petzold, Dieter. *Formen und Funktzionen der Englischen Nonsense-Dichtung im 19. Jahrhundert*. Nürnberg: Hans Carl Verlag, 1972.

Phillips, Adam. *Winnicott*. London: Fontana, 1988.

Ricks, Christopher. "Philip Larkin: Desired Reading." *The New York Review of Books* LIX.19 (2012): 42.

Servotte. *De simulators. De Engelse Roman 1700-1980. Essay*. Antwerpen-Amsterdam: De Nederlandse Boekhandel, 1981.

Slater, Michael. *Charles Dickens*. New Haven; London: Yale UP, 2009.

Smith, Stevie. *Me Again.* Eds. Jack Barbera and William McBrien. London: Virago Press, 1981.

Sollers, Philippe. *Discours Parfait*. Paris: Gallimard, 2010.

Tarantino, Elisabetta (ed.). *Nonsense and Other Senses. Regulated Absurdity in Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009.

Tomalin, Claire. *Charles Dickens. A Life*. London: Penguin, 2011.

Urquhart, Jane. *The Whirlpool*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986.

Vasalis, Maria. *Parken en Woestijnen*, *De vogel Phoenix. Vergezichten en gezichten.* Amsterdam: Uitgeverij G. A. Van Oorschot, 1997.

Wordsworth, William. "Preface to Lyrical Ballads." *The Major Works*. Ed. Stephen Gill. Oxford: OUP, 1984. 595-619.

___. "There was a Time". *The Major Works*. Ed. Stephen Gill. Oxford: OUP, 2000. 297-302.

Abstract

Struck by the coincidence of the bicentenaries in 2012 of Edward Lear, Robert Browning and Charles Dickens, all born in 1812, I accepted the challenge, presented to me by a friend, to relate the three authors in a single text that would also include the ninetieth birthday of the publication of respectively *Ulysses* by James Joyce and "The Waste Land" by T. S. Eliot. My article uses the random element of a calendar year as a structuring element in a story of reading which shows the relationships between the five authors to be simultaneously prospective and retrospective. My conclusion is that the five authors, be they canonical poets and novelists, or "nonsense" poets and popular authors ultimately are all wordsmiths whose art is simultaneously time-bound and universal.

Keywords

Edward Lear; Robert Browning; Charles Dickens; T. S. Eliot; James Joyce

Resumo

No ano de 2012, um amigo lançou-me o desafio de escrever uma pequena nota sobre os bicentenários dos autores vitorianos Edward Lear, Robert Browning e Charles Dickens todos nascidos em 1812; convidou-me ainda a incluir uma referência ao nonagésimo aniversário dos grandes textos modernistas *Ulysses* de James Joyce e "The Waste Land" de T. S. Eliot. O que era para ser um apontamento bio-bibliográfico acabou por constituir uma longa reflexão sobre as complexas relações entre os autores que se revelaram igualmente prospectivas e retrospectivas. No fundo, o meu texto dá conta daquilo que ficou de muitos anos de leitura em que os autores ecoam entre si numa polifonia de vozes acabando por constituir um canto universal: o da arte da palavra.

Palavras-chave

Edward Lear; Robert Browning; Charles Dickens; T. S. Eliot; James Joyce

Jimi Solanke: Towards an African Folk Tradition Model of Early Childhood Education

Oluwole Coker
Obafemi Awolowo University

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N.11 2016

Jimi Solanke: Towards an African Folk Tradition Model of Early Childhood Education

1. Introduction

Early childhood education, especially in Africa, is a topical issue. As a matter of fact, the challenge of stimulating children in the very early stages of their lives from ages 0-3 is particularly daunting. As confounding as this may seem, there is a need to constantly appraise mechanisms and look inwards for novel solutions. Prior to the advent of western education, indigenous education had been transmitted through sets of shared communal values and artistic productions. Such indigenous pedagogical pathways were usually channeled through such popular artistic forms inherent in the folklore of the people. As commonplace as this may appear, it was always the task of certain individuals to drive the learning processes. While it may be argued that, in indigenous African societies, the social organization of families puts this responsibility squarely at the feet of elderly women, mothers and indeed parents always partake of the exercise. However, with the development of African societies into modern entities where, for example the family unit has narrowed considerably, the need to sustain this tradition becomes imperative, if indeed children are to benefit from time-tested practices of culturally grounded early childhood development stimulation mechanisms. This immediately suggests that artists, bards, and other creative entities definitely have roles to play in this regard.

This study is premised against the above backdrop. One of such artists is Olujimi Adeboye Solanke, popularly known as Jimi Solanke, who is the subject of this study. Born in Ipara-Remo, in present-day Ogun State, South-Western Nigeria over seventy years ago, Jimi is a rounded man of the arts. An accomplished theatre artiste, folk singer, dramatist, painter, author and culture educator, Jimi has traversed the artistic landscape deploying the intrinsic qualities of traditional Yoruba arts and culture to

serve multifarious ends. Having cut his teeth as one of the first set of graduates of the Ibadan School of Drama, Jimi has had long years of association with virtually all first and second generation of Nigerian dramatists such as Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, Femi Osofisan, Zulu Sofola, Dapo Adelugba and several others. After long stints in theatre performances where he played leading roles, Jimi continued in his exploration of other facets of the arts—especially arts promotion, culture education and musical productions. He has several musical productions to his credit and has published a play—*Etiti; Ancient and Modern Tales*—a unique artistically illustrated folk narrative; in addition to commissioned children plays. At the level of arts promotion, Jimi's active participation in African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC) hosted by Nigeria in 1977 stands him out as an accomplished performer. He was, in fact, a Dance Director during the fiesta. Jimi was later to further explore Popular Theatre and Music through his associations with such International bodies as UNICEF and UNFPA. He was also a grantee of the John D. and Catherine T MacArthur Foundation for his initiatives in Theatre for Development through his NGO, Popular Theatre and Music for Grassroots Mobilization (PTMGM).

However, despite all his exploits in the literary and performing arts, Jimi is also known as a children folk singer. In the course of his career, Jimi has created several children programmes and built activities around children. Starting with "Children Scene" on WNBS/WNBC, he is the creator of "Storyland," a popular children series on the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) in Nigeria, "Funspace" on Galaxy TV, and "African Stories" on African Independence Television (AIT). Certainly, Jimi Solanke has distinguished himself as a promoter of culture and an advocate of folklore as tool for socio-cultural and moral education of the African Child.

2. Objectives of the Study

In the main, this research seeks to interrogate the challenges confronting existing models of early childhood education in Africa. This is done through an exploration of the dynamic relationship between African folk tradition and childhood education using Jimi Solanke's children programmes as data. Through this, it shall explicate the artistic innovations of Jimi Solanke and situating their relevance within the essence of child education in Africa

generally, especially in relation to cultural and moral motifs. The study also hopes to demonstrate the value of a folk tradition-driven strategy of early childhood education. Ultimately, the research hopes to position and theorize Jimi Solanke on his own terms. This study hopes to demonstrate how Jimi Solanke exemplifies the capacity of local knowledge and art forms as having the capacity to be appropriated to current contexts in evolving effective strategies of early childhood education.

3. Research Methodology

This study involves the use of primary and secondary data. The primary data comprised recorded sessions of the purposively selected TV recordings which were mostly sourced from the archives of the folk artiste and from the digital media, especially Google search engine and YouTube. Secondary sources included journal articles, books and the internet dealing with the subject of early childhood education. The study also involves content analyses of the recorded programmes in addition to informal interactions with the artist. There were challenges associated with getting transcripts of the recorded programmes from the electronic media he has utilized over the years owing to ethical issues of copyright and poor archiving culture. This, however, did not hinder access to a fair representation of the performances through access as a result of Solanke's own records. This study has benefitted from the long standing association and relationship of the researcher with Jimi Solanke. For the recorded programmes, the study analyzed and studied recordings of two out of four children programmes created by Jimi Solanke and aired on Nigerian Television Media Channels: "Funspace" (Galaxy TV, 1995) and "African Stories" (AIT Network, 2002). Owing to inaccessibility, two other programmes i.e. "Storyland" (NTA Network, 1981) and "Family Scene" (LTV-8, 1983) were left out.

However, while taking cognizance of the aforementioned approaches, this study adopts a literary orientation where the potential of the text to serving a purpose within a context is being explored. In other words, the extra-literary function of literature is the focus of this study. Serving as text for the context are the examples drawn from the artistic interventions of Jimi Solanke as a storyteller on the medium of Television. Actually, "in Africa, the transmission of the overwhelming complexity of experience has

been largely rooted in the continent's culture of oral artistry" (Hussein 2). This implies that folklore is a residual location and source of indigenous education. This is further reinforced by the fact that the innate habits and learned habits through literature (oral/written) are pivotal to behavioral principles of Yorùbá culture (Ajibade 21).

4. Early Childhood Education and the Search for an "Afrocentric" Model

Several theories associated with early childhood development exist across disciplines such as education, psychology, the creative arts and development studies. While there is an extensive research from the perspectives of psychologists who have variously accounted for the modalities for early childhood development, scholars in education have explored the potentials of the field of early childhood development for global literacy. For development-minded scholars, the interest in this field is not unassociated with the need for raising the poverty level and economic empowerment, particularly in underdeveloped societies, especially in most post-colonial African states.

In the field of Early Childhood Development, opinions have aggregated over the years on the values and positive contributions of indigenous cultures to empowering the child towards effective learning. Actually, there are several proven cases on the success of culturally relevant approaches in the field of ECD. Examples of such include The World Bank's Indigenous Knowledge Program with components touching on ECD which for example looks at indigenous knowledge related to post-partum maternal health care and child health. (details at www4.worldbank.org/afr/ikdb/search.cfm). The vision of intervention agencies and development partners in addressing the problem of literacy in Africa acknowledges the role of indigenous knowledge. Scholars agree on the importance of indigenous knowledge in understanding issues relating to child-rearing; response to diversity and globalization; respect for cultural values; and the provision of continuity during times of rapid change (Evans and Myers 2-3).

5. Heading Somewhere with Folklore

This study dwells on the dexterity of Jimi Solanke's ability to carry along the children in his performances and the potential of this kind of approach in early childhood care and stimulation. This is clearly evident in how the children are engaged in the shows by the artiste's performance thereby foregrounding the enduring artistic brilliance of Jimi Solanke's propensity for evolving culturally-rich strategies of engagement. Through the use of folksongs for example, the rhymes register in the minds of the children and this can be a platform for catalyzing effective learning. As children approach the age of three, their familiarity with the artist would result in the regular recitation of such folksongs. In fact, as the children head back home, they usually chorus lines of the renditions of the artiste. This represents a novelty in early childhood education. This corroborates the view that:

> Learning becomes a multi-directional process of interaction and exchange that builds the capacity of participants to make new and unique contributions to the body of knowledge on African early childhood development built around these culturally grounded bodies of knowledge. (Pence and Shaffer 10)

In some sense, Solanke's other artistic engagement in theatre and performance contributes to the ease with which he moves conveniently as a storyteller and dramatist to the satisfaction and excitement of his audience. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that Jimi Solanke's artistic oeuvre is an effective medium of engaging African children. Through his exploration and exploitation of folk stories, the folk artist is able to connect the children to African culture; thereby nurturing them early and inscribing indigenous moral and cultural ethos in mind of the children. This is in tandem with the submissions of Karin Hyde and Margaret Kabiru, who hold that, "the success of ECD interventions in Africa is dependent on the extent of infusion of more local knowledge" (32).

This study emphasizes the relevance of popular culture to identity formation; it also deflects by emphasizing the participatory nature of an intervention such as Jimi Solanke's. To support this, it has been established that children have the capacity to learn progressively through narrative in multiple forms (Marsh and Millard 2000). This implies that the children

in Jimi Solanke's storytelling sessions are effectively engaged by the folk artist. The study confirms that, beyond the setting of the story telling sessions, children demonstrate easy recall of such culturally relevant modes and these further contribute to their literacy competence. This affirms Dyson's view that "the use of children's popular culture in educational institutions can offer recognition of their identities and the things they value, thus enhancing their self-esteem and motivating them to engage in learning" (12). In other words, the question of identity formation is closely linked to how children are introduced in the early childhood stage, through methods that are relevant to their socio-cultural contexts. For colonial induced early childhood education models, images conjured in children are likely to be Eurocentric while the children do not grow up to identify with the foreign icons thus hampering effective stimulation of learning among the children.

6. The Missing Link

Early childhood care and stimulation is a crucial stage of the education hierarchy. The need for the appropriation of relevant platforms which will guarantee impactful stimulation is of paramount necessity. Jimi Solanke is not new to attention and spotlights. As a matter of fact, because of his long association with such notable figures in Nigerian art circles, he generally continues to enjoy deserved attention for his immense contributions. Culture journalists like Benson Idonije and Jahman Anikulapo, both of *The Guardian* Newspapers in Nigeria, write regularly on the folk artist. In addition, the bulk of Jimi's clientele cuts across Nigeria's elite class, especially in the South-Western Nigeria. Only recently (2012), Jimi Solanke played host to the CNN African Stories crew in his base in Ile-Ife, Nigeria (available at www.cnn.com/…/jimi-solanke-storyteller-nigeria). All these are indicative of the entrenchment of the Jimi Solanke's brand in Nigeria's culture and arts sector.

Furthermore, international development agencies also acknowledge the need for culturally appropriate interventions using indigenous knowledge. UNICEF's recent "Knowledge, Attitude and Practices" studies (www.unicef.org) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation's "Growing up in Indigenous Societies" initiative (see www.bernardvanleer.org) are two

examples. As desirable as this approach appears, it continues to encounter threats for implementation. These range from issues bordering on the non-formal nature of the approaches and the ravaging effects of modernization which have polluted the hitherto effective order as everything seems to be subsumed as belonging to an illiterate, uncivilized past. It should be noted that, as part of the colonial agenda and the infusion of western education, indigenous knowledge systems seem to have become victims of conscious subjugation while the western approach gained prominence. This ultimately relates to the obvious tension that exists between colonial systems and the ensuing models passed down to the colonized states which led to the loss or watering-down of time tested heritage of indigenous forms of early childhood care and stimulation. Hence, the marginalization of indigenous approaches has featured considerably in the formulation of effective early childhood education models in most post-independent African states. This has resulted in the continued disconnect between education policy and African socio-cultural realities. In this regard, the fate of indigenous African languages and even African literatures in African languages clearly demonstrates the frustrations in a dramatic way.

The importance of storytelling as an effective way of propagating culture and values is clearly evidenced in this study. In a similar study, Ezirim (3) quoting Achebe (1986), affirms the significance of storytelling in the use of proverbs among the Igbos, "that proverbs are the palm oil that Ibos use in eating yams." This is further chorused by (Gamurorwa 5), that notes: "awareness among parents and caregivers about the rich indigenous knowledge that can be tapped in promoting holistic development of children, morally, spiritually, intellectually and emotionally." This study therefore reaffirms the importance of storytelling as a conveyor of morals and an effective tool for learning in indigenous contexts, using Jimi Solanke's artistic engagements as example.

Arising from the foregoing, the critical lacuna identified in this study is the need to re-invigorate the storytelling tradition and appropriate its mode for Early Childhood education in Africa. As the study reveals, children would continue to identify and be swayed by the image of the friendly and engaging storyteller, especially in the early years when they are yet to evolve their personal identities. This implies that the most pragmatic way to disseminate folk education is to put the words into the

mouth of the folk artists such as Jimi Solanke. Parents and care givers can therefore appropriate this culturally-relevant template as early childhood stimulation template. This is where the missing link of culturally sensitive approaches to early childhood education lies.

7. Thematic Analyses

This section is a synopsis of two episodes in each of "Story Land" on Galaxy TV and "African Stories" on AIT. Though created differently, they are both similar in content and structure. The only difference is that African Stories" appears to be wider in scope than "Fun Space." The reason for this discrepancy is suspected to be as a result funding. While an episode of "African Stories" ran for 60 minutes on AIT Television, 30 minutes was allotted to "Story Land."

a) Synopsis: "Funspace"

"Funspace," the Children Education series developed by Jimi Solanke, is a 13-episode serial. The reason for the serialization is to conform to the educational school calendar, which is usually thirteen weeks in Nigeria. Each episode contains a-30-minute presentation divided into five segments: Introduction/Opening; Uncle Facts; Story of the Week; Aunty's Corner and Performance.

In the opening, the children are seen seated either on set or in a natural setting awaiting their beloved folk hero. An adult hostess is heard welcoming the kids and their adult minders to the week's episode. The kids are asked several questions ranging from how they have been faring and the welfare of their families. The segment is closed with a chorus claps from the kids. The second segment features Jimi Solanke, playing the role of a sage. Each week, he brings an issue to explain to the children. The segment is made as factual and as educative as possible. This segment flows into the third where Jimi Solanke now reappears as the Storyteller who brings a story to the children. It is the central part of each episode and the storyteller in Solanke that engage the children through dramatizations, mimicry, songs/nursery rhymes—with traditional flavor. The storyteller ensures the session is as participatory as possible, involving the children as he narrates his tale of the week. At the end of the story, the storyteller asks one or two of the children to suggest a lesson derived from the tale. As this

segment draws to a close, the children are seen in their frenzy and ecstasy bidding the storyteller farewell and savouring the happiness of the encounter. In return, the sage distributes gifts, hugs the kids, carries the toddlers among them and quietly retreats. The fourth segment, "Aunty's Corner," is usually anchored by Margaret Oluwatoyin, Jimi Solanke's actress wife. She breezes in to add a feminine touch to the demand and ensures she brings up an issue bordering on hygiene or culinary matters. For much older female children among the group, this is a central and important segment as they learn and aspire towards adulthood. In the final segment, Solanke's standard band performs and entertains the children usually using the theme song of the day's story.

b) Synopsis: "African Stories"

The plot of "African Stories" is very similar to "Funspace." However, it has a longer duration as hinted earlier and wider scope. It attempts to engage early childhood group, children of school age and early teenagers. It is important to note that, unlike "Funspace," it extends its focus beyond the immediate environment of Nigeria; hence the tales narrated are drawn from several cultures across Africa. "African Stories," according to Jimi Solanke, is an expanded version of "Storyland," his Nigerian Television Authority Network Series. The setting of African Stories is most often in a natural setting, especially under the shade of a huge tree and in a rustic setting.

The opening montage shows the children actually heading towards the venue of the show while the folk hero/storyteller awaits them. "African Stories" ensures that the Storyteller mingles and engages the children as a prelude before starting the narration. Each week of the thirteen-episode series, the Storyteller varies his approaches and ensures that the plot of each episode flows naturally. It appears that "African Stories" fit into the pan-African vision of the media house, AIT, which had just commenced operation in Nigeria, as the first private TV Network with 24 hours service. It is worthwhile to note that the tales also flow into the education segment where the children are asked questions and educated about their environment. In "African Stories," another innovation is the segment that showcases a traditional art practice from traditional games, art and crafts, historical monuments, etc. The show ends with the children heading back home, clutching their gifts the way they had come. In "African Stories,"

African values are promoted as the older children are seen strapping their younger ones to their back as they retreat. The series is more inclusive and certainly more elaborate as there are various aspects of African culture infused into it.

8. Discussion and Implications of the Study

The above insights point in a clear direction: the role of folk tradition towards an effective model of early childhood education in Africa which cannot be overemphasized. As could be seen in the conscious attempt by Jimi Solanke to subtly create cultural awareness in children, t remains unarguable that the form of education at the early stage would combine attributes of fun with participatory style of pedagogy. These are deeply rooted in the African folktale tradition. Another worthwhile innovation which has great implication for evolution of a pragmatic early childhood education deployed by Jimi Solanke is the infusion of songs, mostly nursery rhymes during his performances. Examples of these include culture artifacts, and children specific memorabilia which conjure images of culture and heritage. This accentuates the memorability of the scenarios usually enacted when he narrates interesting moral and didactic stories.

The issue of early childhood education has assumed interesting dimensions. While scholars in the literary and critical studies continue to support an Afrocentric model which encompasses traditional values, the consensus among educationists and policy makers appears to be a model which universalizes Africa's quest within a global quest for child's welfare. This would mean for instance, that culturally relevant practices such as child fosterage would need to be examined. While the approach may not appear to have been agreed upon, it is indubitable that there appears to be no major disagreement on the value of indigenous education approaches. As observed by A. Pence and B. Nsamenang,

> a culturally appropriate model is essential because African children generate their personhood not solely from their individual traits but more from socio-affective premises, especially those of the family and the peer culture, and not only during the early years of life but throughout the life course. (26)

In furtherance of the above, the mobility enjoyed by Jimi Solanke's shows is very significant in deploying his approach for early childhood education. One clear example of how to effectively deploy this early childhood stimulation is to endear the same to the nursing mothers and subsequently follow this up through the care centres and eventually to the pre-school stage. Given the growing army of pre-school and daycare centres in most African countries, the trope could be useful in going round these centres/ schools to set up similar performances. Interestingly, as a veteran children theatre practitioner, Solanke has a repository of produced works and lyrics he has composed over the years that can be utilized. This is a clear edge that is worth emphasizing. This will undoubtedly ensure that the current situation where early childhood education in countries like Nigeria is appropriated as an extension of the faith organizations where the toddlers are only exposed to religious choruses. The approach will certainly ensure the sustenance of culture education in Early Childhood Development. Ultimately, a study of the strategies deployed by Jimi Solanke clearly reinforces the need to evolve early childhood education approaches which will stimulate effective learning among the children. Such an approach must clearly devolve from a culturally-relevant scenario which the target groups grow up to identify within their milieu.

9. Conclusion

This study has established that folk artists and their performances are viable paths towards effective and impactful early childhood education model. Therefore, there is no gainsaying the fact that, even though the content of the performances is usually in the manner of tales channeled at didactic and moral education, their linear constructions and simple thematic thrusts enable children identify and associate with them. Even in the age of science and technology, where the media of exposure continue to multiply by the day, the recording of the performances can still be made accessible to children. Not only would they continue to serve as sources of indigenous culture education, they are also particularly useful for early childhood education materials. Since the child at the early stage is regarded as a *tabula rasa*, and conscious of the fact that, "children require socialization strategies that are rooted in their local realities while providing them skills that will

enable them to navigate multiple contexts" (Okwany *et al* 3), the need to quickly explore the oeuvre of folk art through sustained interventions like the artiste studied in this course, is of paramount importance.

In showcasing Jimi Solanke's artistic relevance in early childhood education, this study has demonstrated that, if there is a gap in current early childhood education in the modern African world, it is partly due to the under-utilization of folk artiste. This is in alignment with Okwany *et al* that, "despite the vital role in the critical stage of the early years of child development, indigenous knowledge is underutilized" (4). Hence, to be able to sustain a culturally relevant model which utilizes the creative energy of talented individuals across Africa, there is a need to look inwards to actualize this.

Arising from this study, it is suggested that other examples of vibrant artistic figures spread across Africa should be studied and a framework for early childhood education developed. This hopefully would result in a new generation of African citizens who would have passed through an early childhood education where folk performances and the culture of their society is the anchor of their childhood development. Hence, sobriquet like *Baba Agba*, for which Jimi Solanke is known and regarded as, across the Nigerian media and arts landscape, would be a worthy replacement for the Western "Barney" enshrined in the psyche of most children of elite in the present generation. Ultimately, the *Baba Agba* tag should become a brand solely associated with early childhood education in Nigeria, and replicas of the same can be adapted across Africa. Hence, the need for a model that is deeply rooted in culture and which takes cognizance of the children's cultural sensibilities will guarantee a robust strategy which is not alienating. This will further re-assert the need to reinstate indigenous forms and methods of early childhood care in Africa which "has its own organizational coherence that is usefully oriented toward purposes different from those of foreign origin" (Nsamenang 277).

This study has affirmed the efficacy of the culturally-driven folktale mode of early childhood education. It has shown that the approach can either complement or even replace the Montessori or conventional forms currently being practiced. This study has established that Jimi Solanke's engagement with children provides a key strategy of an African model for early childhood education and stimulation in the many ways the artiste

endears himself to the children thus demonstrating the relevance of folk tradition to early child education in Africa. The study proposes the thesis that, through a fusion of tradition and modernity enshrined in Jimi Solanke's folk performances channeled in modern media such as Television, Internet, Social Media and the like, the oral tradition of Africa continues to be a worthwhile agent of childhood education. This confirms the well informed view of Evans and Myers that:

> indigenous knowledge and practice is fundamental in promoting cross-cultural early childhood care and development and is critical for inclusiveness by enabling the validation and promotion of diversity; respect for cultural values; and providing continuity during times of rapid change. (cited by Okwany *et al* 3)

In summary, the study is of the view that the value of literature is of immense importance to humanity. This is clearly because the artistic exploration of Jimi Solanke's worldview in impacting children brings out the uniqueness of African literary traditions. As a subset of African literature, the folklores explored by Jimi Solanke are the ones that exude the functionalist temperament of African literature. The heritage of African literature as a body of dynamic forms which exist at the service of the society is thus given prominence.

It is therefore restated that African indigenous societies parade an array of local wits and respected story tellers who are relevant in the engagement of contemporary issues. The story telling tradition in Africa continues to reverberate and permeate even across modern media as in the case with written literature or the orature contents of films and other forms of artistic productions. Certainly, oral literature or orature as firmly rooted in African cultures has not lost the inherent dynamic qualities which manifest in the richness of the oral arts of Africa. This implies that folk artists such as Jimi Solanke can continue to explore for multiple purposes of entertainment, education and sustainable artistry.

This endeavor has demonstrated that, in Africa, songs, stories, proverbs, tales and the like, all exist as forms of cultural productions which perform specific functions. In other words, Jimi Solanke's deployment of folklore puts him in the league of the traditional artists such as bards

and griots whose role in society transcended aesthetic or artistic, but clearly extends to other spheres of life. The literary merit of this folkloristic exploration lies among other things, in the deployment of dramatic elements such as suspense, songs, and occasional songs, miming gesticulations and often times, hyperboles in depicting scenarios and in character portraitures to the delight of the target audience, the children. Therefore, using the intricate resources of folklore in serving the purpose of early childhood education is fulfilling the mandate of the viability of indigenous oral tradition. In actualizing the Education for All (EFA) mandate of UNESCO, enshrined in 2000 Dakar Framework of Action, therefore, there is a compelling need to realize that:

> Promotion of artistic creativity and the role of the arts become essential, not only because creativity is the basis of any artistic activity but also because knowledge in the area is rooted in the same source—that of creation of the mind and appreciation of local cultures (6)

Acknowledgements: This paper was originally a Laureate Presentation for the 2015 Child and Youth Institute of the Council for Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), which was held between 11th and 25th September, 2015 in Dakar, Senegal. I am grateful to CODESRIA for the selection as a Laureate and also thank the Institute's Directors: Professors Auma Okwany, Hassina Ebrahim and Omar Barry and fellow Laureates for the robust critical comments that have shaped this version of the paper. Many thanks to Dr. Chijioke Uwasomba for his enriching comments. Finally, the credit for translating the abstract goes to Mr. Uche Bertrand Anih.

Works Cited

Ajibade, G. O. "Multifaces of Word in Yorùbá Orature." *Journal of Language and Literature* 4.1 (2005): 20-39.

Dasylva, A.O. "Culture Education and the Challenge of Globalization in Modern Nigeria" *Oral Tradition* 21.ii (2006). http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/21ii/dasylva

Dyson, A.H. *Brothers and Sisters Learn to Write: Popular Literacies in Childhood and School Cultures*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2002.

Ezirim, M. *Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Early Childhood Development Training and Services*. Unpublished MA thesis, U of Victoria, 2004.

Gamurorwa, A. *Major Project for Course CYC 562: Information and Communications Technologies in Support of ECD in the Majority World*. Unpublished manuscript, 2004.

Hussein, J.W. "A Cultural Representation of Women in the Oromo society." *African Study Monographs* 25.3 (2004): 103-147.

Nsamenang, A.B. "The Intersection of Traditional African Education with School Learning." *Psychology: An Introduction*. Eds. L. Swartz, C. de la Rey and N. Duncan. Cape Town: Oxford UP, 2005. 327-337.

Okwany, A, Ngutuku, E and Muhangi, A (2011). *The Role of Local Knowledge and Culture In Child Care in Africa. A Sociological Study of Several Ethnic Groups in East Africa*. Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2011.

Pence, Alan and Shafer, Jessica. "Indigenous Knowledge and Early Childhood Development in Africa: The Early Childhood Development Virtual University" *Journal for Education in International Development* 2.3 (2006). www.equip123.net/jeid/articles/4/IndigenousKnowledgeandtheECDVU.pdf.

Pence, A. and Nsamenang, B. "A Case for Early Childhood Development in Sub-Saharan Africa." Working Paper 51. The Hague: Bernard van Leer Foundation, 2008.

Solanke, Jimi. *Etiti: All Eyes on You.* Jimi Solanke: Ile-Ife, 2005.

___. *Ancient and Modern Tales.* Jimi Solanke: Yaba, 2011.

UNESCO. *Cultural Heritage, Creativity and Education for All in Africa* Paris: UNESCO, 2001.

Abstract

This is a study of an African folk artist, Jimi Solanke, and the significance of his works to early childhood stimulation and learning, thereby serving as an avenue for stimulation and learning that is culturally rooted in indigenous knowledge systems. The study aims at subjecting the children programmes created by Jimi Solanke to a close and detailed study. The essence is to show that early childhood education theorizing can borrow a leaf from the children programmes. The study is based on a close analysis of two children programmes, "Fun Space" and "African Stories," developed by Jimi Solanke and aired on Galaxy TV and AIT TV, respectively in Nigeria. The recorded programmes were watched and relevant sections transcribed for informed analysis. The study reveals that Jimi Solanke uses songs, folktales and friendly audience participatory mechanism to endear himself to the children. This confirms the efficacy of culture education, folk narrative and the use of songs, rhymes and other accompaniments in evolving a cultural model of early childhood education for Africa. Jimi Solanke is thus shown as an exemplar of how folk art can serve as a platform for an effective (culturally rooted, sustainable) early childhood education strategy.

Keywords

Jimi Solanke; African; early childhood; education; folk/culture

Résumé

Cela est une étude d'un artiste folklorique africain, Jimi Solanke, et la signification de ses œuvres à la stimulation et à l'apprentissage d'enfance dès le bas âge, ce qui sert comme une plateforme pour la stimulation et l'apprentissage qui est culturellement enraciné dans le système de connaissance indigène. Cette recherche vise une étude attentive et détaillée des programmes destinés aux enfants créés par Jimi Solanke. L'essentiel de cette étude est de démontrer que la théorisation de l'éducation d'enfance dès le bas âge peut tirer exemple sur les programmes télévisés pour les enfants. Cette étude se penche sur deux programmes d'enfants à la

télévision—«Fun Space» et «African Stories» développés par Jimi Solanke et diffusés au Nigéria par Galaxy TV et AIT TV. Les programmes enregistrés ont été regardés et les parties pertinentes ont été transcrites pour une analyse approfondie. L'étude a révélé que Jimi Solanke se sert des chansons, des folklores et du mécanisme amical qui stimule la participation de l'audience pour se faire aimer par les enfants. Cela confirme l'efficacité de l'éducation culturelle, de la narrative folkloriques et l'emploi des chansons et des rimes et d'autres accompagnements artistiques afin d'élaborer un modèle culturel pour l'éducation d'enfance pour l'Afrique. Jimi Solanke est donc montré comme un modèle dont l'art folklorique peut servir comme une plateforme pour une stratégie efficace (culturellement enraciné, durable) d'éducation d'enfance.

Mots clés

Jimi Solanke; Africain; education; enfance; folklore

Modern day slavery: a reading of Orwell's *Animal Farm*

Pedro Tiago Ferreira
University of Lisbon

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Modern day slavery: a reading of Orwell's *Animal Farm*

1. Introduction

In this essay, I argue, with the help of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, that every actual human society necessarily breeds some form of slavery. Due to well-known reasons, some of which I mention in section 2, in the Anglo-American world slavery has come to be regarded as the possibility of free people having the legal ownership of black people, as if the latter were chattel. I wish to demonstrate that this idea of slavery is merely partial, and that slavery, regarded as an institution and not as racial prejudice, is actually much more comprehensive than the legal possibility of having property rights over human beings. This is only the legal component of the question. There are moral, religious and social components that need to be considered as well.

In section 2 I develop the idea that slavery is an institution made up of legal, social, moral and religious rules, and that racial prejudice is an unfortunate unintended by-product of the African slave trade, inaugurated by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century. Section 3 is dedicated to a discussion about the legal validity of the possibility of using slavery as a criminal sanction in the United States, apparently permitted by the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution. In section 4, I turn to *Animal Farm* in order to make the point that the revocation of the legal rules that enable slavery has not abolished slavery as a whole, that is, as an institution, since the revocation of the legal rules of slavery does not affect the social, moral and religious ones that make up the institution as well. As *Animal Farm* shows, the fact that the animals are apparently free because they are not anybody's property and govern themselves does not stop a certain class of animals, the pigs, from taking control and enslaving the other animals. This is not the partial, legal form of slavery I mentioned above, as the pigs

do not have property rights over the other animals, do not inflict corporal punishment on them, and command them by persuasion rather than by brute force. This is indeed *de facto* slavery governed by social, moral and religious rules.

2. Slavery as an institution, not as racial prejudice ab initio

Slavery is a very old institution. It is impossible to know exactly how old it is, but it goes back to at least ancient Mesopotamia, as the practice is recorded in its legal code, the Ur-Nammu law code, which is "the oldest law code as yet known to man" (Kramer 53), created some time after the foundation of the Third Dynasty of Ur, circa 2050 B.C. (Kramer 52). It stands to reason that the practice is older, as law codes usually regulate social activities which have emerged prior to the codes' promulgation; moreover, the fact that the Ur-Nammu law code is the oldest code known to man does not preclude the existence of older law codes that remain unknown. The bottom-line is that slavery is a very old institution, north of four thousand years old.

By referring to slavery as an "institution" I have in mind John Rawls's definition of what an institution is:

> [B]y an institution I shall understand a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities, and the like. These rules specify certain forms of action as permissible, others as forbidden; and they provide for certain penalties and defenses, and so on, when violations occur. As examples of institutions, or more generally social practices, we may think of games and rituals, trials and parliaments, markets and systems of property. An institution may be thought of in two ways: first as an abstract object, that is, as a possible form of conduct expressed by a system of rules; and second, as the realization in the thought and conduct of certain persons at a certain time and place of the actions specified by these rules. (Rawls 47-8)

From this definition, one gathers that an institution is a system of rules which are not necessarily, or exclusively, *legal*; the rules that form a given system which may be deemed an institution may also be, among others,

moral, religious or social, as well as a mixture of all these. What is important is that the system of rules be *public*, that is, that it be shared by the people that are a part of a community. This means that the set of rules that shapes what may be termed as "the private morality"[1] of an individual is not an institution. Institutions comprise rules which are publicly acknowledged.

These rules, or set of rules, may be just or unjust. Discussions that aim at finding out whether a given system, as well as the rules it contains, is just or unjust may yield certain conclusions regarding the system's validity or legitimacy, but these discussions do not undermine the *existence* of the system as such. In other words, blatantly unjust systems of rules may be called "institutions" as much as their just counterparts. Institutions may, therefore, be moral or immoral, legitimate or illegitimate, just or unjust. It may be that only moral, legitimate and just institutions have the right to command the allegiance of people, but these features are not an inherent part of what makes an institution. An institution is a public system of acknowledged rules, regardless of their legitimacy or justice. For this reason, it is possible to speak of good and bad institutions.

It is therefore not surprising to regard slavery as an institution. The fact that it is brazenly evil does not disqualify it from being so regarded. And it passes Rawls's test, as it can be thought of both as an abstract object and as "the realization in the thought and conduct of certain persons at a certain time and place of the actions specified by [the] rules," in this case, of slavery.

The rules that make up the system of the institution of slavery are not exclusively legal. Slavery is, in fact, a very clear example of a mixed system of rules which encompasses, besides legal rules, social, moral and religious ones. One of the objectives of this essay is to demonstrate that the repeal of the legal rules concerning slavery does not entail the repeal of the social, moral and religious rules that are also a part of this institution. The other objective of this article is to show that human society is not possible without some form of slavery. This is done in section 4.

---

[1] Elsewhere, under the Portuguese expression "*moral individual*," I describe in detail what the private morality of an individual is. Cf. Ferreira 4201-11.

This issue cannot be tackled on a global level in the limited number of pages allotted for this essay. One has to bear in mind that "global," in this specific instance, is not exclusively spatial, as it also is temporal, or historical. In order to obtain an adequate understanding of slavery, and of the reasons why I assert that human society cannot do without some form of it, one cannot divorce the history of the institution from its present-day stance. The reality is that slavery is a continual, unfinished story. This story includes not only historical aspects, but legal, political, philosophical and literary ones as well. I do not think that it is possible to neatly separate these as well as other unmentioned aspects, but it is certainly possible to emphasize some or other perspective. In the following pages, I propose to undertake an analysis of slavery on the Anglo-American tradition through its philosophical and literary aspects, namely by discussing Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Before centring my focus on this work, however, it is necessary to call attention to a point of law, namely that slavery apparently remains a legal possibility in the United States. This is done in the next section, where I raise the possibility that the clause of the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution which enables the use of slavery as a criminal sanction is invalid, and thus legally null and void.

Before that, one general remark still needs to be made: slavery is not about race. I think this assertion is an undeniable truism when one makes it about slavery in general, as opposed to slavery in the United States. A cursory glance at historical, legal and philosophical sources shows this very plainly. Ancient Greek and Roman law, for instance, did not base slavery on race (McDowell 79-80, Bradley 32-40). The slave trade in medieval Europe, fostered to a great degree by demand from the Islamic world, had to be hindered by the Catholic Church's constant prohibitions on exportation of Christian slaves to non-Christian lands, which clearly shows that race was not a criterion of enslavement. During the early years of the Renaissance, slavery was still not connected in any way with race, neither in philosophy nor in practice. The perfect world imagined by St. Thomas More in *Utopia*, for example, uses some forms of slavery as criminal sanctions, but the Utopians have no problems with people of any race whatsoever. Slavery is a punishment for certain acts, not a punishment for having been born with a given skin colour (77-8). And, in *Relectio de Indis*, Francisco de Vitoria examines plenty of arguments that could be

used to justify the countless cruelties inflicted by the Spaniards on the Indians, which included, although went far beyond the, evils of slavery, but none of them is based on race (57-112).

When one talks of slavery in the United States, however, to state that slavery is not about race is certainly controversial. This is so because there has been a long history of racism whose story, like that of slavery, is continual and as yet unfinished. I believe, nevertheless, that slavery and racism are two stories intertwined with each other, but still different. Moreover, from the assertion that slavery is not about race one should not infer that positing this assertion yields the automatic result that slavery does not breed racism. Slavery does breed racism over time whenever the people who are enslaved belong to a distinct race or ethnicity. In time, people who fit the racial profile come to be seen as chattel, not as human beings. My point is that racism is the unfortunate unintended result of the African slave trade, in which Africans were transported, by Europeans, to the Americas. Africans might have been green and they still would have been enslaved, which means that the slave trade did not begin with any persecutory feelings towards blacks. As Junius P. Rodriguez remarks, the emergence of the African slave trade was an accidental by-product of the Portuguese exploration of coastal Africa:

> Europeans understood that Africa was the landmass of indeterminate size that stood between Europe and the markets of Asia. For centuries exotic Asian products—silks and spices—had reached European markets via an overland-caravan route, but the uncertainties of wars and of banditry had made the overland-trade route dangerous and expensive. Many believed that an all-water route to Asia could produce a savings in costs that would enhance the profits garnered by Asian goods. The Portuguese wanted to round the African continent in order to realize the great profits that Asian markets could garner in European markets. (…)
>
> Portuguese sailors hoped to make the seas their domain as they explored the waters of coastal Africa. (…)
>
> The expeditions continued until Portuguese sailors had made their way south of the Sahara. It was here that the Europeans first came into contact with black Africa in the early 1440s.

> In 1441 the Portuguese sailor Antam Gonçalvez returned to Lisbon with ten captured Africans, who were sold as slaves in the public market. This was the first recorded episode of Europeans transporting and marketing Africans as slaves. (…) The formalized trading of Africans became more institutionalized when, in 1448, Portugal's Prince Henry authorized construction of the first European slave-trading center and fort on the African coast at Arguin Bay. Exploration had given way to commerce, and the institutional structure of the slave trade began to emerge. (Rodriguez, 78-9)

The Portuguese were hoping to find the maritime route to Asia; they did not set out with the objective of building a slave trade network. The African slave trade thus emerged as the result of an opportunistic business venture which chance put in the path of the Portuguese, and which, in time, came to be explored by other European nations. Race was not a factor, and the enslavement of Africans may well have been justified, in the mind of the early capturers/traders, as an application of the ancient custom of enslaving war prisoners. This may have been a valid application of the custom in early conflicts, in which the Africans may have done battle against the Portuguese explorers; in time, however, raids started being organized with the sole purpose of taking slaves, as is manifest by the construction of the slave-trading post at Arguin Bay. The enslavement of Africans rapidly became a business venture rather than an application of the custom of enslaving captured war enemies. In these early days of the African slave trade, the Portuguese would have enslaved any indigenous person regardless of their skin colour. Slavery was the business of selling and using human beings captured in Africa as chattel, not of persecuting black people. In the United States, the persecution of black people undoubtedly emerged as a result of the latter's enslavement, but the practice of enslaving blacks was not, in its origins, grounded in race.[2]

---

[2] For an analysis of the development of slavery into a racially motivated institution in the United States cf. Rodriguez 77-150, and Fountain. For both the United States and Europe cf. Eltis.

3. Slavery as a criminal sanction

As it is well known, the end of the American Civil War brought with it the coming into force of the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery "except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted," rendering the bulk of the legal component of the controversy between abolitionists and anti-abolitionists moot. I mean, of course, the part of the discussion which focuses on whether human beings may be deemed private property of other human beings. As mentioned above, slavery has not, however, been abolished in the United States *in toto*, as the thirteenth amendment leaves open to the legislatures (both Federal and State) the possibility of enacting criminal statutes that use slavery as a criminal sanction. This is a part of the legal component of the slavery controversy which has not been given its due by expert literature, but the fact is that in the United States it remains a legal possibility that a person be made a slave as a result of being convicted of a crime. Of course, it is difficult to understand what such form of slavery would be like, as a number of present day legal restrictions stop the State from enslaving a person under the same conditions enslavement has historically occurred up to the nineteenth century. One example of such restrictions is the fact that criminal sanctions must be proportional to the crime to which they apply, which means that one could only be held in slavery in perpetuity under the circumstances which presently allow American courts to convict defendants to a prison sentence for the remainder of their lives. This, of course, would not preclude the courts from applying enslavement as a criminal sanction the same way they do most prison sentences, that is, with a commencement and termination date, but it certainly is a deviation from slavery as we know it. Another restriction, which in effect renders slavery useless as a form of criminal punishment, comes from the eighth amendment prohibition of inflicting cruel and unusual punishment, which would certainly bar the State from flogging a convicted slave as a result, for instance, of their disobeying an order or refusing to work. It is therefore easy to see why it is difficult to imagine a form of present day slavery which only occurs as a result of conviction of a crime and in which the slaveholder is the State. Due to the legal restrictions that impede the State from injuring a set of rights that all individuals enjoy

and are deemed as fundamental, and are not to be forfeited simply as a result of a criminal conviction, slavery as it is historically known simply cannot be enforced, as it would be unconstitutional to compel people convicted to slavery to work against their will by using force, which certainly includes not only active corporal punishment but other kinds of punishment as well, as e.g. starvation or deprivation of sleep.

Nevertheless, some form of slavery, unfeasible as it is, remains a legal possibility in the United States; these hypothetical slaves would not be the private property of private individuals, but the property of the State. In order to determine whether this nominal form of slavery, permitted by the thirteenth amendment, is legally valid one would have to explore two critical points, one of legal theory and another of legal philosophy. This analysis cannot be carried out in full here, but I can at least mention the points and provide my opinion on them.

The point of legal theory has to do with the relations between municipal law and International law. International lawyers argue that International law is binding on all the States that comprise the international community; this means, among other things, that the rules contained in the sources of law that make up any given internal legal order, which includes the State's constitution, cannot contravene the rules of International law, which can be created either through custom or Treaty. Sometimes certain States agree and accept the supremacy of International law over their internal legal order, other States disagree and do not accept it on account that this hierarchy of the sources of law violates their sovereignty. The position of any given State of the international community on this question varies with the political climate that results from the state of affairs in international relations. Political questions do not, obviously, influence what the law is, but they certainly influence the decision whether or not to obey it and recognize it as it is. Furthermore, it is necessary, for reasons of political and legal morality, that breach of law, international or municipal, be reasoned to the point of showing that no breach has in fact been committed. This is achieved with the aid of the two doctrines that I mentioned, as the doctrine of the supremacy of International law seems *prima facie* incompatible with the doctrine of State sovereignty. I do not think that such incompatibility is the case, as the supremacy of International law results from two things, viz. the *pacta sunt servanda* principle,

which requires consent for the validity of Treaty law, thus preserving the parties' (which are the States) sovereignty, and the fact that binding custom originates from common and frequent practice, which equally amounts to consent. I cannot press this point further on this occasion; for the purposes of this essay, it suffices to say that the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution is a violation of article 4 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As this document states in writing the most important principles of customary International law, it is binding on the States of the International community, and for this reason not even their constitutions can legally contravene it. The acceptance of the doctrine of supremacy of International law renders the exception of the American constitutional ban on slavery invalid. Whether or not the United States accepts this doctrine is something which need not concern us here. I believe however that impartial consideration—i.e. consideration that does not take into account contingent political factors—shows that every State ought to accept this doctrine, as the supremacy of International law is rooted on the States' consent and therefore does not violate their sovereignty.

The point of legal philosophy which may render the legal possibility of using slavery as a criminal sanction null and void has to do with the *vexata quaestio* which divides natural lawyers and legal positivists, which can be traced back to at least St. Augustine, and consists in finding whether or not unjust laws, necessarily of human provenance, are valid. The few voices that, throughout history, have opposed slavery on all grounds have used some form of the argument that slavery is a breach of natural law, as it is unjust to hold someone in slavery. The echoes of Aristotle's assertion that there are people who are natural slaves (*Politics* 1254a) have provided the necessary fuel to argue that slavery is not a breach of natural law. In the twenty-first century, this particular Aristotelian doctrine carries no weight amongst philosophers and statesmen (at least when they talk of the subject in an official capacity), although derivations of it are still held to be true by a considerable number of people. Nowadays, however, the problem is not so much to show that slavery is a breach of natural law, but to ascertain that natural law is a standard by which positive law should be deemed valid. For those who hold this position, unjust laws are invalid. For those who do not, and argue that the limits of positive law are to be found in positive sources of law, unjust laws are as valid as just laws. Justice

is not a criterion of legal validity, unless, of course, a positive source of law, such as the State's constitution, makes Justice such a criterion. As I said before, I cannot explore fully the particulars of this controversy here. It is enough to notice that, if positive law is indeed to be deemed valid according to a natural law standard, the exception to the thirteenth amendment ban is plainly invalid, as it is clearly unjust. Otherwise, it is valid, although its application is conditioned by the factors that have been mentioned above. Once again, as in the case of International law vs. State sovereignty, I believe that there is no true incompatibility between natural law and positive law, if one regards natural law as a secular, rather than a theological, doctrine. Natural law in its non-theological sense has to do with Justice. The fact that natural law has been expounded mainly by Christian philosophers throughout history has helped to confuse natural law with theology. The Roman concept of *lex*, however, as well as the Greek concept of *nomos*, express an idea of natural law that is not Christian, but a mixture of divine and secular reason. The Christianization of natural law is a more recent phenomenon than the idea of natural law itself. Furthermore, some recent legal philosophers (e.g. Ronald Dworkin 22-31), in trying to identify the limits of law, have built a philosophical system which amounts to a form of secular natural law (my designation). This means that it is possible, although it is not frequently done, to regard natural law purely from a secular point of view, in which the rules of human reason that limit positive law are not the responsibility of a deity (as is the case with God in most versions of Christian natural law) but of the way human beings naturally think. From this point of view, natural law is a philosophical system centered on Justice, and thus the limits placed on positive law are the limits of moral decency. In other words, blatant unjust positive law rules, that arbitrarily violate people's life, liberty or dignity, are invalid. For this reason, I consider the exception to the ban on slavery of the thirteenth amendment as legally null and void, as it is a breach of natural law. Philosophers who argue that natural law has no standing against positive law because it is part of a broader religious doctrine, inapplicable wherever State and religion are separated, have no defense against the secular version of natural law here presented.

To sum up, using slavery as a criminal sanction in the United States is either unlawful or unfeasible, which means that the thirteenth amendment

exception has little room for practical application. Still, in an era in which the rights of the human person have been recognized and upheld to an unparalleled extent is the history of humankind, the possibility of having some form of slavery legally recognized bears negatively on American society as a whole.

4. *De facto* slavery

As I have said before in this essay, the revocation *per se* of the legal rules that contribute to the existence of the institution of slavery does not abolish this institution *in toto*, as there are rules of social, moral and religious provenance which need be revoked as well if slavery were to be abolished as a whole. In this section, I discuss *Animal Farm* with a view to take a look at what can be considered slavery after the revocation of the legal rules which permit certain classes of people to hold property rights over other classes of people. In this discussion, the species depicted in *Animal Farm* have to be regarded as representative of actual classes in human society. Thus, the pigs ought to be seen as the governing class, and the other species as belonging to the class of those who are governed. A finer analysis may reveal subtleties (e.g. the hens may be seen as the exploited lower class, Napoleon's dogs as middle class law enforcement, etc.) that are immaterial for my argument; therefore, for simplicity's sake, I shall assume the existence of a bipartite society, in which one class governs and another class is governed.

In *Animal Farm*, Orwell tells a tale of apparent liberation which turns out to be one of involuntary servitude and *de facto* slavery, all with the, albeit mistaken, consent of the oblivious slaves who, up until the last couple of pages of the book, are deceived as to their actual condition, with the notable exception of Benjamin. The naivety of the animal society governed by the pigs induces the governed class into thinking that they are free simply because the rights of property enjoyed by Jones, their former human owner, have been dissolved via revolution. The rationale of the animals is therefore the following: since they are no longer the property of any human beings, and since government is now operated exclusively by non-human animals, they are free because they are not subject to anyone's rule except their own.

Thus, the expulsion of Jones (and the fleeing of his wife) from Manor Farm creates a power vacuum which carries this animal society into the Hobbesian and Lockean "state of nature" (Hobbes 117-21 and Locke 269-78). The animals see the need to enter into a social contract, not so much for fear that lawlessness should create a spiral of violence, which is the main reason why Hobbes and Locke argue that the institution of a commonwealth or of civil government is absolutely necessary for the survival of human society, but especially because some form of government is necessary to allow for the production of the means of self-sustainability, namely food. The social contract that the animals enter into is largely tacit, as no representative government, or absolute sovereign, is expressly designated by some form of election or acclamation. The pigs, however, take a leading role through the power of language, as they teach themselves how to read and write, which enables them to write down (and adulterate at their convenience) *Animal Farm*'s very own Constitution/Bible on the end wall of the big barn, the Seven Commandments of Animalism. In time, the pigs cement their position as leaders, and a sovereign emerges in the figure of Napoleon, whose name is certainly not random. The command of written English, and the ability to read it, helps to develop the pigs' capacity of reasoning and argumentation, which leaves the other animals feeling helpless whenever some of the pigs' resolutions are intuitively felt as unreasonable, arbitrary or unjust. All animals are welcome to present ideas and discuss their views in the assemblies, but they find it impossible exercising this right on account of the pigs' superior eloquence, the "interpretations" made by Squealer of the arguments and resolutions of the pigs, and the use of Snowball as a perennial scapegoat, responsible for all the setting-backs occurred in the by now renamed *Animal Farm*. In time, the assembly meetings and the public debates are simply dropped as they are harmful, for their continuation may result in the return of Jones, or so Squealer is mandated to say. The animals at first feel that this is unjust, but cannot point out exactly the reason why. In time, they agree that it is for the best, since it is Napoleon's idea.

There is no doubt that *Animal Farm* is about, and a sort of cautionary tale against the policies of, the USSR under Joseph Stalin's rule. Orwell has explicitly admitted so in a number of instances, which include a letter addressed to Yvonne Davet and an essay intended as a preface to

Animal Farm, entitled "The freedom of the press," which, however, was only published for the first time in 1972. The events described in the book tally with this self-interpretation, as Orwell did not, in fact, try to be subtle regarding the expression of his views.

I do not wish to comment *Animal Farm*'s disparagement of Stalinism; in fact, it is not my intention to present any theoretical argument in favour or against any form of government. I merely wish to point out that every actual human society that has ever existed has had a social division of classes, and I think history allows us to infer that this will always be the case. The particular number of classes into which any given society is divided is certainly variable; but every society has had, and will always have, at least two classes. In this most unsophisticated bipolar model of class organization there is the class of those who govern and of those who are governed. In this instance, one should understand "govern" in a sense broader than usual, i.e. a sense that does not limit the application of the term to the public sphere. Hence, in a private company those who govern are those who direct the company's employees (who are governed) and pocket the profits that result from the latter's activities.[3]

In *Animal Farm*, as in every contemporary human society, slavery is illegal. In human society, the prohibition of slavery includes, but is not limited to, the following rules: human beings cannot be the object of property rights; no one can be forced to work against their will; the labour journey ought to be limited to a reasonable number of hours; a minimum wage ought to be set for paid labour. The breaking of rules such as these

---

[3] Companies usually have a tripartite organizational scheme: shareholders, who own the company; administrators, who manage it; and employees, who execute the orders given by the administrators. Companies can be, and the big ones usually are, more complex than this, which results in a many layered hierarchical structure. This however is the result of custom. Conceptually, nothing stops a company from having a bipartite structure: those who own it and simultaneously govern it, and those who are governed, that is, obey orders and execute the tasks they are assigned. The State's structure follows the same principles, and the modern State is many layered and very complex in terms of hierarchical structure. My point however is that organizations, public or private, may have as many layers as custom or convenience dictates, but it would be impossible for them to exist with only one layer, i.e. that those who govern and are governed could belong to the same social class.

may warrant, in most legal systems, criminal sanctions. Thus, it is a crime to traffic humans, or to sequester them in order to make them work without pay. In *Animal Farm*, most of these rules are in force, at least to some extent. It is true that the animals are their own masters, and that no one is forced to work except as a means of survival, for everyone needs to eat. Therefore, there is no corporal punishment with a view to force the animals to work, same as it happens in human society, where people are forced to work in order to survive hunger, but not for fear of corporal punishment induced by a master. The ration allotted to each animal is the equivalent to minimum wage. The rule that limits the number of work hours, however, finds no parallel in *Animal Farm*. The policies enacted by the pigs gradually increase the number of work hours to the point where even the day-off is abolished. It may be said that all this is done with the consent of the governed, persuaded by the pigs that the construction of a windmill, which requires and justifies the long hours and the abolition of the day-off, would eventually ease everyone's troubles, allowing for more leisure time. This kind of reasoning however just demonstrates that slavery can exist even if it has been legally abolished. In *Animal Farm*, the animals are held in a *de facto* slavery which is based not on legal rules, but on social, moral and religious ones.

It is obvious that moral and social rules have no force in themselves, as their existence and enforcement is above all a matter of persuasion by those who hold the power. This is a substantial difference from what happens with the rules of law and religion, which need not be persuasive, as their infringement brings about sanctions. It is important to note, however, that the *enforcement* of the sanction is not a part of the rule. Rules that cannot be enforced by institutions created for that effect are not rules of law. If murder or theft were not sanctioned by imprisonment the only way to stop people from committing these acts would be to *persuade* them that they are morally wrong, that actions such as these are *mala in se*. The persuasion, nevertheless, has a rule as its object. Murder and theft are examples of actions that are normally prohibited by legal, social, moral and religious rules (the exceptions, not the prohibition itself, account for the variation of the legitimacy of killing and stealing according to each normative system). If there is any persuasion at all regarding rules of law, it is the persuasion that the institutionalized system works, which is done

essentially by demonstration. Religious rules work much in the same way, except a deity is the punishing institution; accepting that the rules are mandatory is therefore a matter of being persuaded that a given deity exists. The application of moral and social rules is rather different, as these normative orders have no institutionalized system of enforcement, whether it be a secular system, as in the case of law, or a divine system, as in the case of religion. Thus, when it comes to legal and religious rules, persuasion operates at the level of convincing people that the probability of enforcement is high. In the case of moral and social rules, however, no such persuasion is possible. Persuasion, therefore, operates directly in the mind of those to whom the rules are addressed: the addressee must be convinced that respect for the rule is fundamental, not because they may be detected and suffer a sanction, but because the rule ought to be followed as a matter of social and moral decency. This is the kind of persuasion that the pigs exert on the other animals. The other animals obey the pigs not because they are afraid of suffering a sanction, as the pigs are not regarded as their proprietors or deities, but because the pigs have the capacity of persuading them that the self-serving moral and social rules which benefit the pigs in general, and Napoleon in particular, are actually what is best for the whole community. This results in the enslavement of the other animals. The pigs are *de facto* slaveholders. They have no right of property over the other animals, but they still manage to sell Boxer to the Horse Slaughterer under the pretext that he was actually sent to the hospital. They are no deities, but still can change the tenets of Animalism as they are the only ones with an adequate command of English (some of the other animals struggle to read, and are unable to write, while most cannot do either, which hinders any possible opposition).

Besides the obvious parallels with Stalinism, the point *Animal Farm* also makes, which I have tried to call attention to in this essay, is that those who have a high capacity for reasoning and argumentation can act in a parasitic way, i.e. they are able to reap the fruits of someone else's labour, someone else being those who are gullible and whose capacity of persuasion is low. These innate traits that some people enjoy make them adept at enslaving others. Thus, those who belong to the governing class, by adopting a parasitic lifestyle that preys on the labour of the governed class, are slaveholders who need not the aid of the law.

5. Conclusion

After these considerations, I believe it is manifest that the abolition of the legal component of slavery is insufficient to abolish the institution as a whole. I must confess that I do not see any reasonable endeavours that could be taken in order to abolish slavery *in toto*. The moral and social components of slavery are completely rooted in rhetoric. Rhetoric does play an important part in law and religion, but once the coercive power of the system of Justice or of a given deity is accepted, everything else falls in place, and little remains to discuss. In other words, rhetoric plays its part in convincing people that law and religion are normative systems they ought to obey. Once this is achieved, it is no longer necessary to use rhetoric to convince people to follow every single rule of the system. The application of sanctions substitutes rhetoric's role in this regard. On the other hand, rhetoric has to be constantly used in order to convince people that they ought to obey a given social or moral rule. Thus, it is a social rule that one's employer's orders are to be obeyed, even if there is no legal obligation to do so, because there is a social rule that states that one has to be loyal to one's superior. This explains some behaviour that is not legally required but socially expected: if one has eleven hours' worth of work to do and is only legally required to put in eight hours, it is still socially expected that the work be completed within the same day and that no extra compensation be pursued by the employee. It may be argued that people do this mainly because they are afraid of losing their job; as this fear has no legal basis, the only conclusion one can reach is that people are enslaved through persuasion. They are convinced that losing their job is a very real possibility if they do not do what is expected of them, even when they have the law on their side. The revocation of the legal component of slavery does not abolish the institution; it just brings out its other facets. When the slave was deemed chattel, "persuasion" amounted to threatening them with violence, backed by the force of law. Now that the law does not back the slaveholder, the slaveholder has found other ways to carry on their trade. No physical violence is implied or exerted, but there is a good deal of psychological violence going around. Those who have honed their skills in rhetoric can be persuasive to the point that their interlocutor does not even realize that they are being threatened with some sort of punishment

(e.g. losing their job) and truly comply with what they are asked out of a true sense of loyalty. This is precisely the case in *Animal Farm*. Right until the moment some of the animals witness the pigs toasting with the humans and listen to the speech that compares the animals to the lower classes of human society the animals follow their leader Napoleon out of a sense of true devotion, since Napoleon knows what is best to stop Jones from returning, to keep them "free." And this is also the case in human society. Most of us follow our leaders, whoever they are, out of a sense of loyalty which stems from accepting that they know what is best for us.

Rhetoric and persuasion cannot be outlawed. Being able to convince people to do what is in the best interest of the persuader, even when it goes against the interest of the persuaded, is bad because it breeds slavery under the guise of its social and moral norms. But trying to stop attempts at persuasion by limiting (or abolishing) free speech is plain evil, and would amount to a modern-day version of Plato's reasoning behind the expulsion of the poets from the Republic. The way all human societies are structured nurtures the development and enforcement of the moral and social rules that make up the institution of slavery. There is no solution for this, but there are arms to fight this situation. The best one is education. Highly educated people can reason and argue aptly. Some people will always be better at finding arguments to convince other people that something is the case, or to do this rather than that. But in a highly educated society no abuses like the ones portrayed in *Animal Farm* would be possible, because people would not blindly accept that their leader knows what is best for everyone merely in virtue of holding power. Through education, slavery may yet not be abolished; but just as the revocation of the legal component of slavery unveiled a milder, subtler form of slavery, being able to effectively counter attempts at persuading people to act against their interests may lead slavery into an even milder form.

Works Cited

Aristotle. *The Politics and The Constitution of Athens*. Ed. Stephen Everson. Cambridge: CUP, 2002.

Bradley, Keith. *Slavery and Society at Rome*. Cambridge: CUP, 1994.

Dworkin, Ronald. *Taking Rights Seriously*. Harvard: Harvard UP, 1978.

Eltis, David. *The Rise of African Slavery in the Americas*. Cambridge: CUP, 2006.

Ferreira, Pedro T. "A relação necessária entre o Direito e a Moral," *Revista do Instituto do Direito Brasileiro* 6.3 (2014): 4193-4227. http://cidp.pt/revistas/ridb/2014

Fountain, Daniel L. *Slavery, Civil War and Salvation: African American Slaves and Christianity, 1830-1870*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2010.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Ed. Richard Tuck. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

Kramer, Samuel N. *History Begins at Sumer: Thirty-Nine Firsts in Recorded History*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania State, 1956.

Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. Ed. Peter Laslett. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

MacDowell, Douglas M. *The Law in Classical Athens*. New York: Cornell UP, 1986.

More, St. Thomas. *Utopia*. Trans. and ed. George M. Logan and Robert M. Adams. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. London: Plume, 2003.

Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1999.

Rodriguez, Junis P., ed. *Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political and Historical Encyclopedia*. Vol. I. Santa Barbara, Denver and Oxford: ABC Clio, 2007.

Vitoria, Francisco de. *Relectio de Indis. Carta Magna de los Indios.* Ed. L. Pereña, C. Baciero and F. Maseda. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1989.

Abstract

This article intends to call attention to the fact that slavery is not solely a legal institution. The rules that make up the institution of slavery are also social, moral and religious. This means that the revocation of the legal rules which are a component of the institution of slavery is not enough to abolish the institution as a whole. In order to understand the weight that the non-legal rules have on modern slavery—i.e. slavery which is not condoned by the law—George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is discussed, as this tale of apparent liberation turns out to be one of *de facto*, or modern day, slavery. Before turning to *Animal Farm*, I discuss slavery as an institution, and whether or not it still remains a legal possibility in the United States.

Keywords

Slavery as an institution; *Animal Farm*; *de facto* slavery

Resumo

O objetivo deste ensaio é chamar a atenção para o facto de que a escravatura é uma instituição composta por regras jurídicas, morais, sociais e religiosas; isto significa que a abolição jurídica da escravatura não é suficiente para abolir a instituição no seu todo. De forma a perceber o peso que as regras não-jurídicas exercem na escravatura moderna—i.e. escravatura que não conta com o apoio do Direito—analisamos *Animal Farm*, de George Orwell, que é uma história de aparente libertação. Essa libertação, no entanto, acaba por degenerar numa escravatura *de facto*, ou em escravatura moderna. Antes de discutir *Animal Farm*, explicamos o que se entende por escravatura enquanto instituição, e encetamos uma análise acerca da possibilidade jurídica de, nos Estados Unidos da América, ainda ser permitida uma forma de escravatura jurídica, nomeadamente como sanção penal.

Palavras-chave

Escravatura como instituição; *Animal Farm*; escravatura *de facto*

Media Gótico: o crime e seu duplo ficcional na Literatura, TV e Cinema

Maria Antónia Lima
Universidade de Évora

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Media Gótico: o crime e seu duplo ficcional na Literatura, TV e Cinema

Existindo actualmente uma forte exposição a imagens violentas transmitidas pelos *mass media* onde violência simulada e violência real se confundem, cria-se uma perplexidade originada por efeitos contraditórios que permanentemente nos dividem desenvolvendo a impotência de distinguir entre o real e o imaginário. Por consequência, as fronteiras entre horror real e ficcional esbatem-se com frequência tornando-nos indiferentes aos seus perigos, razão pela qual se justifica uma reflexão sobre a interdependência entre o crime e sua representação escrita ou visual atendendo a esta dupla realidade. Partindo de exemplos retirados da Literatura Gótica, da TV e do Cinema será objectivo deste ensaio expor a ambivalência e dualidade criadas pela actual e constante interdependência entre o crime e sua representação escrita ou visual, reflectindo sobre alguns efeitos perversos resultantes da frequente indistinção entre crime real e sua réplica ficcional.

Por vezes demasiado banal, o crime faz actualmente parte do que em *True Crime*, Mark Seltzer denomina "contemporay wound culture" (2), possuindo uma realidade dupla que provém de a sua mediatização provocar duplicidade num acto de observação que, ao revelar a realidade, a transforma inevitavelmente numa outra realidade. Este processo de duplicação, próprio dos *mass media*, produz, relativamente à transmissão mediática do crime, algo que o escritor japonês Haruki Murakami observou ser um dos grandes perigos da televisão por esta provocar uma "dupla violência" ou uma "segunda vitimização," observações que este autor pôde aprofundar na sua obra não ficcional, *Underground*, centrada no ataque terrorista ao metro de Tóquio em 1995. A relação directa com o género gótico surge muito naturalmente justificada por Seltzer na obra atrás mencionada, quando conclui: "true crime is crime fact that looks like crime fiction," originando-se assim indistinções entre realidade real e ficcional ou entre

verdade e falsidade, que muitos escritores e artistas, de alguma forma ligados à estética gótica, sempre praticaram, podendo-se encontrar inúmeros exemplos desta prática nas obras de Edgar Poe, Patricia Highsmith, Chuck Palahniuk e muitos outros. Aliás, de forma muito semelhante à percepção de Susan Sontag relativamente aos *media* em *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Palahniuk concluíra em *Survivor* que, se não nos podemos unir através de outra coisa que não seja o crime, a violência, o terror, o trauma, ou o sofrimento, então podemos "all be miserable together" (278), restando-nos assim este simples acto de comiseração, também comum ao público fiel às produções ficcionais góticas. Muitas vezes replicando os processos criativos do próprio Gótico, a mediatização do crime contemporâneo torna-se um temível e perigoso difusor do terror e da violência por esta sua capacidade de mutação e replicação, à qual se referiu também Seltzer observando:

> there is a good deal more to be said about how horror *in* the media mutates into a horror *of* it. This is nowhere more evident than in the contemporary gothic, a genre that systematically couples the media sponsorship or determination of our situation with an uncanny violence, as if each holds the place of the other. (5)

Se o crime real pode tomar o romance gótico como seu protótipo, verifica-se também hoje em dia uma transferência desta referência para o que Hellen Whetley classificou como "Gothic TV." Exemplos deste fenómeno são os sintomas recentes de dependência obsessiva de séries de TV como *C.S.I.*, *Criminal Minds*, *The X Files*, *The Following* e *Dexter*, que, embora possuam públicos diferentes e graus de verosimilhança diversos, partilham de uma comum tendência de substituir romances góticos pelas séries televisivas revelando uma atracção perversa para assistir à violência através dos mesmos meios que transmitem notícias diárias sobre eventos violentos em diferentes cenários de guerra em todo o mundo. Talvez se possa considerar que essa atracção irracional por imagens violentas, onde a realidade e a ilusão se confundem como na mente de um psicótico, explique o constante estado de *stress* psíquico que Marshall McLuhan considerou como um dos efeitos mais negativos da tecnologia. Sendo psicologicamente infectadas através dos *media*, as nossas mentes estão perigosamente treinadas para receber os estímulos mais fortes que parecem especialmente concebidos para aumentar os nossos desejos de violência.

Imunidade a essa condição poderá talvez ser alcançada através da arte, através da qual podemos sentir a verdadeira natureza do nosso presente e estar profundamente consciente acerca dos nossos impulsos mais perversos. David Cronenberg foi capaz de expressar esta consciência em *Videodrome* (1983), onde os telespectadores sofrem alucinações criadas por sinais eletrónicos de TV que provocam tumores cerebrais. Também nós, potenciais vítimas desta doença, sempre que assistimos a alguns programas que retratam torturas e assassinatos/assassínios, ainda permanecemos fiéis ao nosso ecrã de TV que se converteu num monstro domesticado que idolatramos e onde podemos ver refletidos os nossos desejos mais obscuros. Não admira que possamos sentir simpatia pelos impulsos violentos de Dexter Morgan, na série *Dexter*, e pela sua consciência de ser um "clean, crisp outside and nothing at all on the inside" (Lindsay 49). A verdade é que alguns de nós partilham um sonho comum: procura-se uma outra existência mais satisfatória, mas talvez do outro lado da morte.

O desejo de viver uma existência mais intensa e gratificante, para escapar ao vazio e ao mecanismo das rotinas diárias, cria fortes necessidades de experimentar novas emoções e sensações que as pessoas esperam encontrar nas novas tecnologias, em geral, e na TV, em particular. Paradoxalmente, esse impulso pode causar uma dependência de outros tipos de actos repetitivos, criando uma armadilha inevitável que transforma os espectadores em vítimas de um mundo ilusório, onde os actos mais transgressores de violência podem ser vividos com a mesma intensidade como se fossem reais, apesar de serem simulados. A repetição involuntária, criada pela TV, nos seus receptores domésticos familiariza-os com todas as atrocidades estranhas a que assistem, o que denota a presença do conceito freudiano de "estranho" (*das Unheimliche*) neste meio de comunicação, que levou Hellen Wheatley a concluir: "the uncanny provides the initial point of dialogue between Gothic studies and television studies" (102).

Este efeito "estranho" está no centro da ambivalência que faz desvanecer as fronteiras entre desejo e fantasia, realidade e imaginação, transgressão e norma, uma ambiguidade vivida por cada pessoa que se senta em frente a um pequeno ecrã que tem o poder de produzir uma constante de incerteza que faz com que todos percam o sentido de realidade. O próprio conceito de *unheimlich*, apresentado por Freud no seu famoso artigo "Das Unheimliche" (1919), tem um carácter dual e ambivalente, pois embora

se refira ao que não é familiar, ele traduz uma espécie de medo que nos reenvia ao que é desde há muito conhecido e familiar, tendo este texto resultado de uma teoria do terror fundamentada na ideia freudiana do "regresso do reprimido." A combinação de dois níveis semânticos no conceito de *unheimlich* revela que este provém de um dualismo onde reside a sua significação. Daí resulta que a noção de estranho (*unheimlich*) seja algo também secretamente familiar (*heimlich*) mas que se tem conservado reprimido. A definição apresentada por Freud revelará, então, a sua natureza eminentemente ambivalente e incerta: "Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*. *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*" ("The 'Uncanny'" 347). Usando imagens que podem revelar áreas fora do alcance da visão, e sendo um domínio onde mais se faz sentir uma certa estranha incerteza, considera-se, assim, estar a TV bem sintonizada com os propósitos estéticos do Gótico, que é definido como "um género de incerteza" por Catherine Spooner, que considera a televisão "a space as well suited to the Gothic as any other" (242), uma ideia que também foi partilhada por Davenport-Hines, quando afirmou que "television soap opera provides the 20th century equivalent of Gothic novels" (144).

Como na ficção gótica, os efeitos de horror na televisão são por vezes usados para recuperar algum sentido do real, mas eles podem contribuir para "make the unreal of familiar horror images real," como Fred Botting concluiu, quando também considerou que "bloody, violent, horrifying reality—shaped by Gothic figures and horror fictions—is returned as Gothic horror by media" (5). A violência simulada pode, assim, ser percebida como violência real, e actos de violência podem ser praticados na realidade com uma indiferença enorme, como se fossem muito banais, não requerendo nenhum tipo de responsabilidade pelas consequências da sua natureza perigosa. Sendo, ao mesmo tempo, imagens reais, irreais e sobrerreais de violência na TV, estas podem originar um sentimento de perda face a cenas contraditórias e ambivalentes, porque a diferença entre o choque e a repetição é anulada. Num capítulo intitulado "The small scream," Fred Botting entendeu esta contradição, quando caracterizou a televisão não apenas como um *media* banal, mundano e repetitivo, mas também como uma caixa de fluxos, choques, sensações e de estranheza, que o levou à seguinte conclusão:

> Shock has been steadily incorporated in the circuits of broadcasting and spectatorial pleasure: television contains (and pleasures us) by contradictions, the very ambivalence of the impulses of shock and repetition marking the rates of bored familiarity and excited attention on the pulses of the viewers. (131)

Ciente desses efeitos contraditórios da televisão e tentando denunciar a sua terrível potencialidade, David Cronenberg criou *Videodrome* (1982), uma narrativa sobre a exposição de um indivíduo a imagens violentas através de fitas de vídeo e sinais de transmissão à distância. Esta vítima é ironicamente Max Renn, o presidente de uma estação de cabo chamado Canal 83/Civic TV, que ficou conhecido como "aquele que você leva consigo para a cama," devido aos seus próprios interesses por televisão, sexo e violência. O sentido de humor de Cronenberg permitiu-lhe tratar o tema através da detecção de muitas contradições que desconstroem um sistema de comunicação aparentemente controlado, revelando o lado negro dos seus principais responsáveis. A verdade é que a denominada *Civic TV* nunca esteve interessada em serviço cívico nem na promoção de qualquer espécie de sentido moral, porque era um canal de TV pornográfico. Max Renn, o seu Presidente, estava tão preocupado em encontrar novos meios ousados de chocar os espectadores, através da violência sexual mais pervertida, que acabou por se tornar completamente viciado nisso. Nicki Brand, uma psicóloga pop, a alma salvadora da rádio CRAM num *show* chamado "Emotional Rescue," parecia ter credibilidade moral suficiente para ser convidada para um *talk show* televisivo para contestar as atividades obscenas de Renn, mas quando mais tarde ela foi convidada para o seu apartamento, mostrou uma curiosidade incontrolável pelos seus filmes pornográficos e também pelas suas práticas sexuais sado-masoquistas. A personagem do Professor Brian O'Blivion, um profeta dos *media* obcecado pela metafísica da televisão, foi ironicamente inspirado no ensaísta canadiano Marshall McLuhan, autor de *Understanding Media* (1964) e *The Medium is the Massage* (1967), onde se encontram muitas das suas declarações crípticas sobre *media* (semelhantes ao título da última obra atrás citada), mas que não o protegeram, no filme de Cronenberg, de ser a primeira vítima de *Videodrome*, reduzindo a sua existência aos seus discursos gravados numa vídeo-cassete. Bianca O'Blivion, sua filha, tinha a missão de anular os

efeitos colaterais do sinal *Videodrome*, que induziu tumores cerebrais nos espectadores, contudo ela própria foi descrita como "o ecrã do seu pai," o que cria algumas dúvidas sobre a realidade e eficiência de seu propósito messiânico que partiu do princípio suicida de que seria necessário "to kill your old flesh to become the New Flesh."

Revelando a sua duplicidade, nenhuma destas personagens parece escapar dos seus mais obscuros impulsos que são estimulados pelo espetáculo da violência na TV, um facto que interessou Cronenberg e também Fred Botting, tendo este último concluído: "[u]nless the horror is spectacular no interest will be excited: human feeling is extinguished or anaesthetised or boredom sets in" (Spooner 62). Justificando o seu interesse em aprofundar estes impulsos perversos, o realizador canadiano confessa:

> I've always been interested in dark things and other people's fascination with dark things. The idea of people locking themselves in a room and turning a key on a television set so that they can watch something extremely dark, and, by doing that allow themselves to explore their fascinations (…). That's closer to the bone in terms of an original impulse. (Lucas 27)

Devido a este impulso primitivo, muitas pessoas sentem-se incontrolavelmente atraídas por imagens repulsivas e horríveis que são a causa, em *Videodrome*, de todas as suas alucinações, porque, como Cronenberg explica: "With *Videodrome* I want to posit the possibility that a man exposed to violent imagery would begin to hallucinate. (…). But there is a suggestion that the technology involved in *Videodrome* is specifically designed to create violence in a person" (Cronenberg, Ed. Rodley 94).

Esta explicação sobre a influência de um mundo tecnológico nos nossos sentidos, e seu poder de dividir a mente entre o real e o imaginário, pode ser associada a um pensamento expresso por Paul Virilio, quando refere: "giving way to the technological instant, vision machines would make derangement of the senses, a permanent state, conscious life becoming an oscillating trip whose only absolute poles would be birth and death" (92). *Videodrome* representa esta "viagem oscilante" entre a vida e a morte até que não seja mais possível reconhecer a sua diferença, porque cada personagem pode ser vítima de uma pulsão de morte, uma espécie de compulsão mecanicista e demoníaca baseada num desejo de imortalidade,

para uma dimensão que Zizek considerava muito semelhante a "what horror fiction calls "undead," a strange, immortal, indestructible life that persists beyond death," ou "beyond the 'way of all flesh'" (294). Este estado de "morto-vivo" é o que parece ser oferecido a Max Renn por Bianca O'Blivion, quando ela proclama "Death to Videodrome; Long Live the New Flesh!" Este imperativo programático tinha sido criado para lutar contra os terríveis efeitos de um conceito biomecânico chamado "The Flesh TV," cujo nome se deve à influência, exercida sobre Cronenberg, de um romance de ficção científica de William Burroughs, intitulado *The Soft Machine* (1961). Como um dos efeitos colaterais do vírus *Videodrome*, "The Flesh TV" significava que os espectadores podiam ter acesso a um novo tipo de TV, que parecia ser, ironicamente, inspirado em muitos aforismos famosos baseados na teoria de McLuhan sobre os *mass media*, tais como "A TV é uma estrutura física do cérebro," "TV é a realidade e a realidade é menor do que a TV," "o espectador é o ecrã," "Não há nada real fora de nossa percepção da realidade," "A tecnologia é uma extensão dos nossos próprios corpos, é parte de nossos corpos," "o meio é a mensagem ou massagem," entre outras. Todas estas máximas foram defendidas na sua obra *Understanding Media: the extensions of men* (1964) e encontram correspondência numa das mais célebres frases de *Videodrome*: "The television screen is the retina of the mind's eye. Therefore, the television screen is part of the physical structure of the brain."

Se David Cronenberg, em *Videodrome*, nos alerta para os efeitos nocivos do poder das imagens que invadem e assombram muitos lares pela via da televisão, Robert Martin, em *American Gothic*, dá-nos conta dessa realidade assustadora e do seu poder sobre o que denomina "TV People"—um vasto público sob a influência de um autêntico *Poltergeist*:

> As a blank incomprehensibility, the serial killer thus serves as a convenient vessel for the articulation of what American society finds truly monstrous in the late twentieth century—the "TV people," or the authorless but authority-filled killed screen that drives fantasies, reaches out and snatches kids from their homes, and transforms them into demons. (233)

A propósito deste elevado grau de alienação capaz de retirar da destruição um elevado prazer estético, Walter Benjamin apresenta, em *Illuminations*,

o seguinte comentário: "Mankind, which in Homer's time was an object of contemplation for the Olympian gods, now is one for itself. Its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order" (242). Este prazer provocado pela distância estética entre o crime real e o observador explica o interesse do público em observar uma violência que se deseja cada vez mais intensa e sensacionalista conduzindo ao que Amy Gilman Srebnick denominou "criminalização da vida privada" (Srebnick 87). Como o gosto do público por sangue tem aumentado significativamente podendo instigar assim as práticas do próprio crime, este é muitas vezes praticado devido ao próprio gosto do público observador pelo sensacionalismo, tirando-se dele partido, como é o caso dos ataques terroristas e de certos assassínios em série, sobretudo os ligados a práticas de intervenção ideológica ou política como foi o caso dos 78 minutos de fama do norueguês Anders Breivik, cujo ar vitorioso captado pelas câmaras lhe permitiu manter o estatuto de herói nacional por si reivindicado, após ter fuzilado 68 jovens enquanto ouvia música.

Destruir com arte num estado de alienação estética faz coincidir a autonomia do crime contemporâneo com a autonomia da arte, praticando-se o mal pelo mal como se de um acto puramente estético se trate, pois existe a necessidade de um público que aprecie à distância os actos cometidos de uma forma impassível e fria, homóloga da frieza e impassibilidade com que foram cometidos. Num cenário destes nada costuma ser deixado ao acaso sendo tudo previamente calculado e estudado como num verdadeiro acto criativo. Exemplo deste fenómeno poder-se-á encontrar na famosa conferência de imprensa em Hamburgo dada pelo conhecido compositor Karlheinz Stockhausen, quando este considerou os ataques terroristas do 11 de setembro em Nova Iorque como "the greatest work of art there's ever been. That people rehearse like crazy for 10 years, totally fanatically for one concert, and then die! Compared to this, we are nothing as composers." Num artigo publicado no *The Daily Telegraph* em 20 de setembro de 2002, Martin Blyth concluiu que, se buscamos respostas inadequadas a este ataque terrorista, quase não precisamos de procurar mais além do artigo de Ruth Padel, intitulado *Art in a time of Terror*, que surgiu num suplemento do *The Independent* dedicado "The Day the World Was Supposed to Have Changed," onde podemos encontrar a resposta surpre-

endente citada acima. O artista de vídeo, John Maybury, também não foi muito bem-sucedido quando disse que o que estava a assistir nesse momento tinha sido artisticamente produzido. Da mesma forma, o artista Damien Hirst felicitou os sequestradores do 11 de setembro por terem transformado o World Trade Center numa obra de arte "visualmente deslumbrante" (cf. Allison). Comentando todas estas respostas, Blyth concluiu nesse seu artigo que, de acordo com o parecer dos nossos principais artistas, a histórica peça de teatro de rua de autoria de Bin Laden tinha ganho *The Turner Prize for Terrorist Art*.

A interdependência e comutabilidade entre crime e sua representação escrita ou visual origina uma realidade dupla onde factos e ficções se confundem, tal como conclui Mark Seltzer em *True Crime*:

> The novel, for example, from the mid-nineteenth century on, progressively yields up its monopoly on stories of love and crime to a rivalry among media forms. The stories the novel continues to tell, in turn, turn out to be stories of vicarious life and death: that is, a vicarious life and death sponsored by, or yielded up to, the double reality of the mass media. (113)

Já em *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* de Stevenson, o narrador tinha observado que "it was the best murder he had ever read" (218), procedendo-se neste romance a várias transições entre facto e ficção, o que mais uma vez revela a existência de processos comuns entre os *mass media* e outras produções ficcionais, visuais ou escritas, que justifica a afirmação, nesta obra, de que "someone has since made fiction out of the old facts" (260). Do mesmo modo, se atendermos à criação ficcional de Edgar Allan Poe, veremos como os seus romances policiais estão invadidos por narrativas factuais extraídas de jornais. Em *The Mystery of Marie Roget*, por exemplo, existe uma hábil transposição que resulta de Poe ter utilizado personagens e acontecimentos da realidade social de Nova Iorque colocando-os numa Paris ficcionada, tendo por base a imprensa nova iorquina da época, pois o enredo consiste, na sua grande parte, em longas passagens retiradas de reportagens sobre o caso publicadas na imprensa diária. Para dar maior credibilidade aos seus enredos ("to make others believe"), o autor americano recorria a inúmeras citações de jornais nas suas narrativas, o que levou Mark Seltzer a concluir, na obra atrás citada, que

"Poe plagiarized the 'true' crime press in renovating crime detection fiction" (38), o que de novo demonstra ser o crime ficcional ou mediatizado um duplo do crime real, razão pela qual fará sentido partir de exemplos retirados da Literatura ou do Cinema para atingir nestes correlações comuns aos processos de mediatização do crime pelos *mass media*.

Assim, podemos dizer que, se vivesse no nosso tempo, Edgar Poe seria um espectador interessado em reportagens criminais e certamente um apreciador de histórias de *serial killers*, hoje em dia uma das formas literárias mais adequadas à expressão da perversidade humana e da gratuitidade da violência pura. Com Poe nasceu o interesse pelo impulso do perverso que os realizadores de cinema actuais, seguindo o primeiro exemplo dado por Fritz Lang com *M* (1931), tão frequentemente têm explorado, tendo-se multiplicado o tema por títulos como *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Henry*, *Natural Born Killers*, *Seven* ou *Copy Cat*. Em quase todos estes filmes, como na maior parte dos contos de Poe, o assassino é um artista, um *virtuoso* na arte de matar, semelhante ao retratado por Thomas de Quincey em "On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts" (1827). As maiores das atrocidades são cometidas como se fossem uma obra de arte, ou seja, obedecem ao mesmo sentido estético com que se constrói um poema, uma pintura, ou uma escultura. Para usar um dos exemplos acima citados, o filme de Jon Amiel, *Copy Cat* (1995), protagonizado por Sigourney Weaver e Holly Hunter, centra a sua atenção numa série de assassínios cometidos por um psicopata preocupado em copiar os crimes mais violentos que, no passado, se tinham tornado célebres pela arte de matar. Levando a sua obsessão ao extremo e transformando-a numa verdadeira arte, as suas cópias recriam os crimes originais ao pormenor, ajustando milimetricamente cada cenário e enquadrando rigorosamente cada cena, exactamente com a mesma precisão com que um artista aprende a imitar um mestre. Assim concebido, o acto criminoso assemelha-se ao acto artístico na sua necessidade em dialogar com a tradição, para atingir o aperfeiçoamento das técnicas que permitirão mais tarde obter determinados efeitos. Como De Quincey refere na sua obra: "People begin to see that something more goes to the composition of a fine murder than two blockheads to kill and be killed — a knife — a purse — and a dark lane. Design, gentlemen, grouping, light and shade, poetry, sentiment, are now deemed indispensable to attempts of this nature" (263).

A teoria estética de Poe, apresentada em "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), procura atingir essa "unidade de efeito" inerente a toda a composição artística. Cada palavra ou imagem não deverá ser usada por acaso, pois faz parte integrante de uma estratégia de significação de uma estrutura meticulosamente estudada e construída para obter um certo efeito estético que provocará no leitor uma determinada reacção, que o autor desde o início conhece, prevê e antecipa, tal como o criminoso poderá antecipar as emoções de terror e agonia das suas vítimas, que serão tanto mais intensas quanto maior for o rigor e a perfeição do acto. Tendo sido informado, por Charles Dickens, de que William Godwin escrevera *Caleb Williams*, começando a partir do fim da intriga, Poe viu aí uma excelente prova para fundamentar o seu ponto de vista acerca da intenção que deverá anteceder todo o acto criativo. No já referido ensaio, o autor comenta: "It is only with the *dénouement* constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention" (*Essays and Reviews* 13). Este seu desejo de executar em "infinita perfeição" a concepção aristotélica de "intriga," recebida de Schlegel—que admirava pela defesa do que chamava "unidade ou totalidade de efeito"—foi pela primeira vez expresso, em 1841, numa crítica a *Night and Morning* de Bulwer-Lytton, apresentando-se a seguinte definição: "*plot properly defined is that in which no part can be displaced without ruin to the whole*" (ibid. 1292). Em "Marginalia" (1844-49), onde Baudelaire localizou as caves secretas da mente de Poe, continua a ser desenvolvida esta ideia, sendo, no entanto, aqui mais preciso em relação à execução:

> *Most* authors sit down to write with *no* fixed design, trusting to the inspiration of the moment; it is not, therefore, to be wondered at, that *most* books are valueless. Pen should never touch paper, until at least a well-digested *general* purpose be established. In fiction, the *dénouement*—in all other composition the intended *effect*, should be definitely considered and arranged, before writing the first word; and *no* word should be then written which does not tend, or form a part of a sentence which tends, to the development of the *dénouement*, or to the strengthening of the effect. (ibid.)

Se nos lembrarmos de *Seven* (1996), o filme de David Fincher, veremos de que forma esta intenção meticulosa e racional, que neste caso passa por um estudo profundo da Literatura e da História do Cristianismo, se aplica em extrair um máximo de ansiedade da parte do espectador e um elevado grau de sofrimento por parte das vítimas, autênticos títeres num espectáculo de terror, onde a religião e a arte são cúmplices. Digamos que os massacres perpetrados por *serial killers* são, nos exemplos citados, trabalhos de grande composição mediática, sendo o homicídio cometido por pura volúpia. Parafraseando mais uma vez De Quincey, este será mesmo o ideal de todo e qualquer crime que se preza, pois, tal como a arte de Ésquilo ou Milton, este deve ambicionar elevar-se ao nível do sublime, desenvolvendo um sentido do gosto segundo o qual deve ser futuramente apreciado. E nada melhor do que o contacto com a Literatura, ou com a arte em geral, para apurar este sentido. No filme em questão, cita-se o verso "Long is the way that from hell leads to light," extraído pelo assassino de *Paradise Lost* de Milton, e emblemático de toda a atrocidade por si mesmo praticada. Neste caso, estamos perante um *serial killer* com hábitos de leitura sofisticados, pois a sua fonte de inspiração vem-lhe de uma longa lista de livros onde constam *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Divine Comedy*, *The Merchant of Venice*, assim como obras de São Tomás de Aquino e do Marquês de Sade.

Na obra de Stéphane Bourgoin, intitulada *Serial Killers: Enquête sur les tueurs en série* (1993), apresenta-se o caso do assassino americano Albert Fish, que possuia, no momento da captura, um volume das *Extraordinary Stories* de Edgar Allan Poe, cujas páginas respeitantes ao conto "The Pit and the Pendulum" estão gastas por terem sido muito folheadas, talvez com o objectivo de se aprender algo com esta longa narrativa de suplício (81). Entre o criminoso e o artista parece existir, assim, uma mútua atracção. No primeiro pelos processos técnicos do segundo e no segundo pelos mecanismos psicológicos do primeiro. A uni-los está um mesmo interesse pela experiência psíquica implícita na perversidade humana e pelos efeitos de terror provocados. Digamos que a grande diferença será a completa cedência a impulsos de violência realmente praticada, no caso do *serial killer*, e uma sensibilidade consciente e distância estética, no caso do artista. Na obra *Evil Inside Human Violence and Cruelty* (1997), Roy Baumeister explica o impulso da agressão nos seguintes termos: "most violent impulses are held back by forces inside the person. In a word, self-

control prevents a great deal of potential violence. Therefore, regardless of the *root* causes of violence, the *immediate* cause is often a breakdown of self-control" (14). O próprio título de uma obra publicada sobre este tema remete-nos para a generalização do instinto de violência a todos os homens. Trata-se da obra *Bad Men Do What Good Men Dream* (1996), onde o autor apresenta as seguintes conclusões:

> there is no great gulf between the mental life of the common criminal and that of the everyday, upright citizen. The dark side exists in all of us. There is no "we-they' dichotomy between the good citizens, the "we," and the criminals, the "they." (…) One cannot listen for so many years to patients and to criminal defendants revealing their inner lives without coming to the conclusion that bad men and women do what good men and women only dream about doing. (Simon 2)

Utilizando uma lógica semelhante à da anterior citação, poder-se-á dizer que o escritor pensa ou sonha o que o criminoso executa, mas o mal faz parte da natureza humana de ambos e existe como algo muito real. Em *Dark Nature* (1997), escrito pelo biólogo Lyall Watson a bordo dum barco no Amazonas, evitam-se as interpretações habituais dadas ao tema pela religião, moral, filosofia e criminologia, apresentando-se uma História Natural do Mal, onde se conciliam exemplos do reino animal e vegetal com personagens extraídas da Literatura. O autor defende que o mal é uma força da natureza e uma realidade biológica, algo de universal como Milton, Dante, Goethe e Stevenson já o tinham entendido. Para ilustrar isto, Watson apresenta um curioso estudo das baleias assassinas na Patagónia. A mensagem do livro é que o Mal não é simplesmente uma ausência do Bem, mas uma ausência de equilíbrio com o Bem, e o ideal será manter as duas forças em relação e equilibradas, como o recomendava a ética aristotélica. Sendo a Natureza demasiado inconsciente para ser moral ("the universe is a monster that does not care if we live or die") (249), temos de ser nós, os primeiros animais éticos, a dar, à vida na terra, essa consciência do "dark side," evitando assim submeter-nos cegamente às leis de selecção natural. O seguinte comentário de Watson parece relacionar-se directamente com a temática central da obra de Poe, testemunhando, assim, a razão da sua modernidade: "It can be frightening, even shocking, to come face to face with our dark side in these days; but it is necessary. We need to leaven the

single-mindedness of our unconscious attitudes with conscious flexibility. We have to confirm the dark shadow and confront its genetic troops with the light of day" (248).

Sendo então comum a todos os indivíduos, este impulso para o mal, que Georges Bataille definiu como "attirance désintéressée vers la mort" (25), este *alien* interior, onde se ocultam os mais negros instintos do comportamento humano, faz parte tanto da natureza do criminoso como do artista, só que um liberta-o na realidade e o outro confronta-o na ficção. Enquanto um é totalmente dominado pela força quase demoníaca do impulso que dele se apodera destruindo-lhe a personalidade, o outro procura a integração dessa mesma personalidade através do indispensável confronto com o inconsciente, tão necessário ao processo de individuação, proclamado pela teoria psicanalítica de Carl Gustav Jung. Aparentemente, a arte do crime e o crime da arte parecem ser uma e mesma coisa, mas se não atendermos à diferença fundamental, anteriormente exposta, nunca poderemos entender o humor e a ironia das seguintes palavras de De Quincey: "For the final purpose of murder, considered as a fine art, is precisely the same as that of tragedy, in Aristotle's account of it; viz. to cleanse the heart by means of pity and terror'" (293). No assassino, o inconsciente nunca foi assimilado e por isso a intenção de "purificação' transforma-o numa monstruosidade, ao passo que no artista os conteúdos do inconsciente são tornados conscientes, o que contribui para que os demónios possam ser exorcizados pelo efeito purificador da arte. Será então significativo que, no poema "Alone" (1829), surjam os versos "The cloud that took the form / (When the rest of heaven was blue) / Of a demon in my view" (Poe, *Poetry and Tales* 60), que inspiraram Baudelaire a escrever em "L' Héautontimorouménos": "Je suis la plaie et le couteau! / Je suis le soufflet et la joue! / Je suis les membres et la roue, / Et la victime et le bourreau / Je suis de mon coeur le vampire" (*Oeuvres Complètes* 57).

O tema do duplo, a presença do "Outro" que é vampiro e demónio, mas que é afinal uma parte do indivíduo, é por si evidência que o problema da desintegração da personalidade representa, para o artista, uma das preocupações centrais da sua obra, que decerto se constituirá numa via de integração e união das duas partes divergentes da psique humana causadoras de profundos distúrbios e conflitos psicológicos. O processo ficcional será assim, para Poe, uma via para essa integração, porque lhe possibilitará

confrontar-se com a própria desintegração, objectivando-a em personagens criminosas que são vítimas de impulsos perversos. A este respeito, em "Poe's Other Double" (1982), Johnathan Auerbach comenta: "Poe's understanding of the creative process, in fact, bears a marked resemblance to the process of plotting enacted by his criminals and detectives" (352). Em "The Purloined Letter" (1844), esta dualidade psíquica é evidente, pois o raciocínio do detective—que poderá personificar o escritor ou o artista—imita o do criminoso, mostrando que o seu processo intelectual pode conter em potência a mesma lógica perversa que conduz à prática do roubo ou do crime. Isto acontece devido ao método utilizado por Dupin, que consiste na identificação do intelecto do raciocinador com o do seu adversário, podendo ambos tornar-se esse mesmo terrível "*monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius" (Poe, *Poetry and Tales* 697).

Embora se conheça o repúdio de Poe pelo que denominava "heresy of *The Didactic*," por ser incompatível com o seu interesse pela experiência aristotélica do Belo, a sua extrema atenção em relação à perversidade humana e à desintegração da psique não o deixou perder o sentido moral, tendo já Allen Tate notado, no seu importante artigo "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe" (1968), que este autor, diferentemente do que é vulgar pensar-se, não demonstra indiferença moral, mas sim interesse por um problema moral de preocupação universal. O denominado "Moral Sense" que, em "The Poetic Principle," aparece a par de "Pure Intelect" e "Taste," como uma das três partes constituintes da mente humana, nunca poderia estar ausente de uma obra que sempre contrapôs a realidade da perversidade humana aos falsos valores da moral dominante, o que, em *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1966), Leslie Fiedler sente como "irony of life in a land where the writers believe in hell and the official guardians do not" (29). Sem esse sentido moral aliado ao sentido estético não poderíamos distinguir nunca os efeitos de terror calculados a sangue-frio nos contos "The Black Cat" (1843) ou "The Tell-Tale Heart"(1843) dos obtidos por Jeffrey Dahmer, o célebre "serial killer" canibal de Milwaukee, sendo esse sentido ético que deverá orientar também toda a transmissão mediática do crime, sem o qual esta, em vez de denunciar as desintegrações psíquicas e possíveis psicopatologias pelas quais os crimes se cometem, antes contribui para as agravar e difundir nos espectadores. Comparem-se os seguintes exemplos:

> Evidence had earlier been given regarding Dahmer's self-confessed cannibalism, where he claimed to have cooked and eaten the bicep of one of his victims seasoned with salt and pepper and steak sauce; he gave police the following justification: "My consuming lust was to experience their bodies. I viewed them as objects, as strangers (…). It's hard for me to believe that a human being could have done what I have done (…)." It was Dr. Berlin's opinion that Dahmer believed he could be closer to his victims by eating them—in fact, Dahmer had enlarged on this when he told detectives that he cannibalised only the people he liked. —Depoimento de Jeffrey Dahmer—(Lane 137).

> Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. (…) I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever. (…) The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs. (Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" 555, 558)

Se os anteriores depoimentos nos fazem lembrar o de Meursault em *L' Étranger* (1942) de Camus, eles remetem-nos também para a questão de saber onde começa a ficção e acaba a realidade, um dilema tão comum a todos quantos estão expostos quotidianamente aos *mass media* actuais. Os actos de Dahmer e os do narrador de Poe parecem pertencer ao mesmo indivíduo e à mesma realidade, que apenas se apresenta duplicada e pronta a que se descubram diferenças e semelhanças inquietantes. Como diria Lord Byron em *Don Juan*: "Tis strange — but true; for truth is always strange; / Stranger than fiction."

Esta distinção revela-se importante para recuperar o sentido ético que deverá orientar também toda a transmissão mediática do crime, sem o qual esta, em vez de denunciar as desintegrações psíquicas e possíveis psicopatologias pelas quais os crimes se cometem, antes contribui para as agravar e difundir nos espectadores. Será assim urgente tomar consciência dos processos de mediatização do crime pelos *mass media*, para que não se

perca o sentido do real, e o espectador deixe de ser vítima constante de uma manipulação mediática criadora de estados de alienação estética e de uma realidade dupla capaz de o tornar indiferente à violência real apreendida como mero horror ficcional. Poder-se-á dizer que, como qualquer forma de arte, o Gótico na Literatura, TV e Cinema é um meio de percepção especialmente vocacionado para estimular e educar a visão, não devendo ser utilizado para provocar, mas antes alertar para os perigos resultantes da confusão de fronteiras entre realidade e ficção, por ser um modo de expressão artística onde esta sobreposição de dados mais recorrentemente se pratica através dos seus processos de representação da violência e do crime. Se existe uma interdependência entre o crime e a sua representação escrita ou visual, esta não deve levar o espectador a um estado de alienação estética, mas deve antes torná-lo mais perceptivo à fundamental distinção entre violência simulada e violência real.

Obras Citadas

Allison, Rebecca. "9/11 wicked but a work of art, says Damien Hirst." *The Guardian* http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2002/sep/11/arts.september11. Feb,13, 2002. December 23, 2015.

Auerbach, Johnathan. "Poe's Other Double: The Reader in Fiction." *Criticism* 24 (1982) : 341-361.

Bataille, Georges. *La Littérature et le Mal*. Paris: Gallimard, 1957.

Baudelaire, Charles. *Oeuvres Complètes*. Paris: Robert Lafont, 1980.

Baumeister, Roy F. *Evil Inside Human Violence and Cruelty*. New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997.

Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1968.

Bourgoin, Stéphane. *Serial Killers : Enquête sur les tueurs en série*. Paris: Éditions Grasset and Fasquelle, 1993.

Botting, Fred. *Limits of Horror: Technology*, *Bodies*, *Gothic*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2008.

Davenport-Hines, Richard. *Gothic: Four Hundred Years of Excess*, *Horror*, *Evil and Ruin*. New York: North Point Press, 1999.

De Quincey, Thomas. "On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts." *The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater and other Essays*. London: Macmillan, 1924.

Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny.'" *Art and Literature*. *The Penguin Freud Library*. Vol. 14. Ed. Albert Dickson. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Lane, Brian and Wilfred Gregg, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Serial Killers*, London: Headline, 1992.

Lindsay, Jeff. *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*. London: Orion, 2005.

Lucas, Tim. *Videodrome*: *Studies in the Horror Film*. Lakewwod: Centipede Press, 2008.

Martin, Robert K. and Eric Savoy, eds. *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1998.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Men*. London and New York: Routledge, 1964.

Palahniuk, Chuck. *Survivor*. New York: Random House, 1999.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Essays and Reviews.* New York: The Library of America, 1984.

___. *Poetry and Tales.* New York: The Library of America, 1984.

Rodley, Chris, ed. *Cronenberg on Cronenberg*. London: Faber and Faber, 1992.

Seltzer, Mark. *True Crime: Observations on Violence and Modernity.* New York: Routledge, 2007.

Spooner, Catherine. *Contemporary Gothic*. London: Reaktion Books, 2006.

Simon, Robert I. *Bad Men Do What Good Men Dream*. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1996.

Srebnick, Amy Gilman. *Mysterious Death of Mary Rogers: Sex and Culture in Nineteenth-Century New York*. New York: OUP, 1995.

Virilio, Paul. *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*. Trans. Philip Beitchman. New York: Semiotexte, 1991.

Watson, Lyall. *Dark Nature: A Natural History of Evil*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1997.

Wheatley, Helen. *Gothic Television*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2006.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Ticklish Subject*. London and New York: Verso, 1999.

Abstract

Crime possesses a dual nature deriving from its portrayal in the media leading to duplicity in the act of witnessing crime which, by showing reality, inevitably transforms it into a different kind of reality. The direct relationship with the Gothic genre is very naturally justified by real crime seeming to replicate fictional crime and vice versa, thus originating various forms of the lack of distinction between reality itself and fictional reality, or between truth and falsehood, which many writers and artists associated with Gothic aesthetics have always relied on, and numerous examples of this can be found in the works of Edgar Poe, Patricia Highsmith, Chuck Palahniuk and many others. While real crime may take the Gothic novel as its prototype, it turns out that nowadays television has taken on this role. Examples of this phenomenon are the recent symptoms of obsessive dependence on TV series such as *C.S.I.*, *Criminal Minds*, *The X Files*, *The Following* and *Dexter*, showing a tendency for television series to replace Gothic novels, thus revealing a perverse attraction for witnessing violence through the same means that transmit the daily news featuring violent events in different scenarios of war all over the world.

Keywords

Crime; media; Gothic; double; TV

Resumo

O crime possui uma realidade dupla que provém de a sua mediatização provocar duplicidade num acto de observação que, ao revelar a realidade, a transforma inevitavelmente numa outra realidade. A relação directa com o género Gótico surge muito naturalmente justificada pelo verdadeiro crime parecer replicar o crime ficcional e vice-versa, originando-se assim indistinções entre realidade real e ficcional ou entre verdade e falsidade, que muitos escritores e artistas ligados à estética gótica sempre praticaram podendo-se encontrar inúmeros exemplos desta prática nas obras de Edgar Poe, Patricia Highsmith, Chuck Palahniuk e muitos outros. Se o crime real pode tomar

o romance gótico como seu protótipo, verifica-se também hoje em dia uma transferência desta referência para a TV. Exemplos deste fenómeno são os sintomas recentes de dependência obsessiva de séries de TV como *C.S.I.*, *Criminal Minds*, *The X Files*, *The Following* e *Dexter*, que demonstram uma tendência de substituir os romances góticos pelas séries televisivas, revelando-se assim uma atracção perversa para assistir à violência através dos mesmos meios que transmitem notícias diárias sobre eventos violentos em diferentes cenários de guerra em todo o mundo.

Palavras-chave

Crime; *media*; Gótico; duplo; TV

Shells, Trenches and Memory: World War I Poets and Autobiography

Ricardo Namora
Stockholms Universitet, Romanska och klassiska institutionen
Centro de Literatura Portuguesa, Universidade de Coimbra

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N.11 2016

Shells, Trenches and Memory: World War I Poets and Autobiography

World War I was the moment in history in which Western innocence, already pummeled by the Industrial Revolution, Nietzsche's assassination of God and capitalist greed, came to an abrupt end. Utter disrespect for human life, gross High Command mistakes and a new concept of warfare led to the unleashing of an unprecedented display of brutality. After a short period of assault, the front shrugged into a stalled balance of trenches, tunnels and barbwire, spread through vast areas of the continent. France and Belgium were the main stages of this world-scale tragedy. Loss of human life was tremendous, the levels of destruction unforeseen, and the amount of barbarity immeasurable. On the Western Front, famously described by Erich Maria Remarque's *In WestenNichtNeues* (*All Quiet on the Western Front*), first published in 1929, thousands of soldiers endured the harsh life of trench warfare among rotting corpses, rats, disease, snow and thunderstorms, occasional lack of supplies, freezing winters, floods and abandon. Among the combatants that experienced the worst side of the mass catastrophe brought about by the war, we find an astonishingly high number of poet-soldiers, fulfilling the ancient image of the man of arms holding the sword in one hand and the quill on the other.

In most cases, these later called "WW I Poets," like Wilfred Owen, Sigfried Sassoon, John McCrae, Edmund Blunden, Rupert Brooke, Robert Graves and Walter de la Mare, among many others, enlisted at a very young age, and to some extent experienced their poetic coming of age *during* the war or shortly after. Some of them had, previously, attempted at writing poetry, either still at school or in that seemingly flourishing period of subjectivity of pre-adulthood, but it is safe to say that, for most of them, the war experience played a decisive role in the maturation of verse. The flurry of English-speaking poetry that stemmed out of WW I was

tremendous, and tremendously popular—it has been subject to widespread publication, critical and theoretical exercises, and even to an outstanding digital archive. What puzzles me the most, however, is not the poetry itself, or the literary fortunes of those poet-soldiers. Typically, we tend to describe poetry as a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," as Wordsworth's famous quote has long taught us (even if, in this particular case, we can hardly imagine soldiers in trenches under shell fire being able to recollect their emotions in "tranquility"). If we wish to take that broad spectrum saying a little further, we might peacefully resolve our notion of poetry into a formula comprising feelings, emotions, some degree of play, some degree of form and, of course, language. The formula would be enough, strictly speaking, to cope with the majority of the WW I poets, still in most cases so *pre-modernist* in style and idiosyncratic in subject. Thus, I will place poetry aside.

That being said, I would like to focus on a distinct post-WW I period in which some of the most admirable poet-soldiers turned to *something else* to revive their war experiences. That slice of time comprises the years 1928 to 1930 in which, perhaps in a surprising way, three former war heroes decided to *rearrange* their previous war experiences by means of the autobiographical register. Edmund Blunden's 1928 autobiography *Undertones of War*, Robert Graves's 1929 *Goodbye to All That* and Sigfried Sassoon's 1930 *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* (arguably a semi-autobiography) constitute a set of texts that share many common features and instigate many theoretical questions. Why did three of the most accomplished war poets felt the need for autobiography in order to mitigate the atrocities of WW I ten or more years after its end? Why, so it seems, did Blunden, Graves and Sassoon turned to autobiography for closure? (wasn't poetry *enough*? or, on the other hand, is first-person prose more *apt* to recollect past memories?) Is autobiography, paradoxically, more *reliable* than verse in order to catalogue such an intense experience? (is it more *trustworthy* to present the atrocities, the horror, the estrangement from common civil life, the thoughts and reasoning about the conflict, plus the epistemological gap between fact and memory by means of a *factual* report, rather than a *metaphorical* verse structure?) Is autobiography, in the end, more *suited* to deal with both memory and experience? I am not sure if I can provide a satisfactory answer to all of these questions. Still,

I believe it is worth trying, and therefore I will start by discussing some features of what is theoretically perceived as the *autobiographical genre*. I will revert, for that purpose, to two 1980's classical works on the subject.

The general question of autobiography as a literary genre is, as many times happens, a question of deciding on which side of the fence you want to stand. Common sense tells us bluntly that the two terms involved in the definition are fairly self-evident: "auto" refers to the self and "biography" to a reliable narrative of historical facts that relate to a particular life. Under this point of view, autobiography is then, roughly, a prose narrative about someone's life, told by that *someone* using his first-person authority, in truthful, reliable terms and presupposing the *unity of the self* that enables people to recount their own life-stories. In universities, literary circles and erudite periodicals, however, the subject of determining the *nature* of autobiography seems a little more problematic. In literature, there are always one or more particular occurrences that challenge the widely accepted common sense notions used by the most diligent practitioners (let us pretend, for the sake of the argument, that we are standing on the "common sense" side of the fence, for the moment). The problem seems to be, then, on how to reconcile two different and yet compatible descriptions: autobiography as a solid, homogenous, self-referential narrative; or as a not-so-transparent, heterogeneous, fragmented sequence of events. Either way, it looks as though Blunden, Graves and Sassoon have perceived it as having a *function* quite different from that of poetry.

If we are (as we are pretending to be) on the "common sense" side of autobiographical description, we must (naturally, so the story goes) accept the proviso that the narrative of someone's life should benefit from some kind of necessary relation to an abstraction called "the truth." Truth claims and truth statements have played a decisive historical role in the construction of autobiography as a fact-rooted *individual history*—analogous, in many ways, to the *collective history* we learn both at school desks and through TV documentaries. To some extent, truth-claims in literature (as in most narratives, whether in books or in friendly conversations at the pub) are typically a function of a relationship of *trust* deemed necessary to the functioning of the traffic between addresser and addressee—this condition is sometimes denoted by an abstraction called the "autobiographical contract" (or "pact," in the words of its creator,

Philippe Lejeune). In his 1988 classic on autobiography as *discourse*, *The Changing Nature of the Self*, Robert Elbaz describes the truth issue as much more than simply an arithmetical exercise in which the variables of the equation (true facts *and* descriptions of facts) are either paired together or simply dismissed as *unmatchable*. Thus,

> surely factual truth is irrelevant to autobiography, for the meaning of autobiography—or for that matter the meaning of any literary text—does not depend on its factual veracity. This, of course, raises a more serious problem, that of the relationship between reality and fiction. Is there a difference between autobiography and fiction? (Elbaz 6)

Empirical evidence is, of course, one of the features that enable readers (or listeners) to establish a clear line of demarcation as to what seems acceptable or not in autobiographical narrative. But what Elbaz's argument seems to imply is that truth- value statements are not the *only* criteria for admissibility and, if strictly considered, may even be so difficult to describe that their admission is sometimes altogether negligible (we may argue that the autobiography of someone describing a lifetime spent in Mars is, obviously, empirically implausible, but I imagine this could only work as an extreme counter-factual example).

Nevertheless, Elbaz's argument points to a hint that autobiography may not be, as "common sense" is bound to suppose, rooted in the truth or on the transparency of empirical facts, but rather into a broad exercise of "telling a story." Should that be the case, we may imagine that, to a certain degree, autobiographical descriptions *do* provide a curious, pendulum-like movement using both fact *and* fiction. As in every story or tale, there is a (sometimes indistinct, sometimes clearer) bond of empirical truths and unproven ones. The difference between autobiographies and novels is, in Elbaz's terms, not a difference in *kind* but rather in *degree* (it amounts, ultimately, to considering the "man in Mars" narrative as less probable than Blunden's or Sassoon's recollections of the war, but not *altogether* an utter lie not worth considering; that is why I will refrain from treating Sassoon's work as semi-autobiographical—the narrative is told by someone called George Sherston: I will address it as any other autobiography, and presume that Sassoon and Sherston are the same person). Should we accept Elbaz's theoretical stance, we will likely be prone to admit that the *fiction* side to

autobiography necessarily involves a reconfiguration of the role and nature of the author: in a sense, the ultimate purpose of writing autobiographies may not be the pursuit of unity but, on the contrary, of finding a narrative way of coping with the inherent dispersion of the (literary and non-literary) self. That explains why:

> autobiography (…) cannot allow for the presentification of the self; since it is a fiction, it can only inhibit presentification. In no way can it be an "incomplete literary project" (for no literary project is ever complete), or "an arbitrary document" (no document is arbitrary). Like fiction, autobiography can only be a beginning, a ceaseless beginning, because there is all that is; because consciousness in its temporal division, in its process of contradiction and negation, allows for beginnings only, for what cannot be completed. (Elbaz 112)

As a feature of the *narrative mode*, then, autobiography is not intent on *closure*, as we might suspect, but rather on promoting a constant reflux of past and present combined with a generous sense of incompleteness. Neither time nor the self are *continuous*—they are, to a large degree, fragmented variations of our *being-in-the-world* experience. According to Elbaz, "the completion of autobiography (…) is a myth posited within the discursive reality by an engulfing hegemonic mode" (13). And the remembrance of things past, either in Mars or the trenches in France rests on a rather shaky definition of both the self and the chronological existence of that same self. "Completeness," Elbaz writes, "is not a natural phenomenon: time is divisive, by definition" (13). This argument is particularly pressing with regard to our initial questions about the biographies of Blunden, Graves or Sassoon: are we, at this moment, prepared to allow that their autobiographical intentionality wasn't governed, after all, by an *insufficiency* of the poetic mode but rather on something deeper? Is there something *ontologically compelling* about writing an autobiography?

At this stage, apparently, "common sense" considerations on the generic nature of autobiography have been mildly challenged. If we adapt our new hermeneutic stance to the object we proposed to discuss, we will probably find out that our initial assumptions were wrong or, at best, poorly stated. An admissible leap in our reasoning would certainly describe, from this point on, Blunden's, Graves's and Sassoon's testimonies as

distinct (yet somehow alike) ways of pursuing not the integrity of the self but rather the best available way of handling the many contradictory sides to it. It is not poetry's fault: all of the three wrote the verse they could and found worthy during the war, immediately after the war and in later stages of their lives. In order to cope with the varying ways of the self (the civilian self, the wannabe-hero, the trench martyr, the civilian after enduring the atrocities of the war self and the self that, ten-plus years after the armistice still feels the need for telling a story about all that), they all chose yet a distinct *medium* of presentation—seemingly separate from poetry. In his 1984 book on literary self-representation, *Being in the Text*, Paul Jay describes some of the modern implications of that process. In his argument,

> the wholeness and coherence of the self, the primacy of biography in self-representation, and the role of narration in representing both, is undermined by a variety of twentieth-century self-reflexive works whose preoccupations are more philosophical than biographical and whose subjects are represented in fragmented discursive forms that seek by their fragmentation to mirror what modern criticism has come to call (perhaps too simply) "the divided self." (37)

As we will hopefully see further ahead, the autobiographies of Blunden, Graves and Sassoon were written in a rather *institutional* (conventional, canonical, or traditional, in other words) way of presentation—thus rendering one part of Jay's argument non applicable to them. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, they mirror faithfully what he calls a "philosophical preoccupation" and, more often than not, the notion of the "divided self." The remoteness of the various manifestations of the self (and their sometimes inflexible relation to one another) is a distinctive feature of the referred poet-soldiers' self-portraits. Has the philosopher in Blunden, Graves and Sassoon overcome the poet? Has the strive for unity of the self vanished after the war? Or was it replaced by a sense of *production*?

That should be the case, if we accept Elbaz's argument that the production of sense is, at the same time, both an extension of subjectivity and the structuring of the same subjectivity. In his words, the "structuration [of the self] means a process of production" and, accordingly, "if the self is created in and through language, it can never be a finished product" (153).

Describing oneself is a case of "ceaseless movement," and that renders our pursuit of meaning akin to our ways of self- description. This means, probably, that in the case of Blunden, Graves and Sassoon, the writing of a post-war autobiography wasn't really a *departure* from poetry or the result of a restless concern about poetry's inabilities to produce a satisfactory rendering of empirical facts. It was merely a case of keeping the self more or less structured by continuously *producing sense* and *meaningful narratives*. In this context, it may even be accessory to determine why they chose autobiography instead of any other means of presentation: to some extent, they could have done it by composing pamphlets, writing drama or pinning biography into verse (we can only limit ourselves to wondering whether the effects would be the same). In either case, the emphasis seems to be on a *certain* degree of continuity as part of an ongoing process of production that is bound to reorganize the constitutive incompleteness and variability of the self. In a rather prosaic way, we can try to explain the autobiographical surge of Blunden, Graves and Sassoon as a simple case of people getting tired of something (in this case, of poetry) and wanting to try something else. Still, the deep-rooted reason for this pronounced shift may be found elsewhere. According to Paul Jay,

> It is this paradox—that the autobiographical work has come to be based on conscious forgetting rather than on careful remembering and on fictional re-presentation rather than on historical presentation—that separates these modern narratives from their poetic predecessor. (36)

It is rather self-evident that the autobiographical efforts of Blunden, Graves and Sassoon have a distinct historical tone to it—they have an empirical setting potentially confirmable by historical, military and journalistic evidence (so we can drop Jay's binary opposition between fiction and history). Nevertheless, we can find Jay's way of pitching "modern narratives" against "poetic" ones appealing, and plausible, even if bearing in mind the aforementioned proviso that, for all intents and purposes, those three autobiographies were written in a fairly *un-modern* way. One other part of Jay's argument, however, is going to occupy us for the remainder of the essay. Thus, we will address a simple question: are Blunden, Graves and Sassoon trying to "consciously forgetting" or "carefully remembering" their experiences as soldiers in World War I? (could it be that they are doing

both things? none? or, by all means, a hybrid construction of meaning based on a *selection* of memories?).

The reliance on memory is, as one may well guess, multifarious and uneven, if we compare *Undertones of War*, *Goodbye to All That* and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. Remembering a particular episode as long as the writing goes, Sassoon comments on having just then remembered a particular communication trench that allowed him to elude a dangerous moment. This, he says, "shows how difficult it is to recover the details of war experience" (Sassoon 95). The concern with the "details" is surely one key narrative preoccupation, but there are certainly others. While translating the tremendous experience of life under siege in fortified trenches subject to regular bombardments into words, the writer of the war autobiography seems to sense other possible outbreaks of incomprehension. What if *they* don't understand? What if *they* find my private story *too* private? What, in the end, will people make of my *one-sidedness*? Am I merely *repeating* history compendiums? Or, as Blunden stated in the opening lines of his "Preliminary" introduction to *Undertones of War*,

> Why should I not write it? I know that the experience to be sketched in it is very local, limited, incoherent; that it is almost useless, in the sense that no one will read it who is not already aware of the intimations and discoveries in it (…) No one? Some, I am sure; but not many. *Neither will they understand*—that will not be all my fault. I know that memory has her little ways, and by now she has concealed precisely that look, that word, that coincidence of nature without and nature within which I long to remember. (v)

The peculiar relationship between *memory* and *presentation* is, apparently, a matter of concern for autobiographers: being *understood* by the readers seems to be not only a narrative desire. It may also lead to the establishment of a sometimes ambiguous link with the *media* of presentation. In a rather crude way, we may acknowledge that, when deciding to write an autobiography, the author is frequently haunted by a number of "common sense" prejudices as to the appropriateness of genre to the *telling* of the narrative of the self. To a large extent, the ways of producing meaning, when applied to memory, stand primarily at an impasse: there is a distinct feeling of epistemological gap between relating one's life story and producing the

adequate narrative form of telling it. We have seen, previously, that poetry isn't *sufficient* for modern autobiography (as it is not for Blunden, Graves and Sassoon). What, then, will suffice? Graves, for instance, provides an answer to this perplexity with a straightforward "common sense" solution, when he states that "In 1916, when on leave in England after being wounded, I began an account of my first few months in France. Having stupidly written it as a novel, I have now to re-translate it into history" (92). *Translation* is, then, one of the key-exercises of autobiography: feelings into meaning, thoughts into narrative, fiction into history.

We may, of course, read some of Graves's pronouncements as deliberate exercises in irony, and thus suspect that he his intentionally misdirecting some of his soundest arguments (his style is, recognizably, based on gayness and mockery at important junctures). Still, of the three, he is the one who most deeply tackles the question of memory. Whereas in Blunden and Sassoon the threefold relationship between memory, the self and narrative seems little more than unproblematic, Graves addresses the subject in a slightly more profound way. In the first two lines of *Goodbye to All That* he writes that "As a proof of my readiness to accept autobiographical conventions, let me at once record my two earliest memories"—as "common sense" has it, autobiography starts at a definite point in time, and that moment is, typically, the inaugural mnemonic recollection. Still, some times the mind plays tricks on you, and thus, at certain points, it may be deceiving: "My memory of that day is hazy" (164), he declares at the onset of a battle. This apparent contradiction (being able to clearly recall childhood memories while admitting the opacity of later ones) is a constitutive part of the "divided self"—a sort of non-sequential nature of the being that sheds into both life and the continuous process of meaningful production. The "structuration of the self" (in Elbaz's terms) is always an incomplete project. That is probably why Graves's "poetry writing has always been a painful process of continual corrections, corrections on top of corrections, and permanent dissatisfaction" (326). We may suspect then, I imagine, that the "that" in *Goodbye to All That* has a definite location: it is rooted in life *as it is*, and not in poetry *as it should be*.

It would be almost impossible that autobiographies of poet-soldiers involved in WW I would not include reflections about the war. To a large

extent, the need to justify a re-appreciation of memory and the recuperation of war recollections is, in the three mentioned autobiographies, peacefully and self-evidently resolved (like the fish that bites his own tail: I am telling you a story about certain souvenirs I have kept in my mind, so I don't really need to reason philosophically about the virtues and dangers of memory to justify my decision of writing it). Reflections about the war, on the contrary, do play an important role in Blunden's, Graves's and Sassoon's accounts, and it is relatively easy to impose on this ascertainment our "common sense" intuition that reasoning may sometimes be used to *correct* the past. It is, moreover, one of the features in which the balance between those three autobiographies is evidently more even—and alike in many aspects.

Sassoon, arguably the most militant of the three in civil life (both during and after the war; his 1917 anti-war pamphlet "Finished with the war: A soldier's declaration," mentioned at length in *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* and reprinted to its full extent in Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, became famous), declares in the first lines that "*I had more or less madeup my mind to die*, because *in the circumstances there didn't seem anything else to be done*" (9). As it is common feature in these three authors, the patriotic appeal that soon dissolves into an almost inhuman and opaque relation to death also dissolves into sour bitterness and disillusionment. Wanting to stop strangers in the streets to ask them what they thought about the aims of the war when back home on leave (a clarification much-needed after months of trench attrition), Sassoon finds out that "what we were fighting for was the Mesopotamian Oil Wells" (279). The disappointment of someone who, at the outset, declared proudly that his aim was to get a military cross in order to feel "safe and confident" is ever-mounting, especially after verifying that the substitute soldiers sent from Britain were increasingly younger and less prepared: meat to toss at the lions, apparently with no regrets, by the government and the High Command. "The raw material to be trained," Sassoon writes, "was growing steadily worse (…) The war had become undisguisedly mechanical and inhuman" (147). He is unable to be sardonic: always the social activist, the politician, the bard, he progressively turns from the ignorant patriotic soldier who placidly awaits death (because there is not much else to do) to a battle-battered officer that, despite his deep-rooted sense of duty, aspires

to challenge the—higher order commanded—absurdity of a war that was being, in earnest, fought in offices and cabinets rather than in the trenches.

A similar progression is very transparent in Graves. The absurdity of the war, translated into two particular episodes in which the opposing trench-stuck battalions exchange friendly salutes and even invitations for dinner (a similar episode is revealed by Blunden in *Undertones of War*), revealed itself not merely through anger, fear and desperation but, first and foremost in Graves's narrative, on a profound and damaging weariness. "Having now been in the trenches for five months," he writes, "I had passed my prime" (178). The constant sight of mass destruction and the huge loss of human lives also took its toll. Such unimportant things as feelings and emotions were either forgotten or ceaselessly pummeled. "Patriotism, in the trenches," so goes Grave's recollection, "was too remote a sentiment, and at once rejected as fit only for civilians, or prisoners" (197), and this probably means that no other feeling except for the basic survival instinct was admissible in muddy (and bloody) France. Blunden's depiction of this state of affairs is appalling: "The sun could surely never shine on such a simulacrum of divine aberration" (171). Within the lawless "No man's Land" of lunar landscapes and utter destruction, feelings, emotions and thoughts are replaced by wait and action. Even sensible and thoughtful men are engulfed by this logic of illogicalness—such as Sassoon himself, as described by Graves:

> The Battalion's next objective "The Quadrangle", a small copse this side of Mametz Wood, where Sigfried distinguished himself by taking, single-handed, a battalion frontage which the Royal Irish Regiment had failed to take the day before. He went over with bombs in daylight, under covering fire from a couple of rifles, and scared away the occupants. A pointless feat, since instead of signaling for reinforcements, he sat down in the German trench and began reading a book of poems which he had brought with him. When he finally went back he did not even report. (219)

Seemingly the more gentleman-like, phlegmatic and poetic of the three, Blunden nevertheless signals his own convictions about the war. Even if his narrative is more concerned, *poetically speaking*, with the raw depiction of the appalling squalor and sordidness of the warfare, he punctually allows

himself to express opinionated statements, though often camouflaged inside episodes or dialogues. "We suffered much," he declares, "from death and wounds, but still there existed a warm fraternity" (84). This is, of course, an echo of the ancient-world soldiers, or for that matter of ancient poet-soldiers, Homeric in their purpose and poetic in their actions and deeds. The problem is that, quite self-consciously with Blunden, war had abruptly shifted from a purpose-led clash of honorable men to the mass sacrifice of thousands of young men used and abused by higher powers in order to keep and maintain a few inches of useless terrain. Slaughter and massacre were just round the corner, if sometimes just to provide illusion and deceit—ironically, to both sides. After a flat failure in a certain operation, Blunden diagnoses the problem. British soldiers were being used, quite literally, as cannon fodder: "Explanations followed. Our affair had been a catspaw, a "holding attack" to keep German guns and troops away from the great gamble of the Somme. This purpose, previously concealed from us with success, was unachieved" (59). The general sentiment was one of outrage and deceit, surprisingly common to both sides of the war—after a few months at the trenches, it seemed clear to everyone that trench attrition warfare was not pitching countries against countries but soldiers against the political power that was apparently dictating the perennial drifting of the atrocities:

> First I began to air my convictions that the war was useless and inhuman, even inflicting these on a highly conservative general (…) who dined with us one evening, and who asked me, "why I wasn't fighting for the Germans?" to which I answered with all too triumphant a simplicity that it was only due to my having been born in England, not Germany. Perhaps I was growing reckless after a year of war. (Blunden 204-5)

Airing convictions of this sort was a dangerous matter in the trenches, but it could be even more frustrating back home, whether on leave or on a convalescence period after a wound or a moment of nervous breakdown (we referred previously to Sassoon's strive for harassing people on the streets to ask them how they felt about the whole war affair). Going back to civil life after witnessing such carnage could, and often would, provide a sense of inadequacy quite damaging for people desperately trying to fit their new

selves into their old lives. Coming back after healing from a near—fatal wound (he was even pronounced dead and his mother received the formal military condolences letter on July 22, 1916), Graves bitterly comments on the awkward sense of remoteness and estrangement felt by returning soldiers—paradoxically, many of them tended to feel more *adapted* to trench warfare, atrocities and the scent of death than they could to the peaceful coziness of an alien place formerly referred to as "home." Thus,

> England looked strange to us returned soldiers. We could not understand the war-madness that ran everywhere, looking for a pseudo- military outlet. The civilians talked a foreign language; and it was newspaper language. I found serious conversation with my parents all but impossible. (Graves 237)

"Newspaper language" was both a heresy to returning soldiers and a catalyst for die-hard patriots eager to side with the official martial rhetoric. Graves comments extensively on the one-sidedness of the media reports on war atrocities—the bias was, in his opinion, damaging and misleading, leading to an increasingly larger gap between civilians and soldiers. Just a couple of weeks prior to tossing his Military Cross onto the mouth of the Mersey, Sassoon testified the same kind of feeling: prostrated (and angered) by a pacifist demonstration, he went on to comment that:

> Any man who had been on active service had an unfair advantage over those who hadn't. And the man who had really endured the War at its worst was everlastingly differentiated from everyone else except his fellow soldiers. (290)

The experience of "the War at its worst" seems, therefore, to draw a very distinct line between first and second-hand witnesses of the "divine aberration." The "insane realities" of battle caused for an army of dead and mutilated. For survivors, the physical pain or limb loss could be as hard to endure as the psychological despair or the mental disorder ("shell-shock" and other related diseases were very difficult to heal; scars would last a lifetime)—thus Blunden's cautioning that "there are many degrees of mutilation" (254). The horrific sight of dead bodies was equally disturbing whether the subject was a "Scottish soldier," who was "kneeling, facing east" (137) or a group of "half-naked bloody bodies of poor fellows, victims

of the minenwerfer, who had been carried there to await burial" (112). Blunden, who was "only a boy" when he enlisted (he recalls the moment of leaving for France in a deliberately innocent fashion, describing how an anonymous man"s hardly concealed pity for him was verbalized by this cry: "Only a boy, only a boy"), provides his readers a mature, thoughtful, uncut version of the war. In a specific situation, he was sent to "Port Arthur" (a nickname for a determinate position, a trench-spot near Neuve Chapelle), where he retrieved from the mass of debris "a pair of boots, still containing someone's feet" (69). "There is an obstinate remoteness about a skull" (14), he concludes upon the sight of corpses along the muddy trenches: it is hardly difficult to understand, even now, how first-hand witnesses of this unprecedented waste of human life became, in fact, radically "differentiated" from everyone else: the civilians, the politicians and, perhaps, all the people that represented or stood for a previous life, a previous home or a previous self. To a large extent, war poets' autobiographies are, precisely, the recognition of this painful and unremitted rupture.

The estrangement from vulgar, ordinary, common life or, for that matter, from a past in which one is no longer able to recognize himself is far more than an abstract academic consideration of the effects of war. WW I was, in this respect, the conflict that broke every previous rule and forcibly bestowed on Western civilization an unimaginable contempt for human life. However general, widespread and uncontested, however, that attitude of contempt faced some brave and unexpected exceptions: according to Graves's report,

> I only once refrained from shooting a German I saw, and that was at Cuinchy (…) While sniping from a knoll in the support line, where we had a concealed loophole, I saw a German, perhaps seven hundred yards away, through my telescopic sights. He was taking a bath in the German third line. I disliked the idea of shooting a naked man, so I handed the rifle to the sergeant with me (…). (136)

It was only once and, if we can brush off some of the amusing tone of the episode, it is clear that both death and the *possibility* of death were incredibly close. In this respect (due, primarily, to the technological advancements in artillery warfare, gas attacks and general mass-murder techniques), being

stationed in the rear-guard, patrolling, engaging in battle or suffering a heavy shell-fire bombardment weren't that different. Still, particular battles were always regarded as crucial, intense, thunderous moments of outer-world *suspension*. Routine was shattered, strive for glory was swiftly replaced by the instinct for survival and the time-space axis was thrown astray for hours. Or, as Graves exemplifies,

> The shells went hissing eastward; we saw the red flash and heard the hollow bang where they landed in German territory. The men picked up their step again and began chaffing. A lance-corporal dictated a letter home: "Dear auntie, this leaves me in the pink. We are at present wading in blood up to our necks. Send me fags and a life-belt. This war is a booger. Love and kisses." (96)

It is difficult for us moderns to imagine how difficult it was to retain a minimum of mental sanity under these conditions. Infra-human life among piles of dead people, the loss and sorrow of friends and comrades, disease and insalubrities, the continuous subjection to danger, sniper-bullets, shells, heavy bombs or airplane bombardments, night patrols, terrible weather conditions: the unimaginable happened continuously on French soil from 1914 to 1918. We may, at distance, hypothesize that Blunden, Graves and Sassoon, having first-handedly experienced such a monstrous amount of atrocities, have chosen to pen down their autobiographies ten or more years after the armistice precisely because, to some extent, they had trouble regaining their full mental sanity. Perhaps they needed the time to adjust, and to calmly reason about the horrors of those days. In France, seemingly, it was impossible. Commenting on a dear friend's death, Graves reveals Sassoon's (and his own) state of mind at the time:

> I felt David's death worse than any other since I had been in France, but it did not anger me as it did Sigfried. He was acting transport- officer and every evening now, when he came up with the rations, went out on patrol looking for Germans to kill. I just felt empty and lost. (205)

Seemingly the most reckless of the three in the battlefield, Sassoon is equally sincere and trigger-happy in recollecting and pouring on to his writing the feelings experienced in the French trenches. As both Graves

and Blunden, he describes the war not as a one-sided affair (the patriotic media-spurred rhetoric of "good guys" versus "bad guys"), but in a broad, magnanimous, almost charitable way instead. Still, there were noticeable differences even between the corpses of both armies:

> wherever we looked the mangled effigies of the dead were our *memento mori*. Shell-twisted and dismembered, the Germans maintained the violent attitudes in which they had died. The British had mostly been killed by bullets or bombs, so they looked more resigned. But I can remember a pair of hands (nationality unknown) which protruded from the soaked ashen soil like the roots of a tree turned upside down; one hand seemed to be pointing at the sky with an accusing gesture. (222)

"Armageddon," he writes, "was too immense for my solitary understanding" (115). Describing being out on an observation mission after a bloody clash, he declares that he "scrutinized these battle effects with partially complacent curiosity," and concludes: "I wanted to be able to say that I had seen 'the horrors of war'; and here they were, nearly three days old" (80). Desolation and the constant presence of death were not graspable by newspapers, well-intentioned reporters, bureaucrats or politicians. Life in dugouts, constant bombings and the occasional confrontations had a peculiar effect on the soldiers who endured it. But unlike most of his comrades, who (perhaps unnoticeably) chose to momentarily *suspend* their emotions and feelings in sight of the horrors, Sassoon seemed to experience, quite on the contrary, a burst of inner transformations that somehow *demanded* to be expressed. Was this because of his *poetic nature* or for some other reason? "For trench life," he writes, "was an existence saturated by the external senses; and although our actions were domineered over by military discipline, our animal instincts were always uppermost" (46). It is the animal within the soldier that seems to command his actions but, perhaps not surprisingly, it is the poet in him that reasons and describes the horrific events in a mild, poetic, almost childish manner: "I am staring at a sunlit picture of Hell, and still the breeze shakes the yellow weeds, and the poppies glow under Crawley Ridge where some shells fell a few minutes ago" (76). Aware that "Death would be lying ahead for the troops next week" (57), he wraps the common

feeling experienced by thousands and thousands of young men in the worst and most desperate war scenario ever seen by the human eye. As he surely understood, "next week" could be very easily replaced by "next hour."

Undertones of War, *Goodbye to All That* and *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* are, in many respects, much more than mere autobiographies (in the "common sense" *sense* subscribed by many, from common readers to literary theorists). In a sometimes poetic sense, they depict not only the actual horrors and atrocities of WW I but also, and perhaps more importantly, the thoughts and deep feelings of three very special poet-soldiers intent on *structuring* their selves by producing meaningful testimonies as to their experience in the great war. Some passages of those autobiographies are, surely (and yet surprisingly) poetic: still, they are to some extent fairly conventional in both tone and form. The best way of dealing with them might consist, in the end, in dropping off our theoretical mask and tackling it at face-value: Blunden, Graves and Sassoon wrote prose narratives of their former selves because they decided to look for a *medium* other than poetry to do it; they did it because they felt an urge to grasp and (re)structure their *selves*, shaken and utterly altered by the war; and they waited for more than ten years to do it simply because, at the time, they must have felt some sort of time- advantage (things could, and would, be *corrected* from a distance). At some point in his autobiography, Sassoon-Sherston declares peremptorily: "I cannot turn my field-glasses on to the past" (74). Reading the three of them, however, we get precisely the opposite feeling. They did it, and in a very special, poetic way.

Works Cited

Blunden, Edmund. *Undertones of War*. 1928. London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1929.

Elbaz, Robert. *The Changing Nature of the Self: A Critical Study of the Autobiographic Discourse*. London and Sydney: Croom Helm, 1988.

Graves, Robert. *Goodbye to All That*. 1929. London: Penguin Books, 1960.

Jay, Paul. *Being in the Text: Self-Representation from Wordsworth to Barthes*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1984.

Sassoon, Sigfried. *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*. London: Faber and Faber, 1930.

Abstract

In a three-year time-span (1928-1930), three poet-soldiers that had endured WW I —Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves and Siegfried Sassoon—published their memoirs of the war experience. This paper aims at discussing: (i) if and how *Undertones of War* (Blunden, 1928), *Goodbye to All That* (Graves, 1929) and *Memoirs of an Infantry Soldier* (Sassoon, 1930) can be described as tokens of "autobiography" as a literary genre; (ii) why did three renowned poets have chosen to present their recollections of the war in form of memoir (not verse) more than a decade after the end of the conflict; (iii) how the choice of a media of presentation has an impact on writer's self-awareness and identity. It will be proposed that they wrote prose narratives of their former selves because they decided to look for a *medium* other than poetry to do it; that they did it because they felt an urge to grasp and (re)structure their *selves*, shaken and utterly altered by the war; and, moreover, that these autobiographies are, paradoxically, more poetic than biographic in many ways.

Keywords

Autobiography; poetry; identity; self-awareness; war

Resumo

Num espaço de três anos, de 1928 a 1930, três poetas-soldados que tinham resistido à Primeira Grande Guerra, Edmund Blunden, Robert Graves e Sigfried Sassoon—publicaram as suas memórias da experiência da guerra. Este artigo aspira a discutir: (i) se, e como, *Undertones of War* (Blunden, 1928), *Goodbye to All That* (Graves, 1929) e *Memoirs of an Infantry Soldier* (Sassoon, 1930) podem ser descritos como exemplos de autobiografia; (ii) por que motivo três poetas consagrados escolheram apresentar as suas lembranças da guerra em forma de autobiografia (e não em verso) mais de uma década depois do fim do conflito; (iii) como a escolha de um meio de apresentação influi decisivamente na auto-consciência e na identidade de um autor. Será proposto que eles escolheram

a prosa autobiográfica porque se decidiram por um *meio* diferente da poesia; que o fizeram pela necessidade de reconstruírem o seu "eu," abalado e radicalmente modificado pela experiência da guerra; e, por fim, que estas três autobiografias são, paradoxalmente e em muitos sentidos, mais poéticas do que biográficas.

Palavras-chave

Autobiografia; poesia; identidade, auto-consciência; guerra

Shoving God into the Backseat: The Erosion of the Divine as Loss of Ethnic Identity in Portuguese American Literature

Reinaldo Francisco Silva
University of Aveiro

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Shoving God into the Backseat: The Erosion of the Divine as Loss of Ethnic Identity in Portuguese American Literature

This essay aims at revisiting representations of the divine in a few Anglo-American and Portuguese American literary texts so as to ascertain the ways in which Catholicism, which traditionally has been regarded as a marker of ethnic identity in the United States of America, gradually eroded. From writings depicting nineteenth- and twentieth- century devout and God-fearing Portuguese pioneer immigrants to writings from the twenty-first century focusing on nonchalant or carefree attitudes toward the divine, this essay aims at foregrounding the divinity to argue that these representations illustrate or substantiate contemporary reassessments of identity, lingering racism, or what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva defines as current "colorblind" discourse. As a case study, it also assists us in re-evaluating Portuguese American identity within this multicultural society. The purpose of this essay is, therefore, to delve into this growing field of United States writings so as to trace the social changes, the full assimilation of Portuguese Americans and how contemporary Portuguese American writers have dealt with these issues in their fiction.

With such major cultural movements as the Civil Rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s, the gradual erosion of ancestral values and identity, dwindling church attendance and religious skepticism, third- or fourth-generation Portuguese Americans today are no longer easily recognized or even ostracized for their religious practices as in the past when their parents or (great) grandparents were often the target of the Ku Klux Klan, a practice which is well documented in several texts. Bonilla-Silva's "colorblind" discourse is, therefore, a useful rhetorical framework for my own purposes in this essay. His overall argument regarding the contemporary ethnic composition of the United States, that is, his position on how Latin Americanization is currently changing the demography of the United States and that the possibility of Latin Americans becoming a

majority by the year 2050 is quite compelling. He posits a three-tiered society, where some Latin Americans will have to fight their way for acceptance as honorary whites. This is an ongoing cycle which harks back to the past. The Portuguese, of course, never wanted to be identified as a minority precisely because they did not want to be confused with Latin Americans, since, in fact, they are not. Latin Americans would be the Brazilians, but not even the Brazilians like to be identified as Latin Americans because they are not Spanish speakers. As I have shown elsewhere, the Portuguese, too, had to struggle for their whiteness much earlier, namely since the days of the whaling industry of the late-eighteenth century, throughout the entire nineteenth century, and well up to or even during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. The racial slur of "you f———-g pork chop" (attributed to the Portuguese immigrants) was an epithet I often heard in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey. Earlier epithets such as the "black Portygee" or the "Portygee" could be found at random in specific literary texts. Although Bonilla-Silva's Latin American model is useful for my overall argument, the Portuguese and even the Brazilians never wanted to identify with Latin Americans. As a matter of fact, speakers of Portuguese resent being told by some foreigners—or Americans, for that matter—that Portugal is somewhere located in Spain or in Latin America and that Portuguese and Spanish are practically one and the same language. In Bonilla-Silva's Map of Triracial Order in the USA, it seems that the Portuguese now have been fully admitted into the White club, but they had to overcome a series of obstacles along the way which will be later on analyzed in much greater detail.

This "colorblind" discourse can still apply to the Portuguese in the sense that racism has not been totally eradicated when alluding to this ethnic group in the United States. The view of most Portuguese as ill-educated, especially most men who are stereotyped as construction workers or women as factory workers or housekeepers in Yuppie American homes is still evident, a practice Bonilla-Silva argues as still being very common in the United States today. Representations of the divine in older canonical Anglo-American writings and more recent texts written by a few Portuguese American writers are clearly a case in point. We witness in these writings a gradual erasure of religious and racial stigmas associated with the Portuguese

for being Catholic, their respectful, God-fearing attitudes manifested by the Old Timers to the point that the divine is now a motif for playfulness and/or subsequent loss of identity. Like other groups, especially the Anglos, their former Puritan fervor is shown as dying out. Moreover, this religious framework is also a quintessentially United States achievement because, through time, Anglo cultural and religious depersonalization would often be emulated by minorities.

A closer inspection and comparison of this religious and cultural erosion in either canonical Anglo-American literature or Portuguese American literature, my contention is that even if we take into account both patterns of immigration and the respective time frames—the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the Anglos and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for the Portuguese—the siblings, grandchildren or great grandchildren of pioneer Portuguese immigrants have also settled for a more relaxed, care-free behavior toward the divine in some of the writings where they feature instead of expressing the religious fervor of their parents. From God-fearing, devout, Catholic Gloucester fishermen worshiping Our Lady of Good Voyage (in Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* or T. S. Eliot's "The Dry Salvages") or such Portuguese American writers as Frank Gaspar when depicting Great Aunt Theophila in *Leaving Pico* or other devout men and women in such poems as "Acts" and "Tia Joanna" (or in some poems by Thomas Braga), through time, this religious fervor gradually eroded. After reading some contemporary Portuguese American fiction, the impression readers are often left with is that of depersonalization, that they, too, have blended and, in the process, discarded their ethnic labels. This is evident in Katherine Vaz's story "All Riptides Roar with Sand from Opposing Shores" where Lara Pereira writes funny letters to Sister Lúcia in *Our Lady of the Artichokes* (2008) and in Frank Gaspar's novel, *Stealing Fatima* (2009).

From a legitimate marker of ethnic identity, divinity and the concomitant religious Catholic fervor in older writings, Catholicism has evolved from being a potential threat to this country to eventually mellow out and ideally encroach itself in this "raceless" discourse and become a potential solution to race, class, and ethnic problems in the U.S.A.

The Puritan Model in the Massachusetts Bay Colony

Bonilla-Silva maintains that contemporary raceless or "colorblind" discourse pictures America as a place where racism is inexistent or dying out, that is, a society where cultural homogeneity prevails and this can only be accomplished when its citizens share the same values, language, views, and identity. It was once believed that what culturally singles someone out in the United States, that is, one's ethnicity, should be dropped with the passage of time. In the case of the Portuguese, who were formerly seen as devout Christians and labeled as Dagos or the "black Portygee" in such American writings as *The House by the Windmill* (1923), by Agnes Edwards Rothery, or LeGrand Cannon, Jr.'s *Look to the Mountain* (1942)—an issue I have touched upon in my book, *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*—full assimilation and depersonalization occurred when they discarded some of these ethnic trappings and eventually melded into America's cauldron. This also meant losing their religious fervor and emulating earlier patterns of religious erosion, with the Puritan being a case in point. Through time, Anglo cultural and religious depersonalization would often be emulated by minorities. Specifically, this erosion of identity can be traced as far back to the original Founding Fathers whose Calvinist beliefs are now a mere recollection. The original Puritan settlers of 1620 and those who followed them to the American wilderness were God-fearing people intent on founding the "city upon the hill" as postulated by John Winthrop.

Possibly the two best examples of devout, God-fearing Puritans in the United States were William Bradford (1590-1657) and John Winthrop (1588-1649). In *A Model of Christian Charity*, Winthrop reminds his community that they would stand as an example to the world either of the triumph or else the failure of this Christian enterprise. The eyes of the world were upon them and they "must be like a city upon the hill." Their Puritan model prevailed for a few decades. But with the second- and third-generations, hard-line Calvinism (the Old New England Way) was slowly eroding and being replaced by a Half-way covenant and less and less Christians publicly professing their signs of election. With the renewal of generations and the pressures enacted by the Age of Reason and Logic, the Founding Fathers' children and/or grandchildren would be named

backsliders by Jonathan Edwards during the Great Awakening of the 1730s, and frightened by his famous sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" (1741). As Perry Miller has shown in *Errand into the Wilderness*, theocracy was slowly replaced by a more secular government. In *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*, Sacvan Bercovitch notes that the decline in "church-membership after the mid-1650s followed at least partly from the *seriousness* with which the children responded to the demands of the fathers." This religious erosion, that is, their "sense of inadequacy, their hesitations about professing sainthood, suggest intensity of belief, not indifference" (97). They resisted the pressures their parents or grandparents had willingly submitted themselves to. Currently, what we now seem to have is a watered-down version of conservative Puritanism manifested by the Moral Majority and its Puritan intolerance towards Otherness but without the religious zeal. As far as American literature is concerned, Alfred Kazin has shown in *God and the American Writer* that whereas the "nineteenth century was seen by many writers as the last great battleground over faith" (12), in most twentieth-century novels and plays the Puritan God had, by then, already eclipsed.

The Puritan Model and its Application to the Devout, Catholic Portuguese "Old Timers' in the Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries in the USA

When attempting to diagnose similar Catholic religious fervor manifested by pioneer immigrants from Portugal in this Portuguese American literary field, my contention is that these markers of identity have also eroded and were replaced by an attitude of indifference or even playfulness. Compared to the earlier generations of Portuguese immigrants, the approach and the attitudes towards the divinity of third and fourth generation Americans of Portuguese descent have clearly changed. The gradual eclipse and carefree treatment of the divine are a given in contemporary Portuguese American texts.

Possibly the two oldest texts with Anglo-American literary references to the Portuguese and their Catholic fervor are Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* (1897) and T. S. Eliot's *The Four Quartets*, collected in 1943, especially Part IV, "The Dry Salvages." Even if Kipling is a British writer,

this novel focuses on Gloucester fishermen. Both texts refer to the Our Lady of Good Voyage Church on Portagee Hill above the harbor of Gloucester, Massachusetts. Eliot's allusion to the "Lady, whose shrine stands on the promontory" has led me to write "An Overlooked Legacy." This section of Eliot's poem is soaked with themes which are quintessentially Portuguese—*fado* (fate) and *saudade* (yearning for a loved one). This church is located on Prospect Street, one of the highest points on Cape Ann. The Portuguese sought the protection and solace of Our Lady of Good Voyage and their fervor was evident during the annual blessing of the fishing fleet of Gloucester. Eliot was very familiar with these rituals and with the region itself since he, as a child and young man, had spent his summer vacation in Gloucester. Helen Gardner is certainly right when she states that "*The Dry Salvages* is soaked in memories of childhood and youth" (46).

There have been two churches of Our Lady of Good Voyage on Portagee Hill, on the same site. The first church is alluded to in Kipling's *Captains Courageous*. Manuel, a sailor from the island of Madeira who is working on the *We're Here* schooner, off of Gloucester, says the following to Harvey:

> "If I was you, when I come to Gloucester I would give two, three big candles for my good luck."
> "Give who?"
> "To be sure—the Virgin of our Church on the Hill. She is very good to fishermen all the time. That is why so few of us Portugee men ever are drowned." (48)

The original church was dedicated on July 9, 1893 and it burned down on the morning of February 10, 1914.

The original fishermen Eliot and Kipling refer to in "The Dry Salvages" and *Captains Courageous* had been affected by economic hardships in the old country, prior to immigrating to New England during the nineteenth century as harpooners to work on the whaling ships which Herman Melville has so eloquently described in *Moby-Dick* (1851). And the women in Eliot's poem, who have also been shaped by such a fate when losing a husband or son at sea, can only find inner peace or solace in Our Lady of Good Voyage. As with the eclipse of Portugal's golden age of Discoveries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the mood of

frustration which ensued, these Portuguese women (or even Manuel) in Gloucester, too, find themselves adrift in a world of uncertainty, chaos, despair, and powerlessness. And their devotion to the Virgin Mary is not only a balm but a way to tap into the very crux of the Portuguese soul.

Contemporary Portuguese American writers such as Thomas Braga (1943-), Frank Gaspar (1946-), and Katherine Vaz (1955-) often write about how the pioneer generation related to the divinity from the unique point of view of some of the Portuguese foods eaten in the Portuguese ethnic enclaves of the United States of America. In these authors' works, writing about food is a means for ethnic identity and cultural preservation. In *Portingales* (1981), Thomas Braga's poems "Codfish Cakes" and "Bacalhau" show how food and religion are intrinsically intertwined. Both poems highlight the fish diet most Portuguese observe during Lent, especially on Fridays. Since the symbolism of Lent centers on moderation, abstinence, and penance, eating meat on Fridays would be perceived as a disrespectful act because it is reminiscent of Christ's shedding of blood on the Cross.

This poem indirectly touches upon quintessential aspects of life in a Portuguese fishing community, which further characterize this culture. Traditionally, the widows put on "black aprons" or "shawls" so as to mourn their shipwrecked husbands. The poem's religious diction in such phrases as "red sacrifice," "confess our sins in white," "pure," "holy oils," and "sanctuary" further attest to these women's Catholic beliefs and how they cling to God since He is the only One capable of bringing their loved ones ashore.

In "Bacalhau" Braga attaches a sense of sacredness to the lives of these fishermen and their catch since they are constantly putting their health and lives at risk and, in the end, are exploited by the owners of the boats. Whether they will or will not encounter what they are looking for lies in the hands of God. While Christ sacrificed His life to redeem sinners, these fishermen often sacrifice their lives to allow for this foodstuff to appear on the tables of most Portuguese or Portuguese Americans.

Frank Gaspar is also a native-born American writer who resists ethnic tags, but his Portuguese American background provided him with relevant materials and the impulse for writing. In his first volume of poems, *The Holyoke* (1988), a mature poetic voice reminisces about how his

childhood was shaped by his Portuguese family and community. His poems touch upon a variety of themes such as ethnic foods, the antagonism between the Portuguese of Provincetown and the Summer vacationers, the artists who flock there, etc. The religious zeal of most Portuguese is another issue he explores at length, especially Catholicism and how it occupies much of the time of Portuguese women from the pioneer immigrant generation. "Tia Joanna" is a good example of a devout woman who spends much of her time in church either praying the rosary, going to confession, or trying to connect with God through mystical experiences. Perhaps the poem's uniqueness lies in the manner in which it captures how Provincetown Portuguese women reconcile their spiritual lives with their role as housekeepers and wives of fishermen. The other poem stressing this people's Catholic fervor is "Ernestina the Shoemaker's wife," which dwells on the mystical experience of a woman who claims to have met St. Francis in the woods when she was a young girl.

In *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death* (1994), Gaspar also writes about a popular foodstuff available in most Portuguese communities in the United States, sweet bread (a yellow, sugared, egg-heavy cake), which can be eaten for dessert, or simply toasted with butter for breakfast or a late afternoon snack. In the poem "Acts," baking sweet bread is a community ritual that traditionally takes place the few days before Easter Sunday. As far as the religious imagery is concerned, it is undoubtedly associated with Christ's Last Supper. The old woman's blessing of the sweet bread before it is baked, its distribution after it is taken out of the oven, and the communal ritual of the men eating together reminds us of holy Eucharist. This poem highlights the Catholic fervor of this people.

Gaspar's *Leaving Pico* (1999) is a novel about Azorean immigrant life in Provincetown during the 1950s and 60s and how this community reacts to—or resists—American ways. In this novel, Great Aunt Theophila, the narrator's great aunt, is clearly the old timer, the one who had "been active in church, a moving force in the Holy Rosary Sodality" (4). She devoted most of her days to prayer and rituals and

> arranged her dresser with painted plaster statuettes of Saint Jude, Saint Anthony, Saint Christopher, The Sacred Heart of Jesus, Our Lady of Fatima, The Infant of Prague, and Saint

> Joseph. She also kept several rosaries, holy water, incense, vigil candles, and a dozen or so book-mark-sized icon cards bearing the pictures of minor saints, one of which was Joachim the Patriarch, a long, thin, dreamy-eyed man in a flowing robe, my own name saint, whom I was said to resemble. (5)

This community's rituals follow the Catholic calendar throughout the year, namely the sodalities, the festivals with their street processions, the Blessing of the Fleet, etc.

Katherine Vaz's earlier fiction often revisits the sensuous Portuguese priest from Eça de Queiroz's *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1875), who becomes Father Teo Eiras in *Saudade* (1994). This clergyman, who had emigrated from the Azores to California with Clara, seduces her years later and gets her pregnant. In *Mariana* (1997), Vaz picks up on a seventeenth-century love story rendered to us in Portuguese literature through a nun, Soror Mariana de Alcoforado, titled *Cartas Portuguesas*. This nun had fallen in love with a French officer, Noel Bouton, who had come to help the Portuguese break free from Spanish rule in or slightly after 1640. For the purpose of this essay, what really interests me is how the representation of the divine is so entrenched in her fiction, especially in how Vaz sprinkles both novels with the sweets and desserts made in Portuguese convents by nuns, a tradition dating all the way back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In *Saudade*, Clara, who has grown up in California and knows very little about her country of birth, Portugal, learns about the legend associated with these sweets:

> Long ago, in the convents of Portugal, the nuns starched their wimples and habits with egg whites. Because wastefulness is a sin, they needed to dream up uses for the leftovers. That is how they came to invent the yolk-heavy desserts that are made to this day. (111)

In *Mariana*, the story revolves around the eponymous nun and how she and other nuns spend their time praying, in meditation, and baking convent sweets. By focusing on these, Vaz tries to connect with her ancestral culture and provide an anchor for ethnic identity. Like Braga and Gaspar, Vaz's fiction, too, substantiates how Catholicism is so ingrained in Portuguese culture. The association between some religious celebrations

and food, however, also applies to other cultures as well. Her fiction also functions as a sort of bridge connecting both Portuguese and American cultures. Through these writers, Catholicism and some of its rituals are, therefore, encroached in the United States of America, a predominantly Protestant culture and country, through such mundane matters as food and convent sweets.

These fictional representations of a devout religious past evinced by earlier Portuguese immigrants, however, may suggest that the Portuguese experienced no constraints when attempting to worship freely. This impression is misleading because in these texts we are within the fictional realm of Portuguese American literature. Specific American literary texts show otherwise. In *Look to the Mountain* (1942), a work set in colonial America, for the character of Joe Felipe, a "Portygee" and the blacksmith at Kettleford, being both dark-skinned and Catholic were certainly double liabilities in colonial New England. Anti-Catholic feelings against the Portuguese continued to recent times, as Mary Heaton Vorse's *Time and the Town: A Provincetown Chronicle* (1942) shows: "In Provincetown a fiery cross was burned in front of the Catholic Church (…) after which the Portuguese Catholics retaliated by organizing strongly in the Knights of Columbus" (160-61).

Living to the fullest one's Catholicism in the United States prior to, say, the middle of the twentieth century, was by no means an easy task. Whether it was the Portuguese or the Irish, Catholics, in general, were the victims of Ku Klux Klan intolerance once this xenophobic, terrorist group felt emancipated blacks were insufficient targets. These feelings were profusely voiced during the Progressive 1920s through the Immigration Acts that were passed during this period (1924) and by the supporters of the eugenics movement. The aim of the latter was to keep at bay the tainted germplasm of Southern Europeans like, for example, the Italians and the Portuguese or even Turks. As Hasian has noted in *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought*, "Many members of the Ku Klux Klan were in favor of the congressional emergency acts that were passed to restrict immigration and the openly racist systems of national quotas that were established in 1924. Like the hard-line eugenicists, many members of the Klan used some of the language of science to mask their nativism and oppose activities like miscegenation" (82). The perception of nativists at the

time was that the darker complexions of most Southern Europeans, namely the Italians (Sicilians) or even the Portuguese (Azoreans) posed a threat to "lily-white" Americans. As I have shown elsewhere, the "black Portygee" was not only a racist, derogatory phrase, it also implied the Portuguese were a not-so-white people as the WASPs. Moreover, when analyzing the high infant mortality rates, especially within the Portuguese community of Fall River, Massachusetts, to support eugenics discourse, Donald R. Taft in *Two Portuguese Communities in New England* (1923) claims that the Portuguese "have some negro blood" (139) and that the "Azorean Portuguese have received considerable infusion of negroid blood at four different periods in their history" (345). In a country such as the United States that popularized the one drop rule (of African blood) as a means to stigmatize any person as being black, there was clearly no way these Portuguese could eschew such a mentality. In this sense, Taft is manipulating science to push his eugenics agenda. Now living in such a race-conscious society, this new reality explains why in America these Portuguese immigrants shied away from Cape Verdeans in New England. Even if Cape Verdeans spoke Portuguese or a mixture of Portuguese and creole or that Cape Verde (and other former Portuguese colonies), at the time, was a Portuguese colony in Africa this was seen as harmful for these old time Portuguese immigrants. These African peoples were also considered Portuguese. Upon arriving in the United States, this became an issue for most Americans, which, in turn, backfired on the European Portuguese. They were being classified in the Census as blacks and this was something they wished to avoid. Unlike other Africans, nonetheless, Cape Verdeans are proud of the fact that they are the only blacks who came to America not as slaves. Of course, this happened because they came as Portuguese or were listed as such in the Census.

When attempting to define "*latinidad* in the flesh," Luz Angélica Kirschner notes how it "can be an important unifying force in our collective struggle against racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia, religious intolerance, and other types of prejudice" (34). The Portuguese in the United States were subjected to most of these realities and possibly even in a more painful and cruder manner than most Latinos today since the Ku Klux Klan has been outlawed and most Latinos have immigrated to the United States after the Civil Rights movement. We cannot, however, overlook earlier ostracism of Mexicans, for example, who interacted with

WASPs much earlier than these more recent Hispanic arrivals. Like the Portuguese in Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), Mexicans were stereotyped as subordinate agricultural workers in California and were seen as occupying the bottom of the racial pyramid. Intensity of pain is not what concerns me here but the crudity of this racism. When Bonilla-Silva states that "the language of color blindness is slippery, apparently contradictory, and often subtle" (*Racism without Racists* 53), in the case of the Portuguese one does not find much sophistication in slurs such as "Those f—-ing pork chops" or stereotyping them as ignorant, uneducated blue-collar workers. What seems quite obvious, nonetheless, is that the process of current Latinization of America, as postulated by Bonilla-Silva, is possibly at a similar stage as experienced by the Portuguese a few decades or a century ago. Compared to most Latinos, the Portuguese (using Bonilla-Silva's map of the triracial system in the U.S.A. as a guideline) would now classify as whites but his colorblind thesis indicates most Hispanics, especially honorary whites, will have to wait and see how Anglo America will deal with them. "Will Latinos replace blacks as the racial boogeyman," asks Bonilla-Silva in *Racism without Racists* "or will they become white, as some analysts have suggested?" Through time, everyone living there may become American. His paraphrasing of George Orwell, who believed that "some will be more American than others," suggests a few nuances of American-ness ("Black, Honorary White, White" 47). If this Latinization of America persists, with Latinos probably becoming a majority by the year 2050, will Catholicism replace Protestantism in the United States given the millions and millions of devout Catholics in Latin America or will it also witness a loss of vigor, with less faithful ones by that time?

This devotion was taken to the United States by the first or pioneer generation of Portuguese immigrants and it was mostly the women who gave life to it in the Portuguese ethnic enclaves of America as a means to provide some meaning to their lives. Through time, this fervor would eventually dwindle or, perhaps, vanish altogether. Or, instead, as contemporary Portuguese American novelists Vaz and Gaspar have shown in *Our Lady of the Artichokes* (2008) and in *Stealing Fatima* (2009), respectively, the rituals outlined earlier have often eroded, changed as these generations slowly passed away. Moreover, church attendance has diminished both in

Portugal and in some Portuguese communities in the USA and, clearly, these writers' approach to the divine and religiosity reflects these changes. Currently, walking into most churches during Mass, one can immediately realize that they only manage to attract salt-and-peppered-hair people.

Nonchalant Attitudes toward the Divine in the Most Recent Fiction of Katherine Vaz and Frank Gaspar

In some of the fiction written by Katherine Vaz, Catholicism in *Saudade* or in the story "Original Sin" in *Fado and Other Stories* has evolved from an exploration of the cultural roots embodied in Portuguese anticlericalism to an exercise in entertainment, where comical situations become paramount in, for example, "All Riptides Roar with Sand from Opposing Shores," where Lara Pereira writes funny letters to Sister Lúcia, as well as the need to invent or stage an apparition of the Virgin Mary in the eponymous story composing Vaz's most recent collection of short stories, *Our Lady of the Artichokes* (2008).

While "All Riptides Roar with Sand from Opposing Shores" draws from the conventions of the epistolary style, Vaz probably had Nathanael West's novel, *Miss Lonelyhearts* (1933) in mind when she wrote this story. Miss Lonelyhearts is an unnamed male newspaper columnist writing an advice column on topics ranging from love to religion and which the newspaper staff considers a joke. In Vaz's story, however, most letters are addressed to sister Lúcia, who never replies to Lara Pereira's letters. This story includes seven letters. Of these, six of them (the first five and the last one) were signed by Lara Pereira, and the sixth one bears the signature of Helen Dodd. These letters revolve around Sister Lúcia, the sole survivor who is credited to have witnessed the apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima at the Cova da Iria, Fátima, Portugal, in 1917. Moreover, these letters also trace the whereabouts and occurrences in the lives of three women—Lara Pereira, Alice Nicolini, and Maria Hathaway—who were good friends and had attended the Transfiguration School in Hayward, California. In the first letter, written on May 1, 1963, Lara Pereira is still a student and her style of writing is simple and juvenile. Basically, the three girls wonder how she spends her time at the cloister and, most importantly, Lara bluntly asks her: "We want to know why you won't release the Third Secret that Mary

gave you at Fátima. Sister Delfina says the Pope has it and he won't tell us. How bad could it be? We are dying of curiosity and maybe you just need to be asked politely" (15).

By March 22, 1964, the date of the second letter, Lara is still waiting for a reply from Sister Lúcia. She now writes Sister Lúcia's full name and title, hoping that she may get some feedback from her since she has finally learned how keen the Portuguese are on using titles and reverence. In the third letter, written on March 4, 1970, Lara, who was spurred by the media changes that were gradually starting to take place in the United States as well as the pop star subculture, writes in a funny way. "I suppose," she says, that "if you're twelve and get to chat with the B.V.M. [Blessed Virgin Mary], the thrills are downhill afterward. I think you dreamt up some supernatural fireworks and the world went bananas and you were in it too deep to back out" (19). This adolescent colloquial language or the slangy phrases she uses in these letters add to the ambiance of entertainment and lightness even if the Third Secret was said to be quite serious.

In the fourth letter addressed to "My dear Sister Lúcia," dated June 19, 1979, Lara Pereira Garcia is now a married woman. Her husband, Ray Garcia, is a chef and they have a baby daughter named Blanca. Her writing is now more sophisticated, evinced by the fact she had obtained a university education and was a writer.

By the time Lara writes her fifth letter to Alice, on July 20, 1985, her prose is even more sophisticated. She reminisces about their Catholic School days, tells her friend she also has another daughter, Gina, who is two years old while Blanca was six. She comments on the clipping and picture of Sister Lúcia in the *Enquirer* Alice had sent her and its funny headline: "Revealed for the 1st Time—the Third Secret of Fátima!" (23). She ends her letter hoping they both stay in touch other than sending the annual Christmas card.

Helen Dodd was the one who wrote the sixth letter in this story. It was dated Spring 2000 and sent from Pontevedra, in Portugal. She introduces herself to Lara Pereira as a journalist who is placing a message in a bottle to her and that she works for the *International Herald Tribune*. She is not a Catholic but was "assigned to write an article… about what the survivor of the Fátima event makes of the Vatican releasing this year the notes she was ordered to set down in 1944 of the so-called secret

message from 1917" (24-25). She also visited Sister Lúcia, who was now ninety-three years old, and among the pile of letters this nun had received over the years, as if she had a club of fans, she encountered the one Lara had written in 1979. She also found what she considers to be her favorite note, namely one that had been sent by a "woman in Brighton, England, who wanted Lúcia to ask God to send her new linoleum for her kitchen" (27). The humor in this letter is simply delightful because Helen Dodd, who is a stranger to Catholicism, Portuguese culture and religious beliefs, once visited Fátima for research purposes and was dumbfound with what she saw there, especially the following occurrences:

> A blind gypsy was selling Band-Aids she had stolen from a truck. People were moaning and walking on their knees. I wanted to hoist them up and say, "Stop that immediately." Hired grannies were throwing wax body parts into the fire in a giant incinerator. I got close and looked. Candles were burning on iron rods set near the flames, and my stomach began to spin. Babies made out of wax, and breasts, legs, hearts, men's heads, burning. What a nightmare. I have no idea what it was all about, but now it's like a screen dropped over my vision. (27)

When she passed out, "people thought [she] had been hit by God, because [she] drew an audience" (27). For a souvenir, she "bought a statue of Our Lady of Fátima, whose cape turns blue when it is sunny and pink when it is going to rain" (27). She presented this "barometer Mary" to Lúcia who laughed. As readers, we cannot help but also laugh with Dodd's attempt at understanding what is going on in this passage. It certainly reminds us of a similar situation in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, namely when Don Quixote wanted to rescue what he thought to be some poor damsel in distress when, in fact, it was just a statue of the Virgin Mary being carried on a litter in some procession he came upon.

In the seventh letter, dated April 20, 2000, Lara, who is now forty-five years old, replies to Helen Dodd. She explains to her what these wax body parts represented and why these pilgrims in Fátima burned them since they believed they could heal the sick person they were intended for. She also tells her that she and Ray are just "friends" now, that he had moved to an apartment up the road, and that her daughters are now grown up,

getting ready for the local Holy Ghost Festival pageant in Hayward and, thus, reviving their Portuguese American ancestry and traditions their ancestors had brought to the United States from the Azores.

Fooling around with miracles and the popular belief in these supernatural occurrences in the Portuguese ethnic enclaves of the United States of America is also a trademark of the story, "Our Lady of the Artichokes." This story introduces us to Aunt or Tia Connie and her niece, Isabel Serpa, and how they were trying to come up with a scheme to fight their landlord and the increase in their rent. Aunt Connie usually watched *Jeopardy* on TV as a means to dream about winning thousands of dollars and to improve her English. She believed that they needed to invent a virgin for themselves and that his might help to resolve their financial problems. If they issued a "scream heavenward—it would ricochet back to earth—and [they]'d beheld an apparition of the Virgin Mary outside this very apartment building—Estudillo Gardens—on East 14th Street in San Leandro" (35-36). Since Aunt Connie "tend[s] so nice those artichokes in the patch in front," she hopes "She'll visit and be Our Lady of the Artichokes, perch on the thorns, and she'll cry and cry, then disappear. People will say, 'Come back to me, water me with your tears'" (36). Tia Connie associates her artichokes with the holm-oak tree (the *azinheira*) on which the Virgin Mary is believed to have appeared to the three shepherds, Lúcia, Jacinta, and Francisco. Her choice of—and allusion to—the artichokes, however, is mundane if not vulgar and just imagining the Virgin Mary's feet being pricked by the artichokes is somewhat hilarious if not blasphemous.

Refusing her niece's assistance through the possibility of her looking for an after school job to help pay the rent, Tia Connie tells her that "What you got now is a homework that you tell everyone Our Lady she talk with you" (36). At this point, they are just ten days away from their landlord evicting them. During the Holy Ghost Festival, Isabel is reported to have started a miracle when she deliberately traipsed the crowned queen, Lúcia Texeira [Teixeira] (sic), a "pretty girl with a bum leg" (39). She stepped on her long cape, lost her "mind and kicked her in the back of the knee of her crippled leg" (39). The miracle immediately sent shock waves all around: "Ten witnesses reported—to the police and to the Bishop—that they'd seen me kick Lúcia, who dropped her cane and flexed her stupid leg in

both hands and screamed. And then—simply walked. The way everyone backed away from me I could have been a drop of acid" (39). The Holy Ghost certainly works its way to the believers in a strange, unusual way and Isabel was soon credited for being imbued with such miraculous powers. Another miracle was said to have occurred when Tia Connie survived from her broken neck. She had earlier cleaned her house thoroughly for she was waiting for the Virgin to appear. It might draw hundreds of people there and she must be ready for this show. She had polished her floor "thinking the people to see Our Lady will want to use the bathroom, drink a glass of water" (41).

Pretty soon, a lot of people started to show up at Tia Connie's house to get kicked by Isabel, hoping for a miracle:

> We listened to boots circling the house, stamping out a moat, and then—television was still our best way of fathoming what was going on right outside—the hawkers came, the vendors of Our Lady of Fátima and Guadalupe, the scapular-and-candle-waving brigade, the dealers in aromatic oils and talismans, the fortunetellers with card tables and the police scrambling to arrest them… (44)

A woman is said to have "rammed her head against the thin membrane of Tia's bedroom window, broke it, got hoisted in, sliced her forehead on the cut glass" (44) and asked Tia to kiss her or for Isabel to kiss or kick her if she will. Others march into Tia's room requesting the same kind of treatment, hoping for some miracle. In the meantime, the landlord, who claimed he was a "deeply moral man," had already asserted he "would postpone a rent hike" (44). This episode looks more like a circus show and since this time around there was no third miracle, Tia Connie and Isabel were called charlatans.

A few days later, Tia Connie hopes to raise some cash at the local bingo. On her way home with her niece, she makes the acquaintance of Rui Alves, a bus driver who was originally from the city of Angra do Heroísmo, on the island of Terceira, Azores, her island of birth. He recognizes her as "that lady the Virgin she talk to." In addition, he claims, this apparition was "big stuff on the news" (47). A week later they get married; he moves into Estudillo Gardens and from now on she doesn't

have to worry about who is going to pay her rent. Eventually, the "fuss" that had "erupted about Mary and the vegetables" (47) subsides. Compared to earlier writings featuring the divine written by the aforementioned writers, this story is very funny. Not only does it highlight the media-frenzy and vulgarity of our contemporaneity, it also places the divine within the framework of a joke or comical story.

When attempting to recreate the Our Lady of Fatima apparitions in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in *Stealing Fatima* (2009), Frank Gaspar depicts Father Manuel Furtado as a depressed man who is heavily dependent on gin and pain-killers while trying to forget painful Vietnam war memories. Lacking strong religious convictions and spiritualism, readers are often left with the impression that Father Manny selected the priesthood only to find some sort of employment in a town where there were not many career options—especially if one did not wish to follow in the perilous footsteps of one's fisherman father or grandfather—and comes across as a mere church manager, trying to bring the dispersed, unmotivated younger flock into the fold. A calculating man trying to revive this community in Provincetown for whom God has been substituted for hedonism and materialism, the Our Lady of Fatima church is depicted as a locale of intrigue but also a place where this priest searches for redemption, where occurrences from the past come back to haunt him through the unexpected appearance of Sarafino Pomba, who is dying of AIDS, and disputes over church tenure are fought with Father Sweet who, in the end, prevails while Furtado seeks rehabilitation.

With the disappearance of the pioneer generation of Portuguese immigrants—composed mostly by Azoreans who arrived in Provincetown after the 1880s—and even the second generation, church attendance dwindled throughout most of the twentieth century. Nowadays, in some Portuguese communities of New England/Middle Atlantic States and California (they are mostly Azorean, but in New England/Middle Atlantic States there are communities with a significant presence of Portuguese from mainland Portugal) church attendance remains high. Such is the case among the Portuguese in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, as well as in the Portuguese communities of California (San Jose and Tulare, for instance). One I am quite familiar with is that of Our Lady of Fatima Church in the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey. But this high

church attendance is not everlasting; it is simply a matter of time before it decreases. With the Portuguese steadily moving out into the New Jersey suburbs, as other ethnic groups before them, such as the Polish and Italians, this church might go through some sort of abandonment as that of the local Polish and Italian churches. Or like the St. James Roman Catholic Church, which was imploded, to enlarge the parking lot of Saint James Hospital due to the disappearance of its original congregation and, therefore, it becoming an economic burden for the local Archdiocese to maintain.

In the fictional world of Frank Gaspar's *Leaving Pico*, readers are exposed to a completely different attitude towards church attendance because the author's purpose was to capture a different livelihood and mentality of the Portuguese in Provincetown during most of the first half of the twentieth century. The annual ritual of the Blessing of the Fleet was the highlight of such church attendance and expression of Catholic fervor. The narrator in this novel tells us that:

> Our Blessing of the Fleet is a ritual that came over from the old country with the crewmen and captains of the old whaling ships and grandbank fishing schooners that had once sailed from our harbor. Now the Blessing was the first feast day of summer in our town, and it signalled the time when the summer people began to arrive from their far-away cities to rent shacks and cottages and spare rooms along the water in those quieter days before all the big motels were built. (7)

This pivotal moment in the Catholic calendar of Provincetown attracted the attention of the bishop of the archdiocese in New Bedford, who was summoned, "each year, on the first Sunday in June (…) [to] travel all the way down to the end of our cape to say a special prayer over the town's fishing fleet" (7). This blessing was preceded by a procession in which the local parishioners participated: "When the bishop arrived he would join the parade from our church, be driven through the narrow streets of our town, down to the end of the big wharf where the ocean-going diesel trawlers would queue up and motor by and each receive its benediction" (7). From this fictional world to the next, that is, the one in *Stealing Fatima*, there is a huge difference in church attendance, religiosity, and fervor in its lingering parishioners, especially after the gentrification of

Provincetown after the 1970s. As we shall see ahead, this is one of the issues Gaspar aims at exploring in this novel.

In the fictional realm of *Stealing Fatima*, the novel begins with Father Manny working very hard to change this reality. Since his arrival, attendance at everything was up and the town seemed to be pulling together again—and this is what he had been sent to do by his superiors. In such an endeavor, he is assisted by Mariah Grey, who organizes several functions to bring back the flock and provide a touch of modernity. She has substituted Mrs. Horta, who is very upset with Father Furtado. Out of spite, Mrs. Horta retaliates by calling Father John Sweet, in the Calumet parish, to tell him that Father Furtado is drinking gin and using drugs and that he is a potential paedophile. Father Furtado's goal was to lift the parish of Our Lady of Fatima—to solvency—and Mariah was helping him in this endeavor. As for an increase in church membership, the novel does not include a single episode where the Church is said to be packed with people. On a particular day, there "were twelve, maybe fifteen people in the church. It was not bad for an early morning, not a Sunday. Nothing like the old days, but that was part of what he was working on. Gathering. Rebuilding. He rose each day to such work" (23). At another time, during a special memorial Mass for Richard Dutra, an old timer, there were only "nine souls" attending (146). Bishop Mayhew and Monsignor Rego did not want any disruptions in Provincetown. They wanted the parish resuscitated, especially now, a time when the Boston diocese was witnessing a few paedophile scandals that were rocking its churches.

In a passage where Father Furtado was engaged in fulfilling his superiors' requests, the way in which he carries out this mission is reminiscent of Jonathan Edwards and his Calvinist role during the Great Awakening of the 1730s—but locally. Although "Fatima would get real fiscal help in return for the renewal in spirit that Furtado was to bring about," Furtado agrees to take this on, "but the parish would become more inclusive. He would reach out to everyone. All the diverse communities in the town" (52). Yearning to revive Catholicism in Provincetown, he wishes to reach out, befriend everyone—even the lesbian couple composed by Mariah Grey and Winslow—and be inclusive towards other lifestyles formerly spurned by the Church, whereas Jonathan Edwards refused any change that would conflict with hard-line Calvinism.

Even then, the money he hoped to obtain for his parish during this endeavor reinforces his view of his duties as being mostly at the level of management. He does not really act as a true priest concerned with faith and spirituality for he questions a few Church dogmas which, should his Bishop find out, make him eligible for immediate dismissal from his job:

> He did not believe that Jesus was divine or the Son of God, nor did he believe that God impregnated a young girl through the Holy Spirit (which reminded him now of Zeus and all of his disguised copulations with humans). So he did not believe that Our Lady appeared to Sarafino Pomba or ever to anyone else. He did not believe in the Resurrection. He did not believe that God would sacrifice a son to be tortured to death in order to redeem a race of beings He Himself created imperfectly. (63)

Presumably, he is only holding on to his salary and a free roof over his head. If he discredits all these Catholic dogmas—any of his superiors would ask—what is the point in him trying to represent this congregation? He only believed in God and, for him, "it was clear that He loved us, in some mysterious way" (90). He learned this harsh reality when he was at a rehabilitation center for priests in Mount Perousia. There, he realized he "did not appreciate being away from the running of his own parish" and that "holding things together in the material world was important, and he was of greatest use in that role" (121). Moreover, he could quite easily discard the "Resurrection, the divinity of Christ, the miracles of the New Testament, the Nativity, all of it" (121) since, to him, these dogmas were just shibboleth.

In a book review of *Stealing Fatima*, Vamberto Freitas has noted that Frank Gaspar has always refused both in his poetry and fiction to let his Portuguese American background dissolve entirely within the larger Anglo-American cultural mosaic (Freitas 194). This resistance towards full erosion is possibly one of the foremost themes in this novel. The author taps from Provincetown's Portuguese past to show how much it has already disappeared even if through writing he wishes to keep it alive—in essence, perpetuate it. This legacy is represented by Furtado's father and the men that belonged to his generation: "In his father's day, owning a dragger made you a prince in the world, and you could swagger into any of the fisher-

men's bars along Front Street and be hailed from a dozen tables by the other men: His father, Pai Furtado to everyone in town, was foremost among them, but there were the others, too" (107). These men "wanted people to know about their labors on the sea. They wanted people to hear their footsteps on the earth" (107). These included, for example, the "Pires, Freitas, Alves, Correiro, Santos, Cabral. None of them were left now. No one still on the water from that generation. And most of the boats gone, too" (107). *Stealing Fatima* tries to preserve some memory of this Portuguese ethnic enclave in Provincetown even if it is now a gentrified place full of "signs for bed-and-breakfasts, guest rooms, apartments, inns. Property. Money" (159) for the Summer vacationers. As Allie and Furtado take Sarafino Pomba for his last tour of Provincetown, they witness the last Portuguese ethnic signs being swallowed up. What used to be the "front of town hall, Parson's Pharmacy, rows of shops, the old movie house" is "at present a cluster of little seasonal stores, boarded up—Pires's Garage, now a mall and food court, also closed for the season. The bank, gone. The barber shop, gone. Now hundreds of yards of counter space for showing the tourists silver bracelets, T-Shirts, beach gear, incense, candles, pottery" (162). Juney's Tap, Furtado's father's second home, is a "proper restaurant now, the Café Balzac, cloth on the tabletops, expensive wine. "Yuppie gay," said Allie'" (162).

In the fictional world of *Stealing Fatima*, complete erasure of this ethnic presence occurs at the very end of the novel when Furtado has already been replaced by Father Sweet, who has taken over the Our Lady of Fatima parish. Furtado believes to have been visited by the Virgin Mary in the guise of a girl. The locale is replete with snow and it is difficult to ascertain whose "tracks" or "footprints" are still visible—are they Furtado's? The girl's? The animals'? The novel ends with "tracks (…) vanish[ing] (…) shadows (…) dissolv[ing]" into the "greater blackness and there was only the sighing of the wind and the sound of his [Furtado's] own blood pulsating in his ears, and under that, the soft *tick*, *tick* of the heavy snowflakes lighting upon him" (387). This novel is clearly about preserving tracks—or witnessing them being erased—a theme around which Louise Erdrich's novel, *Tracks* (1988), revolves, as she attempts to preserve Native-American culture or also seeing it erode. In this novel, Native-Americans have slowly experienced massive genocide through the diseases brought by the European

settlers, their gunpowder and alcohol, or the survivors, who would be dispersed or put on reservations, and forced to learn how to farm and become entrepreneurs like the white capitalists, as represented by the issuing of several Acts which would depersonalize Native-Americans, namely the Dawes Allotment Act of 1887, followed by the 1906 Burke Act and then the 1917 "Declaration of Policy." Revisiting the impact of these policies in "History, Postmodernism, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*," Nancy J. Peterson has shown how Native Americans would be acculturated, pressurized into emulating white farmers, especially those "with more than one-half white blood" who "would be defined as competent and thus would be made United States citizens and that they would be granted fee patents for their allotments" (986). At the end of this novel, Fleur, who has resisted being engulfed by white Anglo culture walks away, "now without leaving tracks" (215). Through the years, the narrator at the end of *Tracks* ironically acknowledges that what is left of the memory of Native American culture and their people has been preserved through stories about a particular "tribe of file cabinets and triplicates, a tribe of single-space documents, directives, policy. A tribe of pressed trees. A tribe of chicken-scratch that can be scattered by a wind, diminished to ashes by one struck match" (225). The coincidences between the erasure of the ethnic signs pertaining to both Portuguese and Native-American cultures manifested through dusty dirt tracks or a forest being burned down (*Tracks*), snow (*Stealing Fatima*) or the wind blowing in the last sentence of both novels are simply astounding and show how much contemporary American fiction(s) have so much in common when attempting to preserve ethnic memory, struggling for it to not be engulfed by the larger Anglo mainstream.

As a case study, tracing the changes in writings featuring the Portuguese and the divine by canonical Anglo-American writers or contemporary Portuguese American writers can be seen as a sort of barometer which has registered the loss of impact, the gradual loss of identity and depersonalization of this ethnic minority and how it has become practically —or totally—assimilated by the mainstream. Currently, this is the situation with the Portuguese in Hawaii. As the Portuguese move out—and Latinos move into—the ethnic enclaves of such immigrant neighborhoods as, for example, the Ironbound section of Newark, New Jersey, into white suburbia, with the third and fourth generations of Americans of Portuguese descent

simply possessing a Portuguese last name, not knowing how to express themselves in Portuguese or living comfortably on the fringes of agnosticism or atheism, the Portuguese are being melted in this huge Crèvecoeurean cauldron and, thus, becoming this new American man. At this juncture, these all-American individuals also find the smell of grilled sardines as being repulsive and "those pork chops' as some family or ethnic ghost from the past.

Works Cited

Bercovitch, Sacvan. *The Puritan Origins of the American Self*. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1975.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo and David G. Embrick. "Black, Honorary White, White: The Future of Race in the United States?" *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the "Color-Blind" Era.* Ed. David L. Brunsma. Boulder and London: Lyenne Rienner Publishers, 2006. 33-48.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. 3rd ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010.

Braga, Thomas J. *Portingales*. Providence, RI: Gávea-Brown, 1981.

Cannon Jr., LeGrand. *Look to the Mountain*. New York: Henry Holt, 1942.

Eliot, T. S. *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950.* New York: Harcourt, 1980.

Erdrich, Louise. *Tracks*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1988.

Freitas, Vamberto. "*Stealing Fatima*, de Frank X. Gaspar: em busca do divino perdido." *BorderCrossings: Leituras Transatlânticas.* Edições Letras Lavadas, 2012. 193-195.

Gardner, Helen. *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1978.

Gaspar, Frank X. *The Holyoke*. Boston: Northeastern UP, 1988.

___. *Leaving Pico*. Hanover, NH: UP of New England, 1999.

___. *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death*. Tallahassee, FL: Anhinga P, 1995.

—-. *Stealing Fatima*. Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2009.

Hargrove, Nancy D. "The Curious Case of T. S. Eliot's Source(s) for Part IV

of 'The Dry Salvages.'" *Yeats Eliot Review* 17.4 (2001): 1-12.

Hasian, Jr., Marouf Arif. *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought*. Athens and London: The U of Georgia P, 1996.

Kazin, Alfred. *God and the American Writer*. New York: Vintage Books/ Random House, 1997.

Kipling, Rudyard. *Captains Courageous*. New York: Bantam Books, 1982.

Kirschner, Luz Angélica. "Expanding *Latinidad*: An Introduction." *Expanding Latinidad: An Inter-American Perspective*. Ed. Kirschner. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier/Tempe: Bilingual Press (Arizona State U), 2012. 1-56.

Miller, Perry. *Errand into the Wilderness*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 1993.

Peterson, Nancy J. "History, Postmodernism, and Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *PMLA* 109.5 (October 1994): 982-994.

Rothery, Agnes E. *The House by the Windmill*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1923.

Silva, Reinaldo. "An Overlooked Legacy: Gloucester's Portuguese Fishermen in the Background of T. S. Eliot's 'The Dry Salvages.'" *Yeats Eliot Review* 20.1 (Spring 2003): 3-11.

___. *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*. North Dartmouth, MA: Center for Portuguese Studies and Culture/U of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2008.

Taft, Donald R. *Two Portuguese Communities in New England*. New York: Arno Press and *The New York Times*, 1923 (reprint 1969).

Vaz, Katherine. *Fado and Other Stories*. Pittsburgh, PA: U of Pittsburgh P, 1997.

___. *Mariana*. London: Flamingo, 1997.

___. *Our Lady of the Artichokes and other Portuguese-American Stories*. Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 2008.

___. *Saudade*. New York: St. Martin's, 1994.

Vorse, Mary Heaton. *Time and the Town: A Provincetown Chronicle*. New York: Dial Press, 1942.

West, Nathanael. *Miss Lonelyhearts and The Day of the Locust*. New York: New Directions, 1962.

Abstract

This essay aims at revisiting representations of the divine in a few Anglo-American and Portuguese American literary texts so as to ascertain the ways in which Catholicism, which traditionally has been regarded as a marker of ethnic identity in the United States of America, gradually eroded. From writings depicting nineteenth- and twentieth- century devout and God-fearing Portuguese pioneer immigrants to writings from the twenty-first century focusing on nonchalant or carefree attitudes toward the divine, this essay aims at foregrounding the divinity to argue that these representations illustrate or substantiate contemporary re-assessments of identity, lingering racism, or what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva defines as current "colorblind" discourse. As a case study, it also assists us in re-evaluating Portuguese American identity within this multicultural society. The purpose of this essay is, therefore, to delve into this growing field of United States writings so as to trace the social changes, the full assimilation of Portuguese Americans and how contemporary Portuguese American writers have dealt with these issues in their fiction.

Keywords

Katherine Vaz; Frank Gaspar; Portuguese American literature; divinity in Portuguese American fiction; erosion of Portuguese American identity

Resumo

O presente ensaio propõe-se revisitar as representações do divino em alguns textos literários Anglo-Americanos e Luso-Americanos de maneira a que possamos entender a forma como o Catolicismo, que tradicionalmente tem sido considerado um marco identitário étnico nos Estados Unidos da América, gradualmente se dissipou. De textos representativos dos séculos XIX e XX que descrevem alguns emigrantes pioneiros portugueses como crentes e tementes a Deus a textos do século XXI contendo situações e atitudes mais descontraídas para com a divindade, o presente ensaio pretende destacar a divindade de maneira a argumentar que estas

representações ilustram ou fundamentam reapreciações actuais de questões identitárias, o racismo latente, ou o que o crítico Eduardo Bonilla-Silva designa por *colorblind discourse* actual. Como estudo de caso, permite-nos, também, reapreciar a identidade luso-americana no seio desta sociedade multicultural. O objectivo último do presente ensaio é, por conseguinte, mergulhar neste crescente corpus literário norte-americano com o propósito de estudar as mutações sociais, a total assimilação dos luso-americanos, assim como a forma como os escritores luso-americanos contemporâneos lidaram com estas questões na sua ficção.

Palavras-chave

Katherine Vaz; Frank Gaspar; literatura Luso-Americana; divindade na ficção Luso-Americana; erosão da identidade Luso-Americana

REVIEWS
RELEITURAS

Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato, eds. *Translated Poe*. Bethlehem, Pa.: Lehigh University Press, 2014

This book stands as a monument to the irreplaceable contribution made by Translation Studies to the history of universal literary culture. *Translated Poe* not only more than clearly demonstrates the international circulation of certain authors by means of a highly striking primary means of reception, translation (with Baudelaire and Mallarmé responsible for the diffusion of Poe to almost all cultures), but also clearly testifies to the very often close relationships between translation and authorship, which, in effect, equals saying between creativity/originality, imitation, adaptation, version and translation. Should such still be necessary, we do indeed encounter in this book an accumulation of still more arguments both against the idea of any purely national literature and against any genuine, singular and unrepeatable creativity.

Furthermore, and for those more directly interested in Translation Studies, we would say that we here face a fortunate alliance between Descriptive Translation Studies and the history of translation. Whilst true that such was not explicitly incorporated into an autonomous and duly visible place on the maps of Translation Studies (whether in the traditional scheme by James Holmes or the more recent typology by Sonia Vandepitte), the fact remains that a descriptive study of a translated corpus requires its history (context) be explained and this history, in turn, has to stem from descriptive studies.

As an object, this is a fine book on whose cover the name POE stands out above the celebrated 1983 painting by the Portuguese artist Júlio Pomar, entitled precisely "Edgar Poe, Charles Baudelaire, un Orang-Outang et le corbeau." The authors are very familiar with a subject that they structure and organise. Margarida Vale de Gato, in addition to her own poetry, is a researcher and professor of North American literature and literary translation at the School of Arts and Humanities at the University

of Lisbon and has translated the complete poetic works of Poe into Portuguese (2008) as well as editing the exhibition catalogue "Edgar Allan Poe in Portugal" (2009). In turn, Emron Esplin lectures in American literature and Inter-American literary studies at Brigham Young University and specialises in the influence of Poe's South American letters and particularly dedicated to the relationship between Jorge Luis Borges and Poe. That the pair managed to gather together such a number of specialists in Poe and in translation represents a feat that in itself draws our admiration.

The work begins with an elucidating Introduction that moves on from a general presentation highlighting how translations and translators of Poe displayed diverse vanguardist expressions, undoubtedly also based on the peculiar characteristics of the American author's writings, in order to input dynamism into their respective literary systems. *Translated Poe* divides into two sections with the first undertaking a greater dedication to the panoramic analysis of the Poe translations produced in eighteen different countries whilst the second part includes case studies (translations of certain texts, the relevance of certain translators and genres, analyses of translation processes, etcetera) set in some of the previous cultural contexts. We would note that from the geographic-cultural point of view this represents both the traditional western cultures along with others whose presence proves a far rarer occurrence in Translation Studies, such as Korea, Iceland, Egypt and Romania and that is not to mention China and Japan. We may nevertheless consider each of the book's thirty-one chapters also constitutes a micro-history of translation and in accordance with its components: archaeologically surveying, critiquing and explaining (Pym 1998). We so frequently hear critical voices about works in Translation Studies that do not appropriately focus upon the translations themselves. Such an objection certainly cannot be targeted at this work with its authors displaying an open concern over the "critical" component, hence, with examples of problems and difficulties, including their contextualised discussion. Any general description of this work cannot but make reference to the 100 pages of valuable final notes even while such would have benefitted from following other models (and their guidelines) for bibliographic presentation that would have correspondingly avoided repetitions and facilitate their consultation by interested readers.

We would now frame some of the conclusions to the history of

translation made by the studies gathered here. These conclusions may not appear absolutely new but nevertheless remain undoubtedly highly significant given that a single author summarises and confirms the regularities observed in many different history of translation contexts.

— The unquestionable centrality of French culture through to the mid-twentieth century: Baudelaire led the way in opening up Poe's path to "continental glory" in the words of Henri Justin (204), and not just continental given this extended outwards to other destinations (Brazil, Argentina, Turkey, Russia, for example) with French mediation, the bearer of the new, conveying this glory ever onwards;

— In the majority of European cultures, Poe gets introduced via translations published in magazines and newspapers and by anonymous translators (e.g. Turkey, 131, Russia, 222, Romania, 231) and, on occasion, attaining such relevance that these translations gain their place in the works deemed canonical (229, 252);

— The translators of Poe were very often the leading lights in their respective national literary circles;

— The entrance of Poe into particular cultures also stems from the knowledge about foreign language then prevailing. One exemplary case comes with China, where, even through to the early years of the twentieth century, there were very few English language readers (175). Poe arrived there via Japan and therefore alongside another regularity: the demand for a certain genre, in this case, crime literature;

— The phenomenon of non-translation has come in for a higher profile and greater study recently which has led me to suggest on another occasion that a history of translation might also constitute a history of non-translation. This absence might derive from the most varied of motives but, among them, those of a political nature come explicitly to the fore. The case of China proves particularly illustrative in these terms: whilst in the 1920s Poe held a strong influence over Chinese authors, between 1949 and 1978 (that period known as the Cultural Revolution!), Poe enters into a period of zero profile in China (179). As regards his translators, they were persecuted or committed suicide (180). With the end of the Revolution decreed, the entire nation began learning English due to the Sino-American relationship and hence there was a revival of interest in Poe and the consequent return of his translations;

— The entrance of foreign literature into a culture may be facilitated or hindered by the respective cultural peculiarities, which equals stating whenever there are substantial differences between the source texts and the recipient cultures. Hence, we may read the following about Poe in Korea: "Korean culture, like other Asian counterparts of Confucian and Buddhist origin, has a sort of cultural singularity of being strangely immune, if not hostile, toward the scientific as well as the psychological symbolism in Poe" (198);

Moving onto the second section of the book, this complements the preceding. This repeats the pairs of languages (not all of them) but the knowledge on the translation in the respective contexts expands still further, offering up a varied range of examples of problems to translation, how to analyse and critically discuss translations, therefore effectively approaching just how to evaluate specific translations. Furthermore, not only does the latter section complement the former but also does so always with input from different scholars. Hence, whilst in the former we learn about the history of the translation of Poe's narratives in Spain, in the latter, we gain insights into the translation of this author's poetry in the twentieth century. While Littschwager analyses numerous German editions of complete or selected works by Poe, an author whose popularity in Germany was a constant right through to the present (55ff.) in a translation first begun prior to Baudelaire (213), Daniel Göske concentrates on the "idiosyncratic appropriation" that the renowned German writer and translator Arno Schmidt made of the American author, revealing his "linguistic inventiveness" (219).

One interesting point in various of these studies stems from their functioning as TAPs (Think-aloud protocols), a translation "black box." This is what Henri Justin ("Retranslating Poe into French" 203-212) achieves so exemplarily in beginning by identifying the errors of Baudelaire and only afterwards to speak of his own *Contes policiers et autres* (Classiques Garnier). This results in, in addition to a species of "stylistic comparison between the French and the English," something resembling a **theory of translating,** knowledge on the experience had (…), and which also embodies the doubts and questions: "How much can a text be independent of its language? Can the translator cut away the authorial flesh without drawing the linguistic blood with it? Should he?" (207).

The change in genre (or sub-genre) that translation may apply to the source text takes place in what the author Daniela Hisan, in quoting Thomas C. Carlson, terms the Romanian cult of Poe (231-239). Here, "The Masque of the Red Death" undergoes translation as children's literature but without any of the norms that regulate this literature type and thus constituting its uniqueness. However, the reception of the translations may also shape a change in the status attributed to the original author. Hence, in the analysis of the translation of "The Fall of the House of Usher" in China, Aimi Ji concluded that "Poe's profile for modern Chinese readers seems to be that of a popular horror-story writer rather than a real master of fiction, poetry, and literary criticism" (281).

In terms of such changes, we may also observe how the visibility and reputation of a translation may frequently depend on the place that the translator, or writer/translator, holds in the national literary system, or its international peers should we talk about languages and not countries. Indeed, the highest profile case comes with the impact of the translations by the Argentinean Julio Cortázar on the Spanish language. The study by Margarita Rigal-Aragón (13-23) both demonstrates this and then reveals how, perhaps not as rare as might at first be thought, the enormous influence of Cortázar as a translator of Poe did not derive from his knowledge of English but rather from his poetic qualities and familiarity with the biography of the American author (23). Similar cases are reported for Italy concerning Mario Praz, Elio Vittorini and I. Calvino (25ff.). On the contrary, whenever translators-poets only occupy peripheral roles in the national system, the same destiny is very often reserved for their translations (Francisco Pino in Spain, 297).

Finally, and as a Portuguese citizen, I would also highlight the well known thoroughness in the gathering and commenting in the initial study by Margarida Vale de Gato on the translations of Poe in Portugal. The second part of this book duly confirms, through the study by George Monteiro, how necessary it is to pay attention to the smallest differences between an original and its translation, firstly and obviously, to detect them but then afterwards in seeking convincing explanations for them (which are clearly not always going to be found). Thus does Monteiro explain the reasons behind Pessoa eliminating the specific name of the beloved Lenore from his translation of *The Raven*. Monteiro goes to fetch a translation

into English made by Pessoa himself of a famous sonnet by Camões ("Alma minha gentil") that approaches spiritualised love and, through the absence of any name, shows how Pessoa bestows a spiritual meaning to the poem by Poe (288).

The editors and authors of this book deserve every congratulation all the while Translation Studies, the History of Translation, Literary Studies, Anglo-American Studies and Comparative Literature may take due satisfaction with this research characterised by its levels of demand, accuracy and depth in addition to its sheer reader-friendliness.

Teresa Seruya
School of Arts and Humanities,
University of Lisbon
Catholic University –
CECC- Research Centre
for Communication and Culture

OTHER VOICES
OUTRAS VOZES

Três poemas de Manny Igrejas

Ana-Maria Chaves
Universidade do Minho

ISSN: 0873-0628 ANGLO SAXONICA SER. III N. 11 2016

Três poemas de Manny Igrejas

Manuel (Manny) Igrejas nasceu em 1949 em Newark, New Jersey. Com raízes em Leça da Palmeira, cresceu no seio da comunidade portuguesa da zona comummente designada como *Ironbound*. Trabalhou durante dez anos (1970-1980) como operário: os primeiros cinco como carpinteiro numa companhia ferroviária de Hoboken (atual *NJ Transit*), e os restantes no *Bloomfield Department of Public Works*. Durante esse período, dedicou-se à escrita de poesia e ficção, publicado textos em pequenas revistas. Em 1980, foi um dos atores escolhidos para a radionovela *Our Life Together Among The Works of Art*, emitida pela estação WBAI. Foi ainda autor de vários episódios dessa série. Em 1980 começou também a trabalhar na Broadway, mais precisamente como publicitário na agência Hunt/Pucci. Terminada esta colaboração, Manny abandonou a Broadway e dedicou-se ao comércio de artigos para restauração entre 1983 e 1990, durante o dia, escrevendo ficção, poesia e dramaturgia durante a noite. Regressou à área das relações públicas em 1990, na David Rothenberg Associates, uma agência que representava algumas das mais importantes produções da Broadway. Em 1991 juntou-se ao coletivo *Blue Man Group*, tendo sido o seu diretor de relações públicas até ao ano de 2005. Deixou nessa data o trabalho a tempo inteiro, mas continuou a representar várias companhias de teatro de dança, como En Garde Arts ou The Builders Association.

Mais conhecido como dramaturgo, entre as suas peças, muitas delas contribuindo assumidamente para um *corpus* teatral *gay*, contam-se *Shrinkage*, *Kitty and Lina*, *Miss Mary Dugan* e *Hassan and Sylvia*. Esta última foi incluída na antologia *Plays and Playwrights 2011*. *Margarita and Max*, de 2013, ganhou os prémios de Melhor Peça Breve, Melhor Encenador e Melhor Atriz *no* Festival de Teatro Internacional de Midtown. No tocante a outros géneros de escrita, publicou o conto «The Little

Trooper» em *Men on Men 4*. Em 1993, a antologia *A New Geography of Poets* incluiu o poema "Herois do Mar," que aqui se traduz. Os outros dois poemas agora apresentados em português foram recentemente publicados no volume especial do *InterDISCIPLINARY Journal of Portuguese Diaspora Studies* (4.2, 2015), subordinado ao tema "Neither Here nor There, yet Both: The Luso-American Experience."

O volume acima mencionado resultou do trabalho do Grupo de Estudos Americanos do CEAUL (GI3) em prol da visibilidade de um crescente grupo de escritores descendentes de portugueses que vão engrossando a literatura norte-americana. A circunstância da diáspora não implica necessariamente o cunho da etnia em todos os seus escritos (em baixo, "Uma Pia Cheia de Poemas Sujos" é passível de se interpretar como a arte poética de um qualquer autor que desafia o sublime como apanágio da sua lírica), mas a obra destes escritores merece também ser divulgada como um testemunho de interculturalidade que complexifica a imagologia de identidades nacionais, designadamente projetando a nossa além-atlântico. O projeto PEnPAL in Trans, por seu turno, transversal a várias equipas dentro e fora do CEAUL e dirigindo a sua investigação à pedagogia da tradução literária, tomou a seu cargo parte do trabalho de disseminação da literatura luso-americana, procurando a sua medida justa em português. No caso presente, as traduções são da responsabilidade de Ana-Maria Chaves, destacada tradutora literária de autores como William Faulkner, Sommerset Maugham ou David Lodge, e participante no projeto PEnPAL no âmbito da sua colaboração com o Mestrado em Tradução e Comunicação Multilingue da Universidade do Minho.

Pequeno-almoço com os Ricardos

Estava pregado ao linóleo em frente ao televisor
Onde os botões dos meus olhos brotavam rebentos azul claros
Que bocejavam e espreguiçavam folhas indolentes ao redor da corola.

Sombras cinzentas cruzam o ecrã
Seguidas da voz estridente de uma criança travessa
Depois uns olhos enormes orlados de voluptuosas aranhas piscam ao focar-se
Furiosos sob arqueados apóstrofos feitos em casa
Sublinhados com um traço preto, oblíquo e elástico,
Que se franzem em sobrolhos inteligentes e sorrisos escarninhos.

Eis Lucy! Uma bomba relógio de avental
Ethel é a voz da razão:
"Como podes ficar aí parada a dizer
Essas quatro palavras terríveis: Eu tive uma ideia?"
Lucy descarta a sensatez com um voluptuoso encolher de ombros
E mãos grandes e fluidas. As comédias televisivas são cruéis
Como suicidas—deixam uma porcaria que outros têm de limpar.
Não há um pingo de responsabilidade nas partidas velhacas
Que arrastam a doce Ethel pelo impetuoso rio vermelho.
Fred resmunga sempre e mergulha para a salvar.

O que irá Ricky encontrar quando abrir a porta?
Sobe a escada de olhos esbugalhados.
Ó não! Lucy está a baloiçar o Pequeno Ricky fora da janela!
Claro que ela pode entrar no espetáculo
E ele paga também a mobília nova.
Mrs.Trumbull apanha o Pequeno Ricky esquecido
No cesto da roupa suja enquanto os Ricardos se beijam.
Os Mertzes, uns macacos de imitação, seguem-lhes o exemplo.
Ricky fica tonto na sofreguidão dos lábios negros de Lucy,
Perdido no seu perfume, Esquecimento Nº 5.
Dorme mal nessa noite
Enquanto Lucy lima os dentes.

Breakfast with the Ricardos

I was planted into the linoleum in front of the TV set
Where the buds of my eyeballs sprouted clear blue shoots
That yawned and stretched lazy leaves around the tube.

Gray shadows flicker across the screen
Followed by the piping voice of a mischievous child
Then saucer eyes ringed by luxurious spiders twitched into focus
Furious beneath homemade, arching apostrophes
All underlined by a black, elastic slash
That twist into clever frowns and sneers.

It's Lucy! A time bomb in a house dress.
Ethel is the voice of reason:
"How can you stand there and utter
Those four horrible words: I've got an idea?"
Lucy dismisses reason with a voluptuous shrug
And large, fluid hands. A screwball is as cruel
As a suicide, leaving a mess for others to clean up.
There is no accountability in the vicious pranks
That drag gentle Ethel down the rushing red river.
Fred always grumbles and dives in to save her.

What will Ricky find when he opens the door?
He mounts the stairs with his eyes bugged out.
Oh no! Lucy dangles Little Ricky out the window!
Of course she can be in the show
And he'll pay for the new furniture too.
Mrs. Trumbull catches forgotten Little Ricky
In her laundry basket as the Ricardos embrace.
The copycat Mertzes follow suit.
Ricky is dizzy in the tug of Lucy's black lips,
Lost in her perfume, Forgetfulness No. 5.
He sleeps fitfully that night
As Lucy files her teeth.

Uma Pia Cheia de Poemas Sujos

O poema estava no cesto da roupa suja.
Lavei-o com as coisas brancas
e a lixívia estragou-o.
O poema estava na massa.
Deixei-o levedar um par de horas
Depois espetei-lhe o dedo a experimentar
e ele abateu.
Mexi o poema numa caçarola
mas a chama estava muito alta e coagulou.
Então enrolei-o e fiz um charro
tão cheio de sementes que me explodiu na cara.
Enrosquei-me na cama encostado ao poema
e envolvi-o nos braços para lhe roubar calor
Ele sentiu o meu desespero
e fugiu com todos os cobertores.

A Sink Full of Dirty Poems

The poem was in the laundry basket.
I washed it with the white things
and the bleach ruined it.
The poem was in the dough.
I let it rise for a couple of hours
then stuck my finger in to test it
and it collapsed.
I stirred the poem in a saucepan
but the flame was too high and it curdled.
Then I rolled it into a joint
so full of seeds it exploded in my face.
I curled up against the poem in bed
and wrapped my arms around to steal some warmth.
It sensed my desperation
and fled with all the blankets

Heróis do Mar

O alegre e simpático pescador do Portugal das brochuras
nunca chegou a Newark onde esquilos discretos
enchiam as fábricas e as valetas, em fila para o Penn Savings
à segunda à noite de cadernetas coladas ao coração.
Era de esquilo o instinto nos olhos negros
alinhados no altar, de um povo
mal aclimatado
à espera do pão grátis da comunhão.
Os domingos eram também malditos jogos de futebol
com todos os lados apaixonadamente errados
e o vinho para tudo resolver
ou tudo piorar. Camisas brancas manchadas de vinho
nos piqueniques do Sport Club. Acordeões e bandolins
no pavilhão. Imponentes Paso Dobles
e desenfreadas polkas até alguém cair
e partir uma perna. Vinho em tigelas e encarniçado
chouriço no espeto, encarniçadas migalhas
nos queixos. Depois as suadas camionetas a casa.
Um homem esbofeteia a mulher. A crianças adormecem.
Um povo infantil, iletrado, todo ele paixão
e segredos de amor, cantores numa língua
que é a sua própria canção
e mesmo assim afoito para construir em Newark
um gueto mourejado de cor e conforto
onde os figos engordam em mini quintais
e as sardinhas crepitam todo o verão.

Herois do Mar

The sunny, friendly fisherman of brochure Portugal
never made it to Newark where sober squirrels
filled factories and ditches, lined up at Penn Savings
on Monday nights with passbooks over their hearts.
Squirrely instinct in the dark eyes
that lined the altar, of a people
just barely domesticated
awaiting the free food of communion.
Sunday too was bloody soccer games
with all sides passionately wrong
and wine to solve everything
or make it worse. Wine-stained white shirts
at Sport Club picnics. Accordions and mandolins
in the pavilion. Stately Paso Dobles
and riotous polkas until someone falls
and breaks a leg. Wine in bowls and purple
chourico on a spit, purple breadcrumbs
on chins. Then its sweaty busloads home.
A man slaps his wife. Children fall asleep.
A childish people, unread, all passion
and secrets in love, singers in a language
that is its own song
and somehow brave to make in Newark
a scrubbed ghetto of color and comfort
where figs grow fat in tiny gardens
and sardines sizzle all summer long.

Manuel Igrejas / Ana-Maria Chaves

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

NOTAS SOBRE OS COLABORADORES

Marijke Boucherie is a retired Assistant Professor in the Department of English Studies of the University of Lisbon where she lectured English and Canadian Literature and Introductory Linguistics. She is a researcher at ULICES where she is part of GI4: "Other Literatures in English." She has a special interest in the relationship between Linguistics and Literature and the communicative functions inherent in prosody. She has published on the Victorian Literature of Nonsense, Charles Dickens, Stevie Smith, U. A. Fanthorpe, Iris Murdoch and Alice Munro. In the framework of the programme "Narrative-Medicine" she has published on autism and communication.

Laura Fernanda Bulger received her MA from the University of Toronto, Canada, and her PhD from the University of Oporto, Portugal. She was a Senior Tutor at the University of Toronto, and a Lecturer at York University (Glendon), also in Toronto. She also taught Literary Theory, English Literature and Media Studies at the Universidade de Trás-os--Montes e Alto Douro (UTAD), Portugal, and worked as a researcher in the areas of the British Postcolonialism and Canadian Studies. She has published on fiction by Canadian authors, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Douglas Coupland and British authors, Zadie Smith, V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ian McEwan and Julian Barnes. In addition to her essays on English-speaking authors, she has published extensively on the literary work by Agustina Bessa-Luís, a major Portuguese writer.

Oluwole Coker holds a Ph. D in English from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, specializing in African Fiction. He is a Lecturer at the

English Department, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria, where his teaching and research interests span postcolonial African fiction, cultural and interdisciplinary studies. His publications have appeared in local and international outlets such as *Proverbium*, *Matatu*, *Marang*, *Journal of African Literature* etc. He is a 2014 Postdoctoral Fellow of the American Council of Learned Societies/ African Humanities Program; 2015 Laureate of CODESRIA Child and Youth Institute and a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Studies, Princeton, New Jersey, USA.

Pedro Tiago Ferreira holds degrees in Modern Languages and Literature, English and Spanish studies, and in Law, as well as master's degrees in European Politics and Literary Theory. Currently he is earning his doctorate degree in Literary Theory.

Ricardo Namora holds a degree in Modern Languages and Literatures (University of Coimbra, Portugal, 2001); an MA in Literary Theory (University of Lisbon, Portugal, 2004); a PhD in Literary Theory (University of Lisbon, 2009); and an MA in Portuguese Literature (University of Coimbra, 2010). He is the author of *40 Anos de Teoria da Literatura em Portugal* (Almedina, 2011) and *Teoria da Literatura e Interpretação—o Século XX em 3 Argumentos* (Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2014). He currently holds a lecturing position at Stockholm University, Sweden.

Reinaldo Silva was educated in both the United States and Portugal and holds dual citizenship. He has lectured at several American universities and is currently Assistant Professor of English at the University of Aveiro. His teaching and research interests include nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature and contemporary emergent literatures, with a special focus on Portuguese-American writers. He has published about fifty articles in international peer-reviewed journals, encyclopaedia entries, chapters in books, and has also authored two books: *Representations of the Portuguese in American Literature*, published by the University of Massachusetts in 2008, and *Portuguese American Literature*, in the United Kingdom, in 2009.