

ANGLO SAXONICA  
REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III **N. 8** 2014  
ANGLO



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



ANGLO  
SAXONICA  
REVISTA **ANGLO SAXONICA** SER. III N. 8 2014  
ANGLO  
SAXONICA



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

# ANGLO SAXONICA

SER. III N. 8 2014

## **DIRECÇÃO / GENERAL EDITORS**

Isabel Fernandes (ULICES)  
João Almeida Flor (ULICES)  
M<sup>a</sup> Helena Paiva Correia (ULICES)

## **COORDENAÇÃO / EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Teresa Malafaia (ULICES)

## **EDITOR ADJUNTO / ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Sara Paiva Henriques (ULICES)

## **REVISÃO DE TEXTO / COPY EDITORS**

Ana Daniela Coelho (ULICES)  
José Duarte (ULICES)  
Sara Paiva Henriques (ULICES)

**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**

SerSílito

**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

# CONTENTS / ÍNDICE

## ACADEMY AS COMMUNITY. ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES IN PORTUGAL AND EUROPE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE	
Teresa Cid .....	11
UTOPIAN TROJAN HORSES: CHANGING THE UNIVERSITY FROM WITHIN	
Fátima Vieira .....	15
THE REIGN OF CONSCIOUSNESS — LATE HENRY JAMES	
Heinz Ickstadt .....	41
ADDING WINGS TO THE UNBEARABLE WEIGHT OF WORDS: ACADEMY AS COMMUNITY	
Teresa Alves .....	67
CALLING FOR A THOUGHT ON FOOD IN ANGLO-AMERICAN STUDIES	
M <sup>a</sup> José Pereira Pires .....	85
O ROSTO VELADO DE MOISÉS: RELIGIÃO E ORIENTALISMO EM OBRAS DE THOMAS MOORE E WALTER SCOOT	
Jorge Bastos da Silva .....	101
THERE ARE MANY SIDES TO THE ENGLISH COIN	
Rita Amorim .....	129
MAPPING OUT THE INVISIBLE VISIBLE: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE REMAKING OF VISUAL CULTURE	
António Lopes .....	151
BRIDGING ANTHROPOLOGY AND LITERATURE THROUGH INDIAN WRITING IN ENGLISH	
Margarida Martins .....	171
THE ANGLO-AMERICAN WORLD IN TEFL IN PORTUGUESE SECONDARY EDUCATION: RE- THINKING THE ROLE OF LITERATURE	
Fernanda Luísa da Silva Feneja .....	183
UM ROMANTISMO PARTICULAR: JOHN KEATS E FERNANDO PESSOA	
Ana M. Ferraria .....	201

**ESSAYS/ ESTUDOS**

A FAIRY GODMOTHER OF HER OWN Alexandra Cheira .....	217
“DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I WAS PROCURING FOR HIM”: ESTIGMATIZAÇÃO DO DESEJO HOMOSSEXUAL EM <i>SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER</i> DE TENNESSEE WILLIAMS Francisco Costa .....	241
VERDADEIRA GRANDEZA E DEGRADAÇÕES DO PODER: TEMÁTICAS COMPLEMENTARES E CONVERGENTES EM FIELDING, COM ESPECIAL REFERÊNCIA ÀS SUAS <i>MISCELLANIES</i> João Manuel Sousa Nunes .....	263
<b>Notes on Contributors / Notas sobre os Colaboradores</b> .....	281

# COLÓQUIOS





**ACADEMY AS COMMUNITY.  
ENGLISH AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
IN PORTUGAL AND EUROPE**



# Introductory Note



## Introductory Note

This section contains selected essays that resulted from presentations and follow-up debates of the 34<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Portuguese Association for English and American Studies (APEAA – Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos). This international gathering was held at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013, under the theme “Academy and Community: English and American Studies in Portugal and Europe.”

The tradition of English and American studies in Portugal has long been supported by the dynamics of academic associations, in which APEAA’s peer network stands out, involving national and international institutions, and establishing continued interactions with research centers. At a time when political and cultural paradigms are on the verge of a crisis and/or change, the scientific committee of this 34<sup>th</sup> Meeting launched a call to revisit the theoretical and pragmatic frameworks sustaining (and constraining) our research practices. Indeed, the Humanities continue to brave the challenges caused by the increasing encroachment of a utilitarian scientific discourse based on evidence and logics, at the cost of musing and creativity, and under the menace of the austerity politics that undervalue the investment in culture and memory. Therefore, some of the essays here selected, including the two from the national plenary speakers (Teresa -F. A. Alves and Fátima Vieira) result from passionate, though rigorous, reflections and discussions on how Anglo-American scholarship, with its vocation for plurality and innovative interdisciplinarity, might progress. Other essays, such as the contribution from international keynote speaker Heinz Ickstadt, address themes of our traditional and ongoing research, which are reexamined through innovative angles and often-competing ideologies, thus dignifying our contribution to the interpretation and

fruition of meaning(s) that thrive in a plurality of cultural and aesthetic manifestations.

The Conference was sponsored by the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULICES), the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon and its Department of English Studies (DEA), and it was supported by FCT (Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology) and by the American Corner at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon. Bringing together not only senior international scholars, academics who have been committed to building networks of collaborative action in this research field, but also younger researchers, the meeting had a diverse structure, including a roundtable on “Associations and the Humanities,” and another on “Past and Present Methodologies in English and American Studies,” and also a session of poster presentations. This gathering managed to highlight the plurality of ways in which our interpretative engagement might touch communities at local, national and international levels.

*Teresa Cid*  
(on behalf of the Organizers)

# Utopian Trojan Horses: Changing the University from within

*Fátima Vieira*

University of Oporto

CETAPS – Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies





# Utopian Trojan Horses: Changing the University from within\*

## 1. The University is Dying!

We are all familiar with the features of the rather dystopian times we are living in. As Spanish film-maker Pedro Almodóvar asserted in Madrid last year, side by side with two dozens of intellectuals who were trying to create a “House of Europe” (amongst whom the Nobel prizes Seamus Heaney and Gunter Grass, French composer Pierre Boulez and Portuguese Architect Álvaro Siza Vieira), economy has become the “only European narrative” (Belanciano, “A Europa à procura da sua Primavera” 7). That narrative is killing the Europe we know and the Europe we have dreamt of — such is the claim of another group of intellectuals (amongst whom Umberto Eco, Julia Kristeva, Salman Rushdie and António Lobo Antunes), who, in the manifesto “Europe or Chaos”, insist on this idea: “Europe is not in crisis, it is dying. Not Europe as in the territory, naturally. But Europe, the idea. The Europe that is a dream and a project” (*El País*, n.pg.).

The European narrative, exclusively based on economic principles, has in fact invaded all the aspects of our society. The worse is, as Zygmunt Bauman has rightly pointed out, that the governments, because they are financially dependent on the economic powers, are mere puppets at their hands, and are no more able to decide by themselves in order to shape our future (apud Belanciano 7) But it is not only our future that is being robbed from us: Portuguese philosopher José Gil has recently expressed his concern for the fact that we are being robbed our present too: our

---

\* A very short version of this text, written in Portuguese, was published in *Via Panorâmica: Revista Eletrônica de Estudos Anglo-Americanos* (special issue 2012), available at <http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/11651.pdf>

daily lives are being taken by unpostponable tasks, labour obligations, supplementary working hours, and excessive and unceasing bureaucratic imperatives (Gil 22).

This logic naturally affects our lives as academics and researchers. The crisis we are experiencing today is in fact systemic: it has an economic, social, political, educational and ecological nature, each part being interconnected with the other.<sup>1</sup> The frame of mind that is being forced on us as citizens is being imposed on us as academics and researchers too. So I would join the subscribers of the “Europe or Chaos” manifesto, extending my mourning to the academy: “The University is not in crisis, it is dying”.

## **2. A New Language, a New Worldvision**

In the past two decades, we have been submitted to unprecedented changes. As Pierre Bernard put it, referring to the French case (which can well be extended to the experiences in other European countries), in the 1990s, universities were confronted with the challenge of welcoming more students than ever; the government encouraged the growth of the existing universities and the creation of new institutions by promoting a policy of funding contracts based on the number of students received per institution. In the first years of the 21st century, the policy changed. For a decade, competitiveness was the watchword; the idea of excellence — only reached by a few — forced universities and research centres against each other, all fighting to belong to the league of winners (Bernard 5). At the turning of the decade — and even more now, with the new European funding programme Horizon 2020 —, the message has changed again: we all need to collaborate, first at a national level, then at an international level. Quite of a sudden, competitors became best friends, and knowledge is only envisioned as being possible through cooperation. Convergence is to be adopted as the new motto of both universities (mostly when it comes to the offer of postgraduate programmes) and research centres. And we are now supposed to live happily together in a worldwide “collaboratory”.

---

<sup>1</sup> Frédéric Lenoir describes the systemic nature of the crisis in his most recent book, *La Guérison du Monde* (2012).

In a very interesting article appropriately titled “The Rise of ‘The Market’ in Political Thinking about Universities”, Michael Kenny elucidates that the change universities have been submitted to goes well beyond the imposition of the motto of collaboration. As he puts it, the UK government adopted, in 2010, a new policy, which represents “the most radical change in policy affecting the funding of Higher Education that has ever been undertaken in the UK”:

This administration developed legislation which proposed to: reduce the public funding of University teaching by approximately 80%; retain direct financial support for subjects that are deemed to be “priority areas” for the economy and remove state funding for the teaching of other subjects; permit universities to charge students up to 9,000 pounds for their courses; and introduce a new system of support for students repaying the costs of degrees after they graduate.” (Kenny 8)

As Kenny evinces, this policy is totally at odds with the idea of “Higher Education as a public good”, and reflects “the ineluctable advance of an ideology — neo-liberalism — that has become the dominant perspective within politics and public policy since the 1980s (8).

I am sure that we all, no matter our nationality, can easily recognise all the measures and problems described above, as we have been suffering, for the past decades, the consequences of these changes of policy. And I am certain that, if we were to be submitted to a Rip Van Winkle experience 20 years ago, we would be as surprised with the process of reshaping and reordering that our universities had to conform to as Van Winkle was when he was told of the American Revolution. The problem is that this shift from seeing university as a public good to envisaging it as a commodity for consumption has co-occurred with the introduction, both in the universities and in the research centres, of a language totally outlandish to the academy, a set of vocabulary that reflects the new world vision and constrains our lives. We are all familiar with the new lexicon we are now supposed to use and we all know by heart the litany that justifies it. First of all, we live in a “knowledge society”, powered by “knowledge economy”.<sup>2</sup> “Knowledge

---

<sup>2</sup> V. Lynn Meek and Dianne Davies noted that several writers “have extended the concept

society” is to be understood, as Marie-Louise Kearny argues, as

...the Third Industrial Revolution, based on the advent of new technologies which have facilitated the ongoing march of globalization. Today, the Knowledge Society and the Knowledge Economy place cognitive resources at the centre of human activity and social dynamics. (Kearny 13)

As V. Lynn Meek and Dianne Davies have maintained, the consequence of this logic is that knowledge has become “‘exteriorised’ from knowers”, as “the old notion that knowledge and pedagogy are inextricably linked has been replaced by a new view of knowledge as a commodity”. Science ceases then to be a “search for truth” to be a “search for a response to economic and political interests” (Meek & Davies 58).

From this logic, other words have gained ground: “knowledge transfer”, which we are all familiar with, but also the “stakeholder” concept. Borrowed, as much as most of the other concepts now in fashion, from management literature, the concept suggests that “an organisation’s long-term success is not solely dependent on the financial interests of its immediate shareholders, but that it must take account of a broad range of social, political and cultural agents in order to achieve long-term success” (54). But this knowledge-based society has another motto which we all have been made aware of: “Think global, act local” — we are told when we are reminded of our “regional, social and economic commitment” and informed we are expected to cooperate with the public authorities, as well as with the business sector (55).

Other economic perspectives are evident in many other concepts that have been imposed on us. Such is the case of “mobility” (and the discussion of the impact of mobility on knowledge; as knowledge has an economic value, mobility too is seen from an economic viewpoint); such is also the case of the university rankings and the notion of “world-class universities”, as well as the concept of the 100 best universities in Europe, which has become a real obsession for many university administrators.

---

[of knowledge-based economy], arguing that science and research are transforming the whole of the social structure, thus creating a knowledge-based society of global proportions (Meek & Davis 58-59).

And such is finally the process of accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, which implies never ending hours of paper work, and culminates with an assessment grounded on general and abstract standards, blind to the specificity of the fields of study.

But because education is now seen as a commodity, we, teachers, are to take on the role of salesmen, a new function most of us have found hard to cope with. As this function has been imposed on us — as much as most of the tasks we perform nowadays — our relationship with the university has changed. As Evy Varsamopoulou has pointed out, “University”, in the Middle Ages, was “a shorthand for *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* (community/association of masters and scholars)” (Varsamopoulou 60). But the sentiment of affiliation we used to experience when our university was mainly a place for academic activities, has been replaced by a plain work relationship as the university started to look down on us as our employer. Massive evaluation of our performance (“high performance” also became quite a fashionable concept) is in fact at the basis of this new relationship, as we are assessed not only by the quality of our teaching and research, but also by our ability to cope with box-ticking exercises, to raise money from external funding and to manage huge research projects. Meanwhile, a new hierarchy has been created, with what Meek and Davies call “the capitalist professor” on the top, all-powerful for his capacities to raise funding (53).

The problem is that although one of the key-words now in fashion is creativity, inventiveness and imagination are not, as Amanda Goodhall contends, the obvious outcomes of an “overly controlled environment governed by rigid procedures, low levels of individual autonomy, the use of surveillance measures, reduced resources”, “excessively monitoring” supervision, “over-bureaucratisation and managerialism in universities, intensified auditing, excessive controls and the overuse of accounting practices when measuring performance” (Goodhall, “Creative vs. Accounting”, n.pg.). In fact, the funding system, because it imposes a frame of mind that researchers have to comply with, stimulates academics to opt for ‘safe’ research themes that will be more likely to secure funding, rather than to be innovative and take a risk (Ulrich & Yagci 114).

Another predicament caused by the way economy has colonised education and research has to do with the shift it originated in the function

of the universities, who have practically abandoned their formative and social function in order to embrace the task of complying with economic objectives (Sobrinho 20). In this process, José Dias Sobrinho contends, Higher Education has rather become an ingredient of the competitiveness of the mercantile world than a human right; more a service based on fees that favour individualism than an essential instrument of citizenship (19). The university seems to be forgetting, in actual fact, as Victor Rosário Muñoz suggested, its social responsibility,<sup>3</sup> i.e., to shoulder the duty of promoting a type of education and research that has clear ethical and social implications, and which is committed to peace, to the defence of human rights and the values of democracy (Muñoz 197). As Evy Varsamopoulou rightly pointed out, “the university to be led by policy makers who are in turn led by these markets is a complete betrayal of its mission”; the university will never be true to itself while it abides to the principle of “know-how for commercial gain or state power” (Varsamopoulou 68, 60). The University, Varsamopoulou continues, needs to be founded on the concept of autonomy, and to foster, first of all, “originality and autonomy of thought, in a shared, non-competitive, non-antagonistic environment” (68-9).

The way Varsomopoulou formulates her thought is instrumental for our understanding of what has happened to the university. Her vision is dichotomic: on the one hand, there is the economy-driven language, which includes the concepts of “market economy”, “commercial gain” and “state power”; on the other hand, there is the language of the academy as it used to be (or, perhaps better, as it has been dreamt of), grounded on the notions of “autonomy”, “originality”, “non-competitiveness” and “non-antagonism”. What Varsomopoulou is suggesting is that we have to replace the language of economy by the language of true science, a language we can well understand because it is the language in which we were raised as academics.

---

<sup>3</sup> Elia Marúm Espinosa considers the social function of the University of the utmost importance, and a fundamental assessment criteria of the quality of the institutions of Higher Education: “Asking about the quality of the University inevitably implies asking about its social function” (Espinosa, 2012: 37).

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, George Orwell showed how our thoughts are conditioned by the language we speak. In the rather dystopian society dominated by Big Brother, Newspeak, scheduled for official adoption around 2050, is designed to render the ideological propositions of Ingsoc the only conveyable doctrine. The problem is that, because of the premises on which that language is founded, it is practically impossible to translate most texts from Oldspeak (older English) into Newspeak. Such is the case, for instance, of the introduction of the Declaration of Independence, which can only be translated into Newspeak by being summed up into one word: “crimethink”.

Over the past decade, a similar lexical imposition has been made on the Academia. Our vocabulary, which used to be that of free and true science (I mean science the goal of which is the advancement of science), has been replaced by a reduced number of key-concepts designed to render the ideological propositions of a knowledge economy the only conveyable doctrine. “Think global, act local”, for instance (of which I spoke above), became one of the new commandments of this new doctrine. But many more commandments have been responsible for the progressive destruction of the university as we knew it, commandments built upon key-concepts that normally inform an economic perspective: such is the case of the concepts of “convergence”, “relevance” and “impact”, the main instruments that funding and accreditation institutions have been resorting to in order to evaluate our research and our programmes of study, and which I will set myself to examine here.

### **3. Re-examining the Concepts of Convergence, Relevance and Impact**

Although I am obviously very critical about the new vocabulary that is being imposed on us, restraining our lives as teachers and researchers, I would like to suggest that before we decide to reject these concepts we should try to reflect on them and see what is wrong with them. The thing is that they are mere tools, and should always be considered as such. For that purpose, the perspective offered by Ivan Illich in his seminal work *Tools for Conviviality* may be of great help. The book was published in 1973, in the context of an industrial society in crisis because, in Illich’s words, of the very problematic relationship that prevailed between the individuals

and the tools they used. Illich elucidates that he uses the concept of “tool” in a very broad sense, subsuming into that category “all rationally designed devices, be they artefacts or rules, codes or operators”, thus distinguishing “all these planned and engineered instrumentalities from other things such as basic food or implements, which in a given culture are not deemed to be subject to rationalization” (Illich 97). According to Illich, at the source of the problem there has been an inability to understand that there are limits — or watersheds, as he calls them — that should never be crossed. As he explains, “[w]hen an enterprise grows beyond a certain point (...), it first frustrates the end for which it was originally designed, and then rapidly becomes a threat to society itself” (35). The problem is then not with the tools, but the way people have been using them. In his very broad idea of tool, Illich includes the concept of “knowledge”. His clarification of what happens with “new knowledge” may help us understand what is behind the crisis we are experiencing today:

At first, new knowledge is applied to the solution of a clearly stated problem and scientific measuring sticks are applied to account for the new efficiency. But at a second point, the progress demonstrated in a previous achievement is used as a rationale for the exploitation of society as a whole in the service of a value which is determined and constantly revised by an element of society, by one of its self-certifying professional Elites. (58)

Our society, Illich reminds us, is at the hands of the managers of “tools-nations, corporations, parties, structured movements, professions-hold power”, who strive to maintain the “growth-oriented structures which they manipulate. These managers have the power to make major decisions; they can generate new demands for the output of their tools and enforce the creation of new social labels to fit them. They can even go so far as to limit the output of tools in the interest of maximizing benefits (83).

Contrasting with this rather dystopian picture of our society, Illich offers us the vision of what he calls the “convivial society”, one where people would use tools “least controlled by others”, where “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons” would prevail, as well as “the intercourse of persons with their environment; and this in contrast with the conditioned response of persons to the demands made upon them by



others, and by a man-made environment” (70). This, Illich says, can be a real possibility if we manage to start using tools differently. As he asserts, “the vision of new possibilities requires only the recognition that scientific discoveries can be useful in at least two opposite ways” (38):

Tools are intrinsic to social relationships. An individual relates himself in action to his society through the use of tools that he actively masters, or by which he is passively acted upon. To the degree that he masters his tools, he can invest the world with his meaning; to the degree that he is mastered by his tools, the shape of the tool determines his own self-image. (98)

These, and other ideas that Illich propounds in his seminal work, are indeed important for our understanding of the harsh situation we are currently experiencing in our academic lives. If it is true, as Illich suggests, that we can only overcome the situation “if we learn to invert the present deep structure of tools” (65), then what we have to do is to examine the tools that are constraining us and try to find out what is inscribed on the other side of the coin.

I am not going to deal with the concepts of convergence, relevance and impact separately, because together they form, for better and for worse, a sole unit of action and meaning. Thus, the discussion of one of the concepts will inevitably entail the consideration of some aspects that may seem to be more pertinent to the other concepts.

Let’s start with the concept of impact, which is being used as a tool of measurement of the quality of our published work, on the one hand, and of the economic and social interest of our research projects, on the other hand. There are hardly words to describe the real obsession that seems to have taken the administrators of the universities, who keep reminding their staff of the correct ways of quantifying their impact. Many universities, mostly in the UK and in the United States, provide information on the way impact should be measured<sup>4</sup>. The University of Nottingham, for instance, is currently promoting an “Impact Campaign” to raise 150 million pounds over the next five years in order to support “a series of high-impact projects

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the case of Griffith University, at <http://libraryguides.griffith.edu.au/content.php?pid=220206&csid=1858212>

on the local, national and global stage”.<sup>5</sup> Impact is even being used to attract students. On the website of the University of Stirling, for instance, under the title “impact” one can read: “Impact: enabling the next generation of researchers to realise their potential and to deliver world-class research that directly addresses the needs of society”.<sup>6</sup> As Brigitte Nerlich points out, although the standard procedure for the measurement of impact has been established by the REF (Research Excellence Framework), people are now exploring the possibility of considering video clips posted on YouTube as well as posts on Facebook or Twitter as indicators of impact, provided they have a significant number of likes.<sup>7</sup> The truth is, as a Philosophy professor contented in an article he published in *The Guardian*, that the “impact agenda” cannot be ignored by those who are active in Academia, as it now has an academic value too: for instance, “research grant applications need to include an ‘impact statement’, while the new research excellence framework assesses impact as a major component of the research quality of each academic department”.<sup>8</sup> The concept of impact is becoming so important that we can even talk of an “impact-industry” (Illich would say, à propos, that we have created an instrument and became slaves of that instrument, as “self-certifying professional elites” are getting rich upon a need that we invented). Michael Wykes, Impact and Performance Manager at the University of Exeter, spoke daringly about the issue at the “Future of Impact” conference held on April 10 (2013) when he put a number of rather inconvenient questions to the room:

... do we shun professional impact writers or do we buy in help? Should we be spending millions of pounds on demonstrating and reporting impact? Do professional organisations have a role to play in building software systems for recording impact, in writing impact case studies, in interviewing academics? How do we integrate new software

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/impactcampaign/impactcampaign.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.stir.ac.uk/impact/>

<sup>7</sup> <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/makingsciencepublic/2012/05/08/the-language-of-impact/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/feb/02/higher-education-research-grants>

and database systems into daily practice? (apud O'Brien 2013)<sup>9</sup>

This impact-industry has another face we are also well-acquainted with: the “publish or perish” commandment, now being pushed to the extreme, forces us to publish a lot (quantity does matter!) in a number of the so-called “high-profile” periodicals, and be cited as many times as we can. Although this has not so far truly affected the humanities, we can already foresee on the horizon the threat of being assessed in function of a citation-counting system. And as books are valued as much as a few page article, we are now witnessing the rise of what Reinach rightly names “Salami Science”, i.e., the result of research, which used to be presented under the form of a book or of a long article, is now used for the publication of several articles (Reinach, “Darwin e a prática da ‘Salami Science’, n.pg.). In this publication and citation industry, everyone gets rich but the authors of the articles and their peers who are in charge of the assessment of the quality of the articles, who work for free. The recognition of this rather unfair situation has led to the discussion of “the cost of knowledge”, the title of the petition promoted by Timothy Gowers in 2012, and signed by more than 12,000 academics and researchers, who all agreed in boycotting the academic journal publisher Elsevier, an example readily followed by the administration of several universities, such as Harvard or Paris 6, who encouraged their staff to publish in open-access journals.

This new version of the “publish or perish” commandment, now associated with the idea of impact, has another dark side, which has been recently exposed. As Richard Monvoisin explains, many of the salami-works that are being published are a fraud, either because they are the product of plagiarism, or because they disclose results of experiences that were never duly obtained (Monvoisin 2013).

The concept of impact seems no doubt questionable when we have this dark side in mind. But is the concept per se a “bad concept”? In order to understand this issue, we will need to relate this concept with that of

---

<sup>9</sup> file:///Users/fatimavieira/Desktop/APEAA/Notes%20from%20The%20Future%20of%20Impact%20%E2%80%93%20and%20beyond%20%20%20Bulletin%20Academic.html

“relevance” (and question what is “relevant knowledge”), on the one hand, and to look at another directive of our times, that of promoting outreach activities, on the other.

Let’s then start by very briefly reflecting on “outreach activities”, which are normally seen as opportunities for moments of science communication. As Boaventura Sousa Santos elucidates, outreach activities far surpass that aspect; they should be, in Sousa Santos’s view, envisaged not as something that is external to our activities as academics and researchers, but as the very bone of the mission of the university. The legitimacy of the university, Sousa Santos contends, will only be fulfilled when the so-called outreach activities are developed to a point where they disappear as such and become a rightful part of the activities of research and teaching. Outreach activities are to be ideally seen not as the third element of the triad Teaching — Research — Outreach, but as a political action, a sign that the university is not separated from society, but that it is instead concerned with its social problems, tries to solve them and contributes to its development. Cited in the white Brazilian document that defines the National Policy for the University’s Outreach Mission, just published in 2012, Sousa Santos stands for the idea that the reform of the University should confer a new centrality to outreach activities (with consequences on the CVs and the careers of the teaching staff), presenting them as an alternative model to global capitalism, attributing to the Universities an active participation in the construction of the social cohesion in the fight for real democracy and against social exclusion and environmental degradation, in defence of cultural diversity (Sousa Santos 2004).

This perspective propounded by Sousa Santos naturally implies a reformulation of the idea of knowledge and a reflection on what we, as academics and researchers, do. As Gordon Graham has asserted in *Universities: The Recovery of an Idea* (2008), “pure science is not the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, but rather the pursuit of understanding, within which the acquisition of knowledge has a central part to play” (Graham 92). Although Graham is referring here to “pure science”, as Varsomopoulou argues this definition of the main objective of “pure science” is “also true of literature and philosophy, the foundational disciplines of the arts and humanities (Varsomopoulou 66). The idea to retain, then, is that of understanding; knowledge is but a part of this rather

intricate process that Graham calls “the pursuit of understanding”.

The problem is, as Edgar Morin has rightly pointed out, that we live under the illusion that ours is a society of knowledge, when, in fact, ours is the society of “unconnected knowledge” (Morin 241). As a matter of fact, our knowledge, being fragmentary, produces what Morin calls “a global ignorance” (240). If we really want to understand things, we will have to invest in a kind of thought capable of tying up the fragments of knowledge, the parts to the whole, the local to the global and vice-versa, i.e., we will have to invest in complex thought, an idea which Morin has been working on for over two decades. One of the main problems of our age, Morin contends, is that we were raised with this notion that we can only get to know the world through very clear and distinct ideas, in a process that reduces complex thought to basics, separating what should be tied up and eliminating the contradictions. All the advanced sciences (such as the sciences of the earth, ecology, cosmology...) have broken up with the “old reductionist dogma” of the pursuit of an “elementary explanation” (242). “Knowing” implies being able to contextualise, to globalise, to multi-dimensionalise (243), to be sensitive to the ideas of ambiguity and ambivalence, to be able to associate what seems to be antagonic, i.e., to think in a complex way (254). Only in this situation can we speak of pertinent or relevant knowledge (256). Relevant knowledge — Morin contends — is that which succeeds in revealing the different faces of an only and same reality. And if it is true that we will never have access to global knowledge, at least we can aim at a multidimensional one (261).

What Morin is saying, when he stands for the need for complex thought, is that we need to converge. This does not mean, though, that Morin subscribes to the commandment that, in the frame of the above-mentioned theories of impact, exhorts academics and researchers to converge. In fact, although the word is the same, the rationale that is behind it is very different: Morin strives for convergence because he aspires to understand the world (allow me to remind you that, according to Gordon, science is the acquisition of knowledge in order to try to understand); the idea of convergence that prevails today is described with terms that reveal its economic intention. In reality, the MIT White Paper on Convergence published in 2011 defines convergence as a “new research model (...) which draws on an ongoing merger of life, physical and engineering

sciences”.<sup>10</sup> Convergence, we read in that document, is important because it enables innovation, it offers new opportunities, it constitutes “a third great revolution in life sciences and biomedical research”, it is “the result of true intellectual cross-pollination” (White Paper, 5, 6, 8,9). If these words certainly ring a bell (the academic language now insists on the ideas of innovation and opportunity), the second chapter of the MIT White Paper confirms the economic objectives of this convergence. In fact, in that chapter, adequately titled “The Economic Case for Supporting Convergence”, one can read: “There are likely to be highly fruitful economic implications...” and “[b]ringing on a new phase of technological advances (...) could be one of the keys to our future economic growth” (17).

The problem is that this model, conceived for life sciences, physical sciences, and engineering, is now being imposed on the humanities and the social sciences. What is worse, the economic value of convergence has been transferred too, and we are told that we are expected to converge in order to produce wealth. Quite of a sudden, in result of this process of transplantation to our field of study of a model produced in a totally different context, we find ourselves at the heart of a “collaboratory” we do not know how to operate.

The concept of collaboratory seems to me to be suitable to describe the situation we are experiencing today. Collaboratories became fashionable in the UK and the United States over the past ten years, although the idea goes back to the beginning of the 1990’s. Collaboratories are physical or virtual spaces created around information made available by digital libraries. They are designed to enable the sharing of data and instruments and the interaction between specialists of different fields by providing them with an experimental research environment for collaborative science. Although this may seem a bit distant for us, allow me to offer you a glimpse into what I believe to be a very close future, foreseen on the website of the Erasmus University, in Rotterdam, where the “online scholarly collaboration course” of the University Library is described.

Online scholarly collaboration in a collaboratory or virtual research environment (VRE) is a relatively new way of working

---

<sup>10</sup> “Letter to our Colleagues”, *White Paper on Convergence*.

in the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, there are still a large number of questions about how these forms of online communication and collaboration influence the nature of research. The main ‘obstacles’ to the implementation of smart software to support research and teaching seem not to be technological, but social.

After going through the Online scholarly collaboration course, you will be able to

- . get an impression of the diverse and fast-growing field of collaboratory projects and environments, especially in the social sciences and humanities;
- . explain how online collaboration tools can be integrated in the research process;
- . create your own collaborative environment;
- . identify failure and success factors, especially organisational and social ones;
- . know when and how to create a Team Site or subsite (using SharePoint);
- . work together in writing a document (using SharePoint);
- . share references in RefWorks.

This online course will no doubt seem strange and even scary to most of us, mostly because it confronts us with a type of language we are not familiar with. That is why I said that I feel that collaboratories are a very good example of the situation we live in: we do not understand what they are, we fear we will not be able to operate them. But are they a bad concept? They may well be an added value to our research — as the Internet is, in fact — provided we know how to use them. Ivan Illich was very clear with regard to this issue when he asserted that “[a] tool can grow out of man’s control, first to become his master and finally to become his executioner” (Illich 278).

#### **4. Utopian Trojan Horses**

Although the scenario I have been describing certainly sounds alarming and worrisome, I believe that we should not take it as an account of an unavoidable future. In fact, I would like to offer a utopian ending to this story by providing a couple of arguments that justify my confidence

that change is still possible.

The first argument will be borrowed from the French philosopher Frédéric Lenoir, who, in his most recent work, contends that as the modernity made of the individual the centre of everything (Lenoir 15), the answer to the problems of the ultra-modernity we live in lies in a possible change of the human being (60). This change, Lenoir claims, is a real possibility, for it depends on a modification of the way we perceive things. In a certain manner, Lenoir is referring to what Illich described as the need for man to enlarge his angle of vision, so that he can understand that any scientific discovery “can be useful in at least two opposite ways” (Illich 40). This process of enlargement of one’s angle of vision does not imply an ethical change only; as a matter of fact, it rather entails a change in the way our brain works. Resorting to French neuroscientist Jean-Pierre Changeux’s studies of the brain, Lenoir explains that it has been scientifically established that our brain is affected by the reciprocal relationship that it creates with our social life, giving birth to a complex neural structure that is renewed every generation. The left side of our brain has a rational, logical and verbal nature, and aims at abstraction; the right side has an emotional, intuitive, relational nature, and aims at picturing things. The human brain has suffered profound changes throughout history. In the passage from the Palaeolithic age, for instance, to the Neolithic, when the human being became sedentary, a progression of behavioural and cultural characteristics occurred, which were marked by a change in the neural structure. The advent of the Internet, for example, is the best proof that our brain is capable of changing. In fact, we all became apt to perform a variety of tasks at the same time — write an essay, consult online books, check and answer e-mails and phone calls certainly is proof of that capability. As Changeux suggests, if our brain is immersed in a new environment, we will be able to recuperate the almost lost characteristics of the right side of the brain (the emotional, intuitive and imaginative part, which has not been much developed since the passage from the Palaeolithic age to the Neolithic) and reach a balanced development of both parts (apud. Lenoir 292-5). Being able to broaden one’s angle of vision would definitely cause an exceptional progress for humanity. According to the Portuguese writer Gonçalo M. Tavares, this is precisely how scientific advancements occur. In *Brief Notes on Science*, he explains the difference between looking



at things from the centre of the eye and from the corner of the eye:

Observing out of the corner of one's eye indicates, in science, the commencement of a new hypothesis.

What is observed from the centre of one's eye is the obvious, what is shared by the multitude.

In Science, as in the world of inventions, observing out of the corner of one's eye is seeing the detail, that thing which is different and which may be the start of something meaningful.

Observing the reality out of the corner of one's eye, i.e.: thinking slightly to the side. From here all the important scientific theories were born. (Tavares 75)

The second argument will be borrowed from George Orwell, more precisely from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Although this work is known for offering us one of the most violent portraits ever painted of an agonizing society — a society from which the values of freedom of thought have been practically eradicated — the truth is that even Orwell, the grand master of dystopia, did not hesitate to show his trust in man's capability to survive and to assert his humanity. I am naturally not referring to Winston Smith, who we find defeated at the end of the novel in his love for Big Brother, but to the Appendix, where the principles of Newspeak are described in the past, thus indicating that the situation has been overcome (although it is not explained how it happened):

Newspeak was the official language of Oceania and had been devised to meet the ideological needs of Ingsoc, or English Socialism. In the year 1984 there was not as yet anyone who used Newspeak as his sole means of communication, either in speech or writing. (NFN 312)

As in 2013 there is not as yet anyone who uses the knowledge-society Newspeak as the sole means of communication, it seems that there is still some hope for our case as well.

My third and last argument will be grounded on the conviction that we, academics and researchers working in the field of the humanities and the social sciences, can make a difference. According to Gilles Demailly, the contribution of our field of studies can in reality be essential to the

process of transformation we will have to invest in so that we can get out of this crisis (apud. Bernard 10). Evy Varsomopoulou stands for a similar position, claiming that “[t]he humanities are arguably in a stronger position to fight the logic of the market economy and the totalisation of instrumental reason because by their very nature they oppose the instrumentalisation of university education (68). I do subscribe to this view. If, as Pedro Almodóvar maintains, economy has become the only narrative in Europe, then the only solution is to replace it by another narrative. We, academics and researchers of the Humanities and the Social Sciences are in a privileged position to fight the dystopian language now in fashion because the subjects we teach are entailed by the principles of critical thinking, because what we do, in our courses, is to teach our students to learn how to think. And no one who is capable of thinking will ever be prepared to adhere to the new logic that is being imposed on us.

From my point of view, the solution lies not in a possible refusal to use the language — as I said, we cannot afford to ignore it because our careers, as academics and researchers, depend on our participation in projects — but on a far more profound revolution, a revolution achieved through the subversion of the key-concepts of this new language, through using them as our Trojan horses. Let’s converge not because we are told to do so or because we want to contribute to this knowledge-economy, but because convergence will provide us with a multidimensional perspective, the very basis of the complex thought that will enable our understanding of society. Let’s promote relevant knowledge, but think of relevant knowledge not as that which contributes to this knowledge-economy, but as that which provides our students with the relevant tools for the understanding of the world. Let’s promote outreach activities not because we need them for our reports, but because, as Sousa Santos rightly contended, it will open up the way for the University to fulfil its social mission and assert itself as a public good, and contribute in a positive way to the effective change of society. And let’s be more political in our participation in the structure of our universities, of our research centres, in our relationship with the funding authorities, claiming for a more active role in the process of decision-making — and being prepared to contribute in a positive way (which means more work to do). The University is no doubt a privileged place for the transformation of society. If we make an effort and start

fighting the economic vision which is dominating it now, if we strive for the implementation, in our Universities, of a system of a real participatory democracy, if we cease to think of our students as “clients”, and call instead for their participation, respecting them as active partners, and making them understand the responsibilities inherent to the fact that they are being heard, if we fight for our intellectual autonomy, for the relevance of our topics of research, refusing to comply with a list of ready-made topics, if, as William Morris would say, we are rebels enough, then we will be able to breathe new life into the university, to reinvigorate it, rejuvenate it, stimulate it, and find in it more stimulus for our careers and our lives.

### **5. ‘A vision rather than a dream’**

In case I have not managed so far to persuade you with my arguments, allow me to resort to the utopian strategy of offering you a picture of my dream for the future. I dream of a university where we are granted autonomy of teaching and research, where the prevailing climate is not of suspicion, but of trust, a university nourished by intellectual innovation and artistic creation, and which understands that these values are not translatable into numbers, a university which is a public good, which wishes for a leading position in society for the benefit of society, which provides its students with the tools for the understanding of society and for changing society as well, a university which looks on us not as employees but as rightful members of an Academia that is a “community of masters”, a university that is a kaleidoscope of “knowledges” capable of harmoniously interacting with each other, thus contributing to a multidimensional perspective of life, a university capable of creating devices for the transfer of knowledge that are sensitive to the immaterial side of life (values such as cohesion, happiness, emotional balance), a university that is capable of harmonising a competitive policy with a policy that aims at happiness. It will not take much. As Illich would say, it is just a matter of ensuring that the tools we are using are well used, so that they may become instruments for construction rather than instruments for destruction. This is the dream that I want to share with you, hoping, as William Morris did, that “if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream” (Morris 228).

## Works Cited

- Belanciano, Vítor. "A Europa à procura da sua Primavera" (interview to Zygmunt Bauman). *Ipsilon.publico.pt*, 5 April (2013): 7.
- Bernard, Pierre. "L'Enseignement Supérieur et la recherche, un nouvel acteur territorial?". *Revue Urbanisme. Innovation Recherche Territoires Universités*. Hors de Série. 43, November (2012): 5-12.
- El País*, digital version, "International" section. 25 January (2013). [http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/01/25/actualidad/1359117883\\_420395.html](http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/01/25/actualidad/1359117883_420395.html). Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Espinosa, Elia Marúm. "Actores de la calidad de la educación superior en América Latina y España: acuerdos y desacuerdos". *La Acreditación de la Educación Superior en Iberoamerica. La Gestión de la Calidad de los Programas Educativos. Tensiones, Desencuentros, Conflictos y Resultados*. Vol. 1. Ed. Rosário Muñoz, Victor Manuel et al. Bloomington: Palibrio, 2012: 36-57.
- Gil, José. "Interview" *Visão*. 20 Dec. 2012: 22.
- Goodhall, Amanda. "Creative vs. Accounting". *Times Higher Education*. 22 march (2012). <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/features/creative-vs-accounting/419371.article>: n.pg. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Graham, Gordon. *Universities: The Recovery of an Idea*. Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2008.
- Illich, Ivan, *Tools for Conviviality*. <http://opencollector.org/history/homebrew/tools.html#hid4S>. Web. Nov. 2013.
- Kenny, Michael. "The Rise of 'The Market'. Political Thinking about Universities". *The European Legacy*. 18 (2013): 7-23.
- Kearny, Mary-Louise. "Higher Education, Research and Innovation: Charting the course of the Changing Dynamics of the Knowledge Society". Ed. Meek, V. Lynn et al. *Higher Education, Research and Innovation: Changing Dynamics*. Kassel: International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel, 2009: 7-23.
- Lenoir, Frédéric. *La Guérison du Monde*. Paris: Fayard 2012.
- Meek, V. Lynn & Dianne Davies. "Policy Dynamics in Higher Education and Research: Concepts and Observations". Ed. Meek, V. Lynn et al. *Higher Education, Research and Innovation: Changing Dynamics*. Kassel: International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel, 2009: 41-84.

- Monvoisin, Richard. “Pesquisa pública, publicação privada”. 7 Jan 2013. <http://www.diplomatique.org.br/artigo.php?id=1342>. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Morin, Edgar. *La Voie pour l’Avenir de l’Humanité*. Paris: Pluriel, 2012.
- Muñoz, Victor Manuel Rosário. “Repensar los procesos de acreditación en la universidad pública mexicana en el marco de su responsabilidad social”. *La Acreditación de la Educación Superior en Iberoamerica. La Gestión de la Calidad de los Programas Educativos. Tensiones, Desencuentros, Conflictos y Resultados*. Vol. 1. Ed. Rosário Muñoz, Victor Manuel et al. Bloomington: Palibrio, 2012: 195-209.
- O’Brien, Chris. “Notes from The Future of Impact – and beyond”, *Academic Bulletin*. May (2013). file:///Users/fatimaveira/Desktop/APEAA/Notes%20from%20The%20Future%20of%20Impact%20%E2%80%93%20and%20beyond%20%20Bulletin%20Academic.html. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. London: Penguin, 1989.
- Reinach, Fernando. “Darwin e a prática da ‘Salami Science’”. *O Estado d S. Paulo*. 27 April (2013). <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,darwin-e-a-pratica-da-salami-science-,1026037,0.htm>. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Sobrinho, José Días. “Acreditación en América Latina: crisis de la educación superior y distintas fases de la calidad”. *La Acreditación de la Educación Superior en Iberoamerica. La Gestión de la Calidad de los Programas Educativos. Tensiones, Desencuentros, Conflictos y Resultados*. Vol. 1. Ed. Rosário Muñoz, Victor Manuel et al. Bloomington: Palibrio, 2012: 17-35.
- Santos, Boaventura S. *A Universidade no século XXI: para uma reforma democrática e emancipatória da Universidade*. São Paulo: Cortez, 2004.
- Tavares, Gonçalo M. *Breves Notas sobre Ciência*, Lisboa, Relógio D’Água, 2006.
- Teichler, Ulrich & Yasemin Yagci. “Changing Challenges of Academic Work: Concepts and Observations”. *Higher Education, Research and Innovation: Changing Dynamics*. Ed. in Meek, V. Lynn et al. Kassel: International Centre for Higher Education Research Kassel, 2009: 85-145.
- The Third Revolution: The Convergence of the Life Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Engineering*. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology. <http://dc.mit.edu/sites/dc.mit.edu/files/MIT%20White%20Paper%20on%20Convergence.pdf>. Web. 10 Nov. 2013.
- Varsamopoulou, Evy, “The Fate of the Humanities, The Fate of the University”, *The European Legacy*. Vol. 18:1, April (2013): 59-73.

### ABSTRACT

In the past decade, we, academics, have been submitted to unprecedented changes which have affected our teaching and research. Being a university teacher now involves never ending hours of paper work, dealing with economy-driven concepts that are totally outlandish to our research concerns. In this paper, I set myself to examine the vocabulary that reflects the new world vision that is being imposed on us — namely the concepts of impact, convergence and relevance —, and put forward the idea that the problem is not with the concepts but with the way they are being used. Following Ivan Illich's suggestion that there are at least two opposite ways of using tools, I argue that it is possible to change the university by replacing the economic principles that are at the background of those concepts by the principles of autonomy of thought, non-competitive environment and pursuit of real knowledge. In this perspective, the concepts of impact, convergence and relevance are the Trojan Horses that will enable us to change the university from within.

### KEYWORDS

University; Impact; Convergence; Relevance; Utopia

### RESUMO

Ao longo da última década, a prática docente e as atividades de investigação dos professores do Ensino Superior foram afetadas por mudanças sem precedentes. A nossa profissão implica agora horas intermináveis de trabalho burocrático, lidando com conceitos derivados do mundo económico, que nada têm a ver com os nossos interesses de investigação. Neste artigo, procedo a uma análise do vocabulário que reflete a nova cosmovisão que nos está a ser imposta — nomeadamente os conceitos de impacto, convergência e relevância —, e avanço a ideia de que o problema não reside nos conceitos mas na forma como eles estão a ser utilizados. Seguindo a sugestão de Ivan Illich de que existem pelo menos duas formas diferentes de utilizarmos um instrumento, defendo que será possível mudarmos a

universidade procedendo à substituição dos princípios económicos que lhe subjazem atualmente pelos princípios de autonomia de pensamento, ambiente não-competitivo e busca de conhecimento relevante. Nesta perspetiva, os conceitos de impacto, convergência e relevância serão os Cavalos de Tróia que permitirão que a mudança da universidade se processe de dentro para fora.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Universidade; Impacto; Convergência; Relevância; Utopia

---





# The Reign of Consciousness — Late Henry James

*Heinz Ickstadt*  
Kennedy Institut, FU Berlin



## The Reign of Consciousness — Late Henry James

During the last fifty years or so, the image of Henry James has gone through many transformations. The fast turning carousel of changing theories has provided us with several sets of critical spectacles of which each has made us look at him with new (or different) eyes. I remember that when I first read him as a student in the late fifties, it was the New Critics (such as R. P. Blackmur) who made us see in James the early master of the modern novel, the expert craftsman whose work — supreme example of the pure autonomy of art — transcended its historical and/or political contexts and conditions. To be sure, there was also a counter position (mostly Marxist) that rejected James as esoteric and elitist, despised him almost for what it called his ahistorical aestheticism. But since this counter-image was fairly crude and the denunciation of the aesthetic so obviously ideological, it was easy to dismiss.<sup>1</sup>

The various revisions since then have never questioned James's status as a master of fiction, but they have sacked the modernist monument that the New Critics had made of him. The New Historicists saw his insistence on aesthetic appreciation (which he himself had understood as

---

<sup>1</sup> R.P. Blackmur, ed., "Introduction," *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces*, by Henry James (New York: Scribner's, 1934); Frederick Dupee, *Henry James* (New York, 1951) and ed. *The Question of Henry James: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1945). For a Marxist approach see Granville Hicks, "Fugitives," *The Great Tradition: An Interpretation of American Literature Since the Civil War* (New York, 1933), and, more subtly and substantially, Jean-Christophe Agnew, "The Consuming Vision of Henry James," *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. by Richard W. Fox & T. Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 65-100. Agnew argued that the aestheticism of James's late phase was complicit with the culture of consumption, it so vehemently opposed.

a critical response to a rising culture of “the cheap and easy” [Balzac 70]) as deeply complicit with that culture; just as Foucauldian readings saw his aesthetics of perception as complicit with a social system of surveillance and metaphorically linked to the coercive power politics of Empire. Post-structuralist readings, not surprisingly, found in James’ textual ambiguities the Lacanian gap through which the signified had left forever, sending his readers on an endless search for an ever-elusive meaning. While recent pragmatist reassessments of his work have seen what James called his “religion of doing” as part of a “natural history of pragmatism” (Joan Richardson) that included Emerson and ran via William James to Gertrude Stein, or even anticipated the flexible strategies of Dewey’s thought or the dialectic subtleties of the Frankfurt School.<sup>2</sup>

What has remained a constant in this kaleidoscope of shifting critical opinions is the importance James gave to “consciousness” in the theory as well as the practice of his fiction — although what its function might be and how it worked continues to be a matter of debate. It was, in any case, this emphasis on consciousness that distinguished him from his fellow-realists as well as it marked him, in the eyes of later critics, as a forerunner of Proust, Joyce or Virginia Woolf: “He seems to have grown more and more inward, and to retire to his own interior to ruminate the morsels of his fellow men which he captures in his consciousness of things outside...,” his friend William Dean Howells wrote in 1904. (Anesko 330)

In what follows I shall discuss the limits, the doings, and the ideological implications of “consciousness” as it becomes manifest in James’s late fiction and in his theoretical reflections on “consciousness.” Of course, this could be the subject of a book whose argument can only be outlined here.<sup>3</sup> I shall walk around “consciousness” as if it were a

---

<sup>2</sup> Mark Seltzer, *Henry James and the Art of Power* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1984), Sharon Cameron, *Thinking in Henry James* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), Ross Posnock, *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity* (New York: Oxford UP, 1991), Joan Richardson, *A Natural History of Pragmatism* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> For an earlier study of that subject see, for instance, Alwyn Berland, *Culture and Conduct in the Novels of Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981).

concrete object of Jamesian representation — touching on its different aspects and assuming the position of various approaches to it.

But let me first point out that James's insistence on the centrality of consciousness in his "Art of Fiction" as well as in his earlier experiments in subjective point-of-view (his famous "center of consciousness" as practiced for the first time in Isabel Archer's midnight meditation in chapter 42 of *The Portrait of a Lady*) still falls within the logic of realism. Since, in this logic, reality is defined as subjectively experienced yet commonly shared, realism has indeed many different faces within the same conceptual frame. William Dean Howells and Mark Twain both emphasize the experience of common people — people of the middle class (in the case of Howells), people on margins (in the case of Twain). Their heroes are able to rely on the simple truths of "reason," of the senses and the instincts of the good heart which allow them to eventually do the right thing. Howells conceives of the democratic as average, grounded in shared values and common experience (he thus rarely uses a subjective point of view), while, with Twain, the common is frequently subjectively mediated via the senses. Twain's heroes are non-intellectual, the process of perception is more important than the process of reflection. In contrast, James (with only a few exceptions) prefers educated protagonists, capable of reflection and with a rich inner life. What is represented is not what is seen and experienced directly but the reflected impression, the reflected experience. Howells's realism had been based on a concept of "mimesis" that made the novel a mirror of reality. He attempted — as he once wrote — to hide the joint between the "real" and the mere image of the real and worried that the joint would always be visible. (Novel-Writing 290) James's concept was more flexible from the beginning. He did not ask whether his fiction was true to reality but whether it had "life" — which puts emphasis on the work of art itself.<sup>4</sup> Only if it had life could it create interest and involve the reader. That interest he identified, especially in his fiction of the late 1890s and after, with the life of the mind, the process of thinking (what his brother William had called, in his *Principles of Psychology* of 1890, the "stream of thought");

---

<sup>4</sup> Their differing concepts of realism become clearly evident in James's "The Art of Fiction" (1884) and Howells' "Novel Writing and Novel-Reading" (1899).

and it is the richness of the inner life, of reflection and consciousness that becomes his increasing obsession. While his novels of the 1880s — *The Portrait of a Lady*, *The Bostonians*, *Princess Casamassima*, *The Tragic Muse* — still present the broad social panorama of the realist tradition and prove his ambition to become the American Balzac, the more experimental fictions of the 1890s display what Howells saw as James's "inward" turn.

But with the exception of *The Portrait of a Lady*, his big novels of the 1880s had all failed to attract an audience. "I have fallen upon evil days," he wrote to Howells in the early 1890s, "every sign or symbol of one's being in the least *wanted*, anywhere or by anyone, having so utterly failed." (Letters, I, 237) Therefore — since his novels did not sell — he tried to convince himself for five years that his plays might. Yet after his stubborn attempt to achieve "fame" and "fortune" via the drama had also ended in disaster, he faced and, to some extent, accepted his alienation from the popular audience. He returned to fiction and committed himself, with even greater intensity, to exploring new possibilities of the narrative medium — hoping that the very expansion of the literary market would eventually allow for smaller, yet more refined publics that, "like shoals of fish rising for more delicate bait," would accept him on his own terms. (HJ, 1898, 654) If the dominant culture of the *fin de siècle* and after had turned itself more and more "outward" toward the "mass-produced," the "public" and "commercial," James's work from now on turned decidedly "inward," to mental processes, to the private inner life, to "consciousness" in short — as any comparison of the opening paragraphs of, let's say, *Portrait of a Lady* (1882) and *The Bostonians* (1886) with *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) and *The Ambassadors* (1903) will show.

James's novels display, from early on, his delight in the concretely visualized "picture" and the dramatic "scene." However, the passages from his later fictions give evidence not only of a much greater degree of narrative economy but also of James's subtle combination of "picture" and "scene." At the same time, there is a noticeable reduction of the authorial narrator's role. True, there is a narrative voice above the protagonist's consciousness, a voice that speaks of him (or her) in the third person ("Strether's first question", "She waited, Kate Croy"), but it rarely ventures beyond the personal perspective. In addition, the "scene" dramatizes in both cases a mental state: Strether's wavering between expectation and

delay or Kate Croy's restless indecision (as evident in the inverted structure of the sentence), whether she should leave or stay in her father's shabby living room, are both enacted in the linguistic performance of the text.

James's achievement here is the result of a longer period of experimentation in which he tried to make what he called "the divine principle of the Scenario" (Notebooks 188) part of his narrative technique. This resulted on the one hand, in the dramatization and externalization of mental processes and, on the other, in a preference of the scenic over the descriptive. James was fascinated by the theatre because the stage implied immediacy, an absolute Now, and the audience had to work hard to understand action and character primarily from gesture and from speech. James' short and theatrical novels of the late 1890s are accordingly either narrated dramas of reflection, enacted and performed on the inner stage of consciousness, or a sequence of cleverly arranged scenes in which a limited number of characters engage in witty but by no means transparent conversations whose deeper meanings the reader has to draw from the only partially articulated, from unaccountable exclamations or from tantalizing silences.

An example of the first would be *What Maisie Knew* (published in 1897) where James chooses a little girl, Maisie, as reflector or "center of consciousness" who is bounced, like a "little feathered shuttle-cock" (42), between parents and their lovers in a choreography of changing places and shifting marital and extra-marital relationships. Maisie's consciousness expands with her knowledge of life: "Her small expanding consciousness" (24) slowly grows and unfolds in several stages of observation, reflection and sensuous experience — although what Maisie merely *thinks* she knows, or only *pretends* to know, or eventually *comes* to know the reader can never be certain of. An example of the other, the purely "scenic method," would be the *Awkward Age* (1899). The ambivalent title points to the book's adolescent heroine, Nanda Brookenham, as well as to its temporal and social setting: a segment of London's so-called "good" but in fact rather decadent society. Nanda is thus not only *of* awkward age but also born *into* an awkward age whose moral corruption is a threat to the young girl's innocence. Although Nanda occupies the center of the novel, she is not a "center of consciousness" — consciousness is in fact what the reader has to read from (or into) the speech or physical and verbal gestures of the participants in social interaction. The "scenic method" only allows for

an outside view whose hidden inner dimension has to be constructed by the reader. James ultimately preferred the integration of the scenic into the drama of consciousness (as the three great novels at the beginning of the new century demonstrate), but he never completely gave up its opposite. His last published novel, the long forgotten *The Outcry* (which came out in 1910) is, in fact, a return to pure scene (and was originally meant to be a play).

The turn inward has brought James the reputation of a being a master of psychological representation, but several critics have pointed out that the label is misleading.<sup>5</sup> Like his brother's *Principles of Psychology*, which, despite its title, is a work more of philosophy than of psychology, Henry James's dramas of consciousness are not psychological in the Freudian sense: they do not push toward the unconscious, do not explore the secrets and abysses of the soul, the yearnings of the instinctual life — although they are aware of them. They rather stage, in their fictional representations of how the mind works, the labours and (re)discoveries of memory and reflection. It is therefore quite plausible to compare Henry's enactments of consciousness with William's "study of the mind from within." (Stream 170) Indeed, William James's attempt to "unstiffen" (Pragmatism 7) established notions of the mind by conceiving of thought as fluid, continuous and constantly changing has many echoes in his brother's narrative work: That consciousness is grounded in experience and constantly shaped and reshaped by it; that any notion of a pre-given stable "self" is therefore untenable (although we do create or confirm forms and structures through habit); that what seems a firm and solid image in the stream of thought is steeped in association and suggestiveness; that thought is relational and extends into the sensually perceived and felt, into the pre-verbal and non-articulate; that it is therefore worked out of the fluid stuff of experience like a sculptor "works on his block of stone." (Stream 203)

---

<sup>5</sup> As did, most emphatically, Sharon Cameron, on the opening pages of *Thinking in James*; and Ross Posnock writes: "For all his renown as a psychological novelist, Henry James conceives of the representation of consciousness not as a descent into psychic depths in search of truth but as a dissolving of the stable oppositions — depth and surface, inside and outside — that defined selfhood as a discrete and intelligible entity..." (*The Trial of Curiosity* 103)



And very much like his brother, Henry James pursues the “reinstatement of the vague,” the feelings of “if” or “but” or “and,” as is apparent in the verbalization of the pre- or non-verbal life of the mind enacted in his later fictions. (Stream 189-190)

There are differences, however. Although both brothers accept the idea of a “personal consciousness,” William insists on its “absolute isolation” in a “pluralist universe.” He seems much closer here to Emerson’s individualism than Henry who sees personal consciousness not only as relational in its own processes but as formed by social relations and interactions. His emphasis of the subjective point of view should not make us forget that each “center of consciousness” acquires knowledge through being worked on by others as much as it is working on others. It is central and relational.<sup>6</sup>

I want to elaborate this by a more detailed discussion of two novels of the major phase: *The Ambassadors* (1903) and *The Golden Bowl* (1904). I start with the opening passage from *The Ambassadors*: Its first word (and the first word of the novel) is “Strether.” It is the novel’s last word as well: “‘Then there we are,’ said Strether” — his consciousness encompasses the entire narration and we, as readers, are confined to it. The passage enacts Strether’s wavering between the known quantity of Waymarsh, his stable but “joyless” New England friend, and his own joyous expectation of Europe. This tension forms in fact the structure of the whole book: Strether is torn throughout between the moral certainties of Woollett and the sensuous and aesthetic lure of Paris. He moves from one pole to the other without giving up Woollett altogether. He has been sent to Paris by the rich Mrs. Newsome (who represents Woollett and beyond that a Puritan and business-minded America) in order to retrieve her son Chad from what she conceives to be the seductive charms of a morally depraved woman. This is the melodramatic fantasy projected by all of Woollett’s ambassadors (first Strether’s and later that of Mrs. Newsome’s daughter Sarah Pocock

---

<sup>6</sup> “The self is a transitional agency within the dynamic web of relations in which it appears,” thus Jonathan Levin argues in *The Poetics of Transition*. “No element of that web has any meaning in isolation. Though many of James’s most interesting characters are distinctly individual, his fictions invariably confront their individuality with the irreducible relationality of social experience.” (Levine 112)

and her family) — a fantasy acted out in countless melodramas of popular fiction and the popular stage. These are the moralistic pre-judgements that “frame” whatever the pilgrims from Woollett believe to see as Paris — except that in the case of the aging Strether his repressed aesthetic and artistic sensibilities infiltrate and undermine the moral convictions he has brought from overseas. Especially since what he actually encounters in Paris does not apparently fit the Woollett pattern: To be sure, there is a woman, Madame de Vionnet, but she is not the expected *femme fatale*. To Strether’s admiring eyes she rather seems to be the very embodiment of European culture. He is therefore ready to believe that Chad’s relation to her is, as he is told, a “virtuous attachment” that has transformed an uncouth American adolescent into a polished and well-mannered gentleman. To make Chad break with Marie de Vionnet and make him go back to a provincial America appears to Strether now a violation of good taste as much as a denial of visible evidence. He therefore betrays Woollett and inverts his mission: Instead of sending Chad back to America, he tries to keep him in Paris as long as possible.

When a second set of Mrs. Newsome’s ambassadors arrives in order to achieve what Strether has failed to accomplish, the break with the rich widow (whom he once hoped to marry in exchange for bringing back Chad) becomes irreparable. One of the high points of the novel is the comic confrontation between Strether and Sarah Pocock (chapter 27) when Strether’s vagueness — his inexpressible sense of the felt richness and interrelatedness of everything he has experienced — encounters the hard rock of Sarah’s moral certainties. Not much later, however, Strether is forced to realize that he has been systematically deceived: that the attachment of Chad to Mme. De Vionnet is not at all a virtuous one; that Woollett has been “right” despite of being wrong. Chad’s affair *is* morally dubious and yet has changed him; it has most of all changed Lambert Strether who, the innocent “lamb” and fool of perception, has acquired new knowledge in the process of perceiving. Although he has been deceived by those he had wanted to “save,” he has nevertheless learned to understand that “truth” is not a stable entity but changes in the twists and turns of an ever-changing flow of experience; that it can comprise different, even antagonistic meanings; that the aesthetic has its own virtue. Even though Strether cannot completely give up ethic for aesthetic values, he is

eventually able to hold both as complementary if irreconcilable facts of human experience.

There are two scenes relevant in this connection: The first is the reception in Gloriani's garden when Strether, overcome by the sensual "assault" of Paris and by a mounting regret for having missed to live his life, implores Chad's friend, Little Bilham, not to commit the same mistake: "Live all you can; it's a mistake not to..." He then continues: "The affair — I mean the affair of life — couldn't, no doubt, have been different for me; for it's at the best a tin mould, either fluted and embossed, with ornamental excrescences, or else smooth and dreadfully plain, into which, a helpless jelly, one's consciousness is poured — so that one 'takes' the form, as the great cook says, and is more or less compactly held by it; one lives in fine as one can." (A 153)

On first glance this seems in accord with a Puritan notion of life as having a God-given, predetermined shape which allows for living one's life only "as one can." On second glance, however, the metaphor contains a pragmatist program: for we can only know the eventual shape of our lives by actively shaping or living it. "Live all you can" therefore claims mastery of the shape of one's life by the action of living it to the full. The ambivalence of the metaphor (the tension between passive acceptance and the self-determined freedom of action) echoes in all of James' late fiction as, for example, in *The Wings of the Dove* where Milly Theale wavers between the life "one would live if one could" and the "life one could live if one would." (WD 182) Life, in late James, is at least potentially a pragmatist project: its eventual form brought out in the very action/process of shaping and "stretching" it. (Strether thus turns out to be a "stretcher.")

The second scene is developed in two chapters that have become famous in the history of the modern novel (chapters 30 and 31): Strether's recognition of what, until then, he had successfully managed to ignore — the sexual relationship between Chad and Mme. de Vionnet whom he had both excessively idealized as "gentleman" and "lady." From the beginning, Strether has been prone to project conceptual "frames" that pre-structure experience. He shares this tendency with other representatives of Woollett, except that their moral fundamentalism prevents them from ever changing the ordering "frame" of their prejudices and pre-judgments. In contrast, Strether's moral consciousness is mediated by his aesthetic sensibility.

In the eyes of Woollett, his appreciation of sensuous perception, his being too easily seduced by the senses as much as by “his poor trick of quiet inwardness” (349), amounts to moral weakness. In a dialectic process of reflection he constantly negotiates between things imagined and things seen, between idealizing “frames” and the flow of experience; accordingly “letting go,” “plunge,” “give in,” “adrift,” “at sea,” “afloat” are key words. He gradually exchanges moral for aesthetic pre-conceptions; until his last “frame,” the pastoral image of a nostalgically remembered painting by Lambinet, is shattered by the boat that, at first, seems to fit perfectly into the frame of the ideal mental picture — but in fact shatters it when it reveals Chad and Mme. de Vionnet as expert lovers (who know “how to do it” [389]), thus forcing Strether to finally face the “truth” of experience directly: “I have no ideas,” he says at the end, “I am afraid of them, I have done with them.” (437)

And yet it would be wrong to regard this final state of disillusionment as the essence of Strether’s Paris experience. It is only the end of a process of reflected perception in which “truth” has been changed from moral certainty to a fluid and relational concept, in which “everything has come as a sort of indistinguishable part of everything else.” (348) For “truth” cannot be isolated from the specific moment and sensuous context of its experience, “truth,” in other words, comprises the whole process, all stages of Strether’s “knowing.” Without Strether’s idealizing frames, without his self-deceptions and the deceptions suffered by his Paris friends it would have been impossible for him to “plunge” into the experiential flow of Paris.

Whether, at the end, his hands are full or empty remains an open question. They are full because he has, after all, lived all he (still) could, thereby expanding the shape of his consciousness in the act of exposing it to the experience of Paris. Yet they are also empty since, by abandoning all idealizing pre-conceptions, he has lost the incentive to interpret, his habit of “framing” which got him going in the first place. In this sense, the novel confronts the reader with the premises not only of Strether’s “knowing,” but also of James’s own imagination which dialectically straddles the gap between an idea of form and the formless flow of experience. The energizing contradiction hidden in Strether’s double-coded “live *as* you can” — “live *all* you can” which runs the gamut between passively accepting

and actively shaping one's life marks the choice that all protagonist of James' late novels have to make. In *The Ambassadors* James follows this paradoxical concept to its very limits: the concept of a form of life or consciousness pre-given, yet shaped, or rather stretched, through process. In his next novel, *The Golden Bowl*, he moves into the opposite direction. Here, the heroine tries to reset, through the power of her reflective imagination and by faith in the validity of form, the shattered pieces of her social life.

*The Golden Bowl* occupies a special place in James's work. Up to now his centers of consciousness, although heroes or heroines of reflection, were mostly victims in the game of life — people who, like Lambert Strether, suffer losses or do not want to selfishly gain from their actions: "That you see, is my logic," argues Strether at the end. "Not, out of the whole affair, to have got anything for myself." (A 438) They are lambs or doves to the panthers and tigers of this world. Maggie Verver, however, the heroine of *The Golden Bowl*, wants back what she has lost and so, by refusing to be a victim, she becomes a victimizer by exerting power over others. No wonder that the novel has given cause to many controversial interpretations. For some, Maggie's success is a triumph of art, love, and consciousness; for others it is the result of rather sinister machinations. In their view the whole book is not only a strange fable of love but also one of power and coercion; or, as Mark Seltzer argues, it is "a story of power and authority told *as* a story of love." (Seltzer 95)

It deals exclusively with the personal relations of hardly more than a handful of people, but its very privacy reverberates with cultural, even political, implications. In the *donnée* of the novel, the Italian Prince Amerigo marries Maggie Verver because he needs her father's money to pay off the mortgages on his Renaissance palaces. In exchange, Adam Verver — American multimillionaire and art collector — acquires the Prince as the most valuable object in his vast collection of European art treasures. Since Maggie loves the Prince, yet does not want to leave her father, she arranges his marriage with Charlotte Stant (her old school friend and, what she does not know, one of Amerigo's former lovers). Their marriage gives the impoverished Charlotte the freedom to be socially "magnificent," while it allows the Ververs to continue their close father-daughter relationship.

If the Ververs have the means to acquire precious objects, they do not have the knowledge of how to put them to right use. By withdrawing into their pre-marital symbiosis and by letting Charlotte and Amerigo — both “worldly” and “made for exhibition” — lead their social lives for them, they shift the balance of their mutual arrangement and inadvertently encourage Amerigo and Charlotte to resume their earlier passionate affair. Accepting the chance that Maggie and Adam offer them in the naïve assumption of their safe possession (“We’ve never lost anything yet,” Maggie playfully says to Amerigo referring to her father’s art collection [GB 36]), Charlotte develops an elaborate strategy of caring deception that would maintain the arrangement and, at the same time, leave each couple in its respective state of bliss.

When Maggie finally acts on her growing suspicion, she answers Charlotte’s deception with a subtle counter-strategy of dissimulation that gradually forces their relation back to its original symmetrical design. Like Charlotte and Amerigo, Maggie is determined to spare the father who thus, by his mere presence, enforces the authority of patriarchal rule. Without their unspoken agreement to act with consideration for each other, and without the precondition that the weights of their relationship be changed without disturbing the “equilibrium,” playing this complex game of communicative interaction would be impossible. Since for all players success depends on the strictest observation of appearances, and “truth” may not, under any circumstances, be revealed,<sup>7</sup> the game can only be won by strategies of observation, interpretation, calculation, dissimulation that will eventually force the other player’s hand.

Therefore, the reality in which they move is one of pure surface: an ambiguous ‘text’ of verbal and gestural cues that can be understood only by those capable of the most imaginative interpretation. Charlotte misreads Maggie because she cannot imagine her (“I can’t put myself into Maggie’s skin”[236]) — whereas Maggie, in imaginatively assuming the place and role of the other, is not only able to read the social text but also to change it in the very act of interpreting it. This process of reflective observation

---

<sup>7</sup> “...how it would have torn them to pieces, if they had so much as suffered its suppressed relations to peep out of their eyes.” (543)

which can call magically into being what it can foresee is compared several times with a game of cards or with a theatrical performance which unfolds in the interaction of the players. If Maggie, in the first part of the novel, is a figure in a play written and directed by Charlotte, in the novel's second part, she turns Charlotte and the other players into "figures rehearsing some play of which she herself was the author." (GB 548)

In this fiercely competitive game the players nevertheless form a closely interrelated community of interpretation. They are united in their consensus to respect the forms, and it is precisely this silent agreement that allows Maggie to force her reading of the social text on all the others. Their communication must at least partially do without the explicitness of utterance. It is said of Maggie that she "lived, inwardly, in a consciousness that she could but partly open even to so good a friend, and her own visitation of the fuller expanse of which was, for that matter, still going on." (447) Therefore it is not only the reader who is kept in the dark about what is understood but not said, or what is not said because it is not known, or what is only said to pretend or to hide knowledge, or what cannot be said because appearances have to be saved. Silence speaks as much as the spoken word — and it is often hard to distinguish between what is thought and what is spoken. So great is Maggie's power of reflection and so intense the "reign" of her consciousness that much of what seems to be dialogue are actually words she only imagines as hearing: "She had turned away from [Amerigo] with some such unspoken words as that in her ear, and indeed she *had* to represent to herself that she had spiritually heard them, had to listen to them still again, to explain her particular patience in face of his particular failure." (448) It is even more difficult to distinguish between what she imagines as saying and what she actually says: "Yes, look, look,' she seemed to see him hear her say even while her sounded words were other [...]. And her uttered words, meanwhile, were different enough from those he might have inserted between the lines of her already-spoken." (427)

In her subtle and provocative study of *Thinking in Henry James*, Sharon Cameron argues that what seems the result of Maggie's extraordinary empathy is, in fact, a usurpation of the thoughts of others. Especially in the second part (when Maggie becomes the novel's center of consciousness) "thinking is prescriptive," Cameron writes, and turns into "a form of

communication that looks curiously like mind reading. Because speech is made incommunicative, what characters think can only be intuited..." (Cameron 96) In fact, so supremely real (for Maggie as much as for James) is the life of the mind that "the presumed functions of speech and thought appear inverted" and, in the intensity of Maggie's reflection, thought receives, by way of metaphor, the weight and concrete shape of real things. This is true of the elaborately imagined pagoda whose image, it is said, "may represent our young woman's consciousness of a recent change in her life." (GB 302) It is also true of the extraordinary passage representing Maggie's thoughts while waiting for her husband (after his betraying her with Charlotte). Here, the inward scene is materially and spatially projected outward until "[t]he quite different door had opened and her husband was there." (GB 309) "The very power of Maggie's thought," writes Bill Brown in his analysis of this scene, "is suggested by the fact that, even though the opening door interrupts her thinking about the roomful of confused objects, it is as though her thinking about the door of that room has conjured the opening of the other. The materialization of thought — understood either as thought's externalization or as the internalization of the physical object world — serves not just to contain anxiety but to work on and in that world." (Brown 165)

In the ensuing re-arrangement of relationships, hermeneutic competence and knowledge become instruments of domination. Maggie's choice is either to remain the victim of Charlotte's manipulations or to victimize Charlotte (who is not only her husband's lover but also, to make matters really complicated, her friend of school days and her stepmother) through manipulations of her own. When she lets Amerigo know *that* she knows (but not *what* she knows), she can trust his sense of social form (his "manners") that he will not let Charlotte know that Maggie knows. By leaving Charlotte in the dark, Maggie, in selfish selflessness, turns her own "knowing" into power. She eventually deceives Charlotte into "magnificently" choosing the role that she, Maggie, has designed for her. The struggle between interpreters and interpretations in which the participants engage passionately to the fullness of their mental and social abilities, thus issues into a hierarchy of knowledge and intelligence. Playing the game restores "a violated order" (448) as much as it asserts the value of the individual players.



If the novel, as its idealizing rhetoric implies, converts an “abstract acquisitive drive [...] into acquisition of a higher order” (Mull 138), it yet also curiously duplicates the market world of competition and accumulation that is otherwise excluded from it. In a social world in which Adam Verver rules by pulling invisible strings and guarantees by his financial presence the very possibility of all arrangements (“without him nothing might have been” [GB 477]), the protagonists “work,” “labor,” “struggle,” “succeed,” or “fail” in the effort of “making” their lives. The hierarchy of hermeneutic competence established at the end thus doubles the economic hierarchy that is the premise of the game. *The Golden Bowl* inquires into the potentialities of money. It makes possible the acquisition of beautiful objects at any price which may then be converted into “spiritual furniture” (160), into priceless pieces in the treasury of consciousness. Therefore one could read *The Golden Bowl* as a quasi-utopian fairy-tale that celebrates the transformative power of consciousness but does not hide the price paid for its practice. In behaving “beautifully” and “magnificently” by keeping up appearances, the protagonists establish art (and a social life become art) as the latent, the potential “form” of capital.<sup>8</sup>

In her deconstructive reading Sharon Cameron argues that James stages, in Maggie’s triumph, an omnipotence of consciousness in which he cannot really believe himself: “In the last paragraph of *The Golden Bowl*,” she writes, “James turns away from consciousness (or has Maggie do so by burying her eyes in Amerigo’s breast), a consciousness whose meaning-making faculties he so consistently exalted in the five hundred pages preceding it [...]. Therefore she sees, or hides her face so as not to continue to see, the destruction she has wrought.” (Cameron 112)

---

<sup>8</sup> See also Heinz Ickstadt, “‘The Salt That Saves’: Fiction and History in the Late Work of Henry James,” *Faces of Fiction*, ed. by Susanne Rohr & Sabine Sielke (Heidelberg: Winter, 2001), 137-155; Donald Mull, *Henry James’s Sublime Economy (Middle-town: Qesleyan UP, 1973)*, Jean-Christophe Agnew, “*The Consuming Vision of Henry James*,” *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History, 1880-1980*, ed. by Richard W. Fox & T.Jackson Lears (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), 65-100, and Gabriel Pearson, “The Novel to End All Novels: *The Golden Bowl*,” *The Air of Reality: New Essay on Henry James*, ed. by John Goode (London: Methuen, 1972).

However, the novel's ambivalent ending rather seems to suggest that the marital and patriarchal order Maggie's consciousness has worked so hard to repair, is reconfirmed in her final gesture of submission to the institutional as well as to the sexual power of her husband. *That* gesture cannot be without "pity and fear" since Maggie must place trust where trust has been betrayed before. Whether she has restored the "golden bowl" with or without the original crack thus remains undecided.

The novel may perhaps most plausibly be read as an exercise in "hermeneutic education" (Armstrong 208) — Maggie's as well as the reader's — and as part of "James's ultimate attempt to salvage imaginatively the ideals of a civilization that his deepest instincts warned him was doomed." (Pearson 301) Indeed, James passionately believed that "forms," in the widest sense, were the essence of all civilized behaviour, "that the observation of forms," as Leo Bersani once wrote, "is sufficient to produce a conversion of being." (Bersani 74) But James was also aware that he wrote at a historical moment when such a concept of civilized life was becoming obsolete. This is apparent in the fierce, almost merciless, analysis of society's corruption in his novels of the late 1890s but also in the extravagant rhetoric of his late essays and speeches on American manners when he tried to create, for a larger American public, a consciousness of social form that was, he feared, rapidly disappearing in a commercial culture whose new fetish was publicity.

Thus, in a commencement speech at Bryn Mawr College, he urged the young student ladies to acquire mastery in their manners of speech as well as their behavior: "What I thus urge upon you [...] is a consciousness, an acute consciousness, absolutely; which is a proposition and a name likely enough to raise among many of your friends a protest. [...] Therefore your consciousness will now present the phase of awakening, and that will last what it must. Unconsciousness is beautiful when it means that our knowledge has passed into our conduct and our life; has become, as we say, a second nature. But the opposite state is the door through which it has to pass, and which is [...] rather straight and narrow." But once through that "narrow portal," they would see "the blue horizon across the valley, the wide fair country in which your effort will have settled to the most exquisite of instincts, in which you will taste all the savor of gathered fruit." (The Question 52)

What the young ladies thought of this utopian vision of a style whose perfection would, through the exertions of self-culture, eventually become a “second nature,” we can guess from a related essay where one of them speaks to him of “oppression” and of “oppressive obligation.” (James in Walker 75) Against which James argued “that so small and easy an application of taste made really not for servitude of situation, but for interest of discourse...;” for, he concluded: “Everything hangs together, I say, and there is no isolated question of speech, no isolated application of taste, no isolated damnation of delicacy. The interest of tone is the interest of manners, and the interest of manners is the interest of morals, and the interest of morals is the interest of civilization.” (James in Walker 78) And the interest of civilization, he might have added, is the interest of art.

Obviously, all these elements are part of an all-encompassing aesthetic ideology that also informs the art of his fiction: his consciousness of form and the forms of consciousness it enacts; as much as it informs an economy of literary style that “bristles” (as he would say) with social, even with political implications. For James, all questions of aesthetics are therefore matters of utmost relevance. This defines the social function of the artist and his responsibility to make “public[...] and civic use of the imagination” in a time of change and crisis. “One does, thank heaven, encounter here and there symptoms of immunity from the general infection,” he wrote in the Preface to “The Lesson of the Master.” “One recognizes with rapture, on occasion, signs of a protest against the rule of the cheap and easy; and one sees thus that the tradition of a high aesthetic temper needn’t, after all, helplessly and ignobly perish.” (Prefaces 223)

James made the cultivation of form and consciousness an “anti-dote,” a counter-strategy “in behalf of the something better [...] that blessedly [...] *might* be.” (Prefaces 222) His fictions of “inwardness,” in balancing out the losses of an ongoing “process of historic waste,” (American Scene 191) were embodiments of “all the Style the community is likely to get.” (American Scene 97) Accordingly, they should not be regarded as marking James’s retreat into mere aestheticism but as an attempt to actively, pragmatically, “take his place in a community-in-the-making by joining in the process of making it” (Holland ix). So that the hermeneutic education *in* his fiction and *by* his fiction would not only create new generations of readers who delighted in his subtle representations of cultivated

consciousness but would also help bring about a more refined civilization that saw itself as shaped *by*, and as represented *in*, his work.

Such hopes mark several of his endeavours in the first decade of the new century, especially his major novels, the New York Edition and the cultural criticism of *The American Scene*, the account of his trip through the US which was published in 1907. Although all of these ventures failed in so far as they did not realize the high hopes he had placed in them, he never allowed himself to fall into the “blackness” of cultural despair. Thus he wrote in an essay of 1910 (“Is There A Life After Death?”) which is perhaps his most sustained theoretical reflection on consciousness:

This mere fact that so small a part of one’s visionary and speculative and emotional activity has even a traceable indirect bearing on one’s doings or purposes or particular desires contribute strangely to the luxury [...] of thought, and strongly reminds one that even should one cease to be in love with life it would be difficult, on such terms, not to be in love with living...

[I]n proportion as we [...] enjoy the greater number of our most characteristic inward reactions, in proportion as we do curiously and lovingly, yearningly and irrepressibly, interrogate and liberate, try and test and explore, our general productive and [...] creative awareness of things, in that proportion does our function strike us as establishing sublime relations. It is this effect of working it that is exquisite [...]; it is in a word the artistic consciousness and privilege in itself that thus shines as from an immersion in the fountain of being. Into that fountain, to depths immeasurable, our spirits dip — to the effect of feeling itself, qua imagination and aspiration, all scented with universal sources. (James in Matthiessen 610-612)

And again four years later in a letter to a depressed Henry Adams:

*Of course* we are lone survivors, of course the past that was our lives is at the bottom of an abyss — if the abyss *has* any bottom... But...I still find my consciousness interesting — under *cultivation* of the interest... You see I still, in presence of life (or of what you deny to be such,) have reactions —

as many as possible.... It all takes doing — & I *do*. I believe I shall do yet again — it is still an act of life. (James in Horne 533)

This remarkable insistence on the life-giving, life-revealing, and life-sustaining activity of consciousness should warn us not to insist too much on the ideological dimension of Henry James. It is true that our reading of the late novels can profit from placing them within the larger context of what one might call his civilizing project which is most clearly expressed in the educational appeal of his essays on American manners. But although these essays illuminate the novels to some extent, they do not explain them. They offer a conservative ideology of “form” that marks James indeed as “the lone survivor” of a society long gone. They project “form” quite rigidly against the deficits of social life — whereas the novels, in contrast, open form to experience, test it or bring it out in the process of groping for it, shaping it. In fact, it is the very testing and “groping” that makes for “interest” and adventure in the life of the mind.

To that extent, Cameron is right when she argues that, in the late novels, experience undermines the claims James makes for the powers of consciousness. I would modify and say that the novels affirm those powers, yet in doing so also make us see the limits of the very ideology that they sustain or that sustains them. This, one should remember, defined Strether’s position. He cannot do without form but he opens up form to the flow of experience until he is no longer able to deny that its shaping power had been feeding on illusion. It is in the working, the doing, the shaping of the reflective mind that consciousness is formed by exposing itself to the flow of, and the struggle with, experience. Shaping one’s world in the process of “reading” it constitutes the “hermeneutic education” of James’ characters as much as of his readers. In this sense, the “cultivation of consciousness” *in* and *by* his fictions still works for us — quite independent from the ideology that may once have sustained them.

## Works Cited

- Anesko, Michael. *Henry James and the Profession of Authorship*. New York: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Armstrong, Paul. *The Phenomenology of Henry James*. Chapel Hill: University

- of North Carolina Press, 1983.
- Bersani, Leo, "The Jamesian Lie," *A Future for Astynax*. New York: Columbia UP, 1984, 128-156.
- Brown, Bill. *A Sense of Things: The Object Matter of American Literature*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Cameron, Sharon. *Thinking in Henry James*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989.
- Holland, Laurence B. *The Expense of Vision: Essays on the Craft of Henry James*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1982.
- Horne, Philip, ed. *Henry James: A Life in Letters*. New York: Viking, 1999.
- Howells, William Dean, "Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, vol. 2, Second Edition, New York: Norton, 1985, 278-300.
- James, Henry. *What Maisie Knew* [1897]. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Wings of the Dove* [1902]. New York: Signet Classic, 1964.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Ambassadors* [1903]. London: Penguin Books, 1985.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Golden Bowl* [1904]. Harmondsworth: Penguin Modern Classics, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The American Scene* [1907]. New York: Scribner's, 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Lesson of Balzac," *The Question off Our Speech and The Lesson of Balzac: Two Lectures*. Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1905.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Letters of Henry James*, ed. by Leon Edel, Vol. I, 1843-1875. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1974.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock. New York: Oxford UP, 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Prefaces" to the New York Edition ed. by R.P. Blackmur, *The Art of the Novel: Critical Prefaces by Henry James*. New York: Scribner's, 1934.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Question of the Opportunities," [1898], in Leon Edel, ed. *Henry James: Literary Criticism (Essays on Literature, American Writers, English Writers)*. New York: The Library of America, 1984, 651-657.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Speech of American Women" [1907], "The Manners of American Women" [1907], both in: Pierre A. Walker, ed. *Henry James on Culture: Collected Essays on Politics and the American Social Scene*. Lincoln:

- University of Nebraska Press, 1999, 58-81, 82-112.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Is There a Life After Death?" [1910], in: F.O. Matthiessen, *The James Family*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948, 602-614.
- James, William, "What Pragmatism Means" and "The Scream of Thought," in G.H. Bird, ed. *William James: Selected Writings*. London: Everyman, 1995, 3-20, 170-204.
- Levine, Jonathan. *The Poetics of Transition: Emerson, Pragmatism & American Literary Modernism*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999.
- Mull, Donald. *Henry James's 'Sublime Economy.'* Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1973.
- Pearson, Gabriel, "The Novel to End all Novels: The Golden Bowl," in John Goode, ed. *The Air of Reality: New Essays on Henry James*. London: Methuen, 1973, 301-362.
- Posnock, Ross. *The Trial of Curiosity: Henry James, William James, and the Challenge of Modernity*. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.

### ABSTRACT

The essay discusses the “work,” the limits, and the ideological implications of “consciousness” as it becomes manifest in James’s late fiction (especially *The Ambassadors* and *The Golden Bowl*) as well as his theoretical reflections on style and “consciousness.” It is the richness of the inner life that becomes James’s increasing obsession. While his novels of the 1880s still present the broad social panorama of the realist tradition, the more experimental fictions of the 1890s display what William Dean Howells saw as James’s “inward” turn. If the dominant culture of the *fin de siècle* and after had turned itself more and more “outward” toward the “mass-produced,” the “public” and “commercial,” James’s work from now on turned to mental process, to the private inner life. These are aspects of an aesthetic ideology that informs the art of his fiction as much as it informs an economy of literary style that for him has social, even political implications. So that the hermeneutic education enacted *in* his fiction and *by* his fiction would not only create new generations of readers who delighted in his subtle representations of cultivated consciousness but would also help bring about a more refined civilization that saw itself as shaped *by*, and as represented *in*, his work.

### KEYWORDS

Realism and the novels of Henry James; Henry James and pragmatism; James’s aesthetic ideology; the cultural and educational function of James’s late style

### RESUMO

Este artigo analisa o “trabalho”, os limites, e as implicações ideológicas da “consciência” conforme se manifesta na ficção tardia de James (em particular em *The Ambassadors* e em *The Golden Bowl*), assim como as suas reflexões teóricas sobre estilo e “consciência”. A riqueza da vida interior torna-se a obsessão



crescente de James. Enquanto os seus romances da década de 1880 reflectem ainda o amplo panorama social da tradição realista, a ficção mais experimental da década de 1890 revela aquilo que William Dean Howells interpretou como a transformação “interior” de James. Se a cultura dominante do *fin de siècle*, e a partir de então, se havia transformado progressivamente em algo mais “exterior”, orientada para o “produzido em massa”, para o “público” e para o “comercial”, o trabalho de James voltava-se para o processo mental, para a vida interior privada. Estes são aspectos de uma ideologia estética que caracteriza a arte da sua ficção, tanto quanto caracteriza uma economia de estilo literário que, para o autor, para além de implicações sociais, tem também implicações políticas. Desta forma, a educação hermenêutica propiciada *na* sua ficção e *pela* sua ficção, não só viria a criar novas gerações de leitores encantados com a representação subtil da consciência cultivada de James, mas também contribuiria para a expressão de uma civilização mais refinada moldada *por* e representada *no* seu trabalho.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

O realismo e os romances de Henry James; Henry James e o pragmatismo; a ideologia estética de James; função educativa e cultural do estilo tardio de James

---



# Adding wings to the unbearable weight of words: Academy as Community

*Teresa F. A. Alves*

ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies



# Adding wings to the unbearable weight of words: Academy as Community\*

## **The Sense of Community**

As one of the earliest manifestations of life — plants of the same kind growing into woods and forests, animals sticking together in differentiated groups, men and women cultivating a gregarious living — the sense of community allowed the human race the entrance into History. The yearning for transcendental order, which basically goes back to the wonder awakened by phenomena beyond human comprehension and the need to transmit knowledge and belief to future generations, finds different ways of expression either in animistic terms or, with the march of history, in forms of spiritual belief that challenge the arrow of time and are sustained by cultural heritage. The Jewish faith in Jehovah as the sole creator of Heaven and Earth is of particular interest for it structures community life around a deeply unifying value that, strengthening common identity, endures all kinds of erasure — the loss of geographic territory and dispersal throughout the diverse cultures of the world as a paradigmatic Diaspora, without putting in jeopardy the sense of a shared collective identity. Catholicism diverges from Judaism in the representation of God in three manifestations — the Holy Trinity, by which the Father as divine creator becomes human in the figure of the Son and overcomes the limits of human reason as Dispenser of Grace in the figure of the Holy Spirit.

It is not, however, my intention to dive into theological waters, but simply to trace the thread of history of the word community which, in our cultural beginnings, may not be severed without loss from those groups of

---

\* English language revision by Rui Vitorino Azevedo.

people who were moved by a deeply religious understanding of their existence and chose to live together in communion with their beliefs. The early Christian communities that molded themselves after the relationship of Jesus Christ with the Apostles, on which succeeding communities were modeled. An especially interesting record of community-life is to be found in Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians and all the other communities who were converted to the Word. My reference to Paul's epistles as an invoked paradigm is justified by their very nature — they are a particular instance of someone who addresses an audience and thereby establishes an act of communication which, to a certain degree, looks ahead to our age, since the Epistles address the differences in the community to which they are intended, each community in turn bringing to their interpretation the cultural differences of a variety of traditions. It is true that, with Paul and his Epistles, we are hermeneutically bound to a transcendental view of God which, however, is mediated by the humanity of Paul and, in the last instance, by that of Christ, the Son made Man.

### **The Augustinian Experience of Community Life**

A curious secularization of the Word is to be found, of all the books, in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. From a purely theological perspective it might be argued that *Confessions* enacts the fall, the crisis of conscience and, finally, the autobiographer's conversion to the Christian Faith. While narrating the events of the protagonist's life the quest is stated in terms that leaves no doubt about its nature and it carves the distance between the later Augustine who authors the book and the younger protagonist who draws closer to the mature voice as the narrative progresses: "Where were You, for me, and to where had You gone? [...] I sought for You outside me and could not find You, God of my heart" (*Confessions*, 6, 1, 1. My Translation) complains the autobiographer early in his address to God. Augustine's translation of individualized experience, however, establishes the link between the world of matter and that of the spirit, the first nine books being concerned with a personal life deeply rooted in worldly events and society, while the last four are devoted to the author's pilgrimage, through time and memory, toward God, the ultimate object of his quest.

As several critics pointed out, notably William C. Spengeman among them, Augustine's progress is not only of a spiritual order but also of a temporal one, and so, besides the theological quest, *Confessions* fosters the convergence of faith with the history of man, portraying the human quest also in philosophic and literary terms. Augustine's speculations in the last books not only feature man thinking about his place in God's Creation, but also entail a recurrent dialogue with philosophers and thinkers who before him engaged in analogous issues of ontological nature. As a literary paradigm, *Confessions* looks ahead to the forthcoming autobiographies and memoirs, which in a way or another repeat the ground pattern of a personal life and individual conscience encapsulated in the surrounding universe but seeking to break way from its limits and inquiring into ultimate reasons. Nowadays, the genre is in expansion, not always a tribute to the inaugural paradigm, but in many cases showing close indebtedness as in the bestselling author Paul Auster, who in the first section of *The Invention of Solitude* makes unashamed use of Augustine's literary visual architecture as a metaphor for the narrator's ontological pursuit.

Augustine's easy negotiation between temporality and transcendence is in direct connection with his experience of life in community, which "has at one and the same time both a spiritual reality, namely the common search for God [...] and a true human reality, that is, the building up of a loving, welcoming, supportive, caring and challenging fraternity" (Tack, 10). Augustine founded his first community in Tagaste (Souk Ahras in present-day Algeria) and never exchanged his monk's habit for the insignias of the Bishop of Hippo, his representation in such regalia more often than not the product of the painter's imagination.

The intimate relationship with the brethren undoubtedly foreshadows the familiarity with which Augustine addresses God in the autobiographical *Confessions*, and, by transposition, it fosters an implicit invitation of a similar relationship to the reader on the grounds of kinship. The subject of a person-oriented community life would later be developed in his utopian *City of God*, where he explicitly claims that its foundations lie in the Agency of the "kind will of the Supreme God" upon the "society of people united by the shared rights and community of interests." God, the dispenser of grace, acts on the person whose agency is validated by the community of values and beliefs. Augustine is indeed explicit about

the role of the person as constituent of his envisaged “City of God,” better said, as the builder of his ideal community, on the basis of which lies the State (*res publica*) legitimated by the people (*res populi*) (XIX, XXIII, 1954-1955. My Translation).

### **Ralph Waldo Emerson and Communitarian Sensibility**

If Creation is drawn to more secular spheres, we are led to think of those communities of sensibility called into being in the awning of the nineteenth century with Wordsworth and Coleridge, or some decades later with Ralph Waldo Emerson in Concord. It is indeed a long temporal distance from Augustine to the nineteenth century, but one that is allowed by the shared internalization of the quest pattern, and the role of the questing individual who similarly becomes a builder of ideal communities. My focus will, understandably, be on Ralph Waldo Emerson who, as much as the English poets of the High Romanticism, contributed to give the word community a different ring from Augustine’s, maintaining, however, the notion of a shared communitarian experience and appropriating the tone of familiarity in which that experience develops. Totally angled on the “infinite of the individual self,” in Emerson’s case, it gives an interesting slant to the sense of community.

By attracting to Concord a diversity of people that were invited to visit, or even to sojourn with the family, Emerson’s community materialized in the huge house he perhaps acquired with such a design in mind, Coolidge House, later more fittingly renamed “The Bush,” in much the same vein of “Lidian,” the name by which he christened Lydia, the second wife. Both names betray Emerson’s intent to bring the ontological and philosophical speculation of his mind to the simple, familiar natural order in which he would pattern the totalizing system and into which he invited the diversity of the so-called American individual experience. The communitarian urge drew to “The Bush” Emerson’s contemporaneous variety of idealistic and reformist thinkers, among them, Bronson Alcott, Elizabeth Peabody, Frederick Henry Hedge, Orestes Bronson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Carolyn Sturgis, Jones Very, Sophia Peabody, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ellery Channing and



Theodore Parker. It is interesting to compare the different journals of these personalities, and learn how influential the communitarian background was for their own work.

In October 26, 1838, Emerson wrote in his Journal: “entertain every thought [,] every character that goes by, with the hospitality of your soul. Give him the freedom of your inner house. He shall make you wise to the extent of his own uttermost receivings” (117). Implying a communitarian design, these words reach beyond the subjective sphere of the diarist into the wider circle of those who would be the architects of the “New World.” Bronson Alcott who, in consensual critical opinion, has inspired the well-known admonition for every person to build a world of one’s own at the close of Nature (48), would in turn acknowledge in his journal entry of January 19, 1837, that “[Emerson’s] ideas come orbed and winged. Footed and creeping things stand in contrast to give them effect; nor do slime and puddle become insignificant and unworthy in his creation [...] Emerson is destined to be the high literary name of this age” (cit. Baker 90). The communitarian impulse indeed became a dominant feature of the American 19th century, materializing in discussion-and-lecture-oriented clubs throughout the country — the “club of clubs” being located in Medford and frequented by Emerson and his “eccentric” company to borrow the notion from Carlos Baker’s biographic study. The debates were focused on what Ralph Waldo Emerson, in his “little azure-colored book,” had described as the discipline of nature and in which issues of space, time, society, labor, climate, food, locomotion, the animals and the mechanical forces, were discussed in connection to Understanding and Reason. These clubs were exclusive and evoke a semblance with Coleridge’s clerisy, for they were attended by an exclusive group, engaged in disseminating alternative values to those of the growing materialistic society.

There were, however, other forms of communitarian experience that bring Emerson closer to our time and, even, to our own experience as teachers. I have in mind his activity as a lecturer, the only profession he exercised throughout his life after having resigned from the pulpit, and which, for almost fifty years, engaged him with that loose federation of hundreds of local organizations called the Lyceum. As a sponsor of a regular series of public lectures by traveling speakers, the Lyceum was also commu-

nitarian-oriented, with each speaker becoming a performer for the sake of his audience. In Emerson's case, the performance was seriously taken to the heart. It got him in touch with men and women who questioned his own assumptions and probably also influenced the course followed when the lectures took the definite shape of essays. As a lecturer, we are told, Emerson knew the pains of deadlines (he is quoted as saying that to get results at the speed the lectures were happening he would have to write the text in 21 hours), but even if the subject of all of them could be traced to his query on the infinitude of the human being as an individual, the fact that he was writing with an audience in view, had an enormous influence on his style. In R. Jackson Wilson's appraisal: "What [Emerson] needed to do was to devise ways of satisfying ... conventional expectations without surrendering the quality he strove hardest for — originality. Without originality there was no hope of genuine magic" (88) and, in a sense, his language, probably his richest legacy to future generations, thrives on this kind of magic that exposes the congeniality of "orbed" and "winged" words with "footed and creeped things."

The Lyceum gave Emerson a footing on the realities of the USA and taught him the value of coming out of the idealist cocoon into the reevaluation of his role as a lecturer. Contrarily to Coleridge and Carlyle, whom he enormously admired, he exchanged the pedestal of the genius for that of "Mr. America" to use Harold Bloom's fortunate coinage of the designation by which he is acknowledged as the most significant name in terms of cultural resonance. In such a role, he is not only a reservoir of original discourse but is also rescued from the trap of being shut within the confines of Romanticism or Transcendentalism, which, as he himself explained in a lecture delivered in January 1842, is a popular designation for Idealism, "Idealism as it appears in 1842" (193).

This does not mean that Emerson did not look up to the geniuses of previous centuries, his representative men, who might have been featured as models for the age, if he had not chosen to speak of them as portions of the infinitude which took him a life to pursue. They were the subject of seven different lectures which would be published in 1850, each man a representative of a given discipline: Plato for philosophy, Swedenborg for mysticism, Montaigne for skepticism, Shakespeare for poetry; Napoleon for worldliness; Goethe for writing. In portraying each one of them as a

fixed identity, almost a typology of a sort, he was probably also measuring their roles against his own role as a lecturer and a man and, more generally, they admirably fitted in his description of the circumstances of life at the core of "Experience," in one of the central *Essays of The Second Series*, published in 1844 when the romance with Transcendentalism was over:

The secret of illusoriness is in the necessity of a succession of moods or objects. Gladly we would anchor, but the anchorage is quicksand. This onward trick of nature is too strong for us: *Pero si muove*. When, at night, I look at the moon and stars, I seem stationary, and they to hurry. Our love of the real draws us to permanence, but health of body consists in circulation, and sanity of mind in variety or facility of association. We need change of objects. Dedication to one thought is quickly odious. (476)

From his own experience of journeying around the whole country for his lectures, Emerson apprehended the value of movement subject to the orders of actual time and space. A trickster with language, which he rehearses in contact with his various communities of listeners, he furthermore invites words and borrows thoughts from his elected representative men as well as from many other literary sources, winning the copyright for the cross-cultural dialogue that would become a feature of the American literary text.

This brief x-ray of the word "community" as mediated by the Augustinian and Emersonian experiences aims to show the flexibility of a concept that as many others in our human experience is shaped by the usages of time without losing the kernel of sense already present in the Latin word *communitate*. Interestingly, when the paradigm is given an extended sense in Augustine's *City of God*, it also fares well among the utopian socialist reformers, namely Orestes Bronson who, together with Charles Dana and George Ripley, tried in vain to attract Emerson to the experimental Fourierist community of Brook Farm. But Emerson felt that utopian communities were thousands of miles away from the world of circumstances and the reformist zeal which determined his involvement in the cause of the Cherokee Indians and the issue of slavery.

### Off-Springs of the Communitarian Paradigm

If we transpose the image of community from the cultural into the literary sphere, as Augustine and Emerson did in their different but eminently autobiographical ways, we cannot fail to acknowledge the fortune of the concept in American Literature. Melville's Pequod in *Moby Dick; or the Whale* (1851) is the classic illustration of a specular community which is also a metaphor for the nation at large. Ship wreckage as a result of the tragic pride of humanity is hardly compensated by the single survival of the narrator to tell the story. Melville's pessimistic depiction of the "community of the doomed race" takes on a still grimmer view in *The Confidence Man* (1857), an allegorical fiction of the defeat of Charity, one of the three cardinal virtues of Christianity, by an artful, devilish trickster disguised as an ordinary passenger. Katherine Ann Porter's *Ship of Fools* would in 1962 return to the use of the allegorical community doomed by the foolishness of the crew and passengers alike, throwing a backward glance on the rising of Nazism and its devastating effect on the rest of the world. A much more optimistic view is rendered in the utopian romances, namely in Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (1888) and Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915). Bellamy's idealized community represents cooperativism as an alternative system to unbridled competition, whereas Gilman's shifts the angle to that of a community based on gender difference, depicting an ideal world under the rule of women. I invoke these literary representations of community, in as far as they possibly exerted as much influence in their contemporaneous society as Emerson's lectures and Essays, inspiring women and men to reform and be aware of the need for societal change.

The strong communitarian appeal in the United States surfaces, again, in Walt Whitman's use of symbolic communities — as if they might harbor the multitudes that people the American nation — in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), the volume of poems that earned the admiration of Emerson and, in turn, earned Whitman the public recognition of his role as the awaited-for "American Poet." The overpowering impact of the communitarian image would find an objective correlative in Hart Crane's 1932 lyrical craving for the "visionary company of love" in "The Broken Tower" (106), or in Adrienne Rich's extended invitation to the exiled Rosa

Luxembourg and the murdered Anna Mae Aquash to the almanac of the North American time where Julia de Burgos in 1983 had written: “*that my grandfather was a slave/ is my grief; had he been a master/ that would have been my shame*” (36).

The marks of gender, race, ethnic and class differences are, nevertheless, as variedly inscribed in the North-American time as that communitarian side which gave rise to the renaissance of the so-called ethnic cultures — and I have in mind the diversity of arts — not only literature, but also music, the visual arts, cinema and many other expressions of cultural and cross-cultural artistic achievement. The cultural impact and presence of distinguishing communitarian influences may be surmised in a couple of rhetorical questions: how would have American music fared without the jazz communities of New Orleans? How would it have fared without George Gershwin, Ray Charles, Aaron Copland, Edward Varese, Billie Holiday, Wynton Marsalis or Leonard Bernstein? Without the Black Mountain Community would there be a place for that early interdisciplinary cross-fertilization that gives birth to dance, music and poetry of a distinctive sort? Without the New York School would American painting have ever reached the monumental assertion to which Pop Culture responds?

### **A Personal Angle on Communitarian Experience and Associativism**

The gap between the senses of community in this 21<sup>st</sup> century of ours, marked by the accelerated adhesion to the virtual world and the explosion of technologies, is or will be, I am afraid, much wider than that between ours and the Augustinian’s sense. At a time of speeded changes and sensibility shifts of every kind, it is wise to acknowledge a gap of a different kind, probably fostered by the tentative replacement of Emersonian understanding by technological know-how. With an already long history that, perhaps, began with the hierarchization of literary studies and the subsequent radicalization of knowledge between the humanistic and the scientific fields, we have been definitely affected — and I am speaking as a researcher integrated in FCT — by the supremacy of the scientific paradigm over

the humanistic. With this in mind, it is highly desirable that to the contemporary tendency to value the training of excellent professional agents is added the perception that the divorce from the so-called historical project for a humanity-oriented culture may, in the long run, become a suicidal pact.

A 2008 document authored by Geoffrey Boulton and Colin Lucas, entitled “What are universities for?” led to optimistic expectations about the place of the Humanities in the general frame of Higher Education. After taking into account issues about university governance, sustainability and accountability, the conclusive remarks of the authors, in first place, highlight the necessity to envisage the University as a totality in which the humanities and the social sciences play a distinctive complementary role in relation to science, including the so-named hard-core science. The second point offers the rationale for such a conclusion. And I quote “[...] the instinct to understand, to find meaning, to map oneself and one’s actions and the world is essentially human.” As essentially human is, I would add, the notion that bringing the university into the dynamics of a shared perception of its nature, it is and will always be part of the development process, in other words the progress in Higher Education. Whatever the direction in which our sense of community grows, knowledge and experience lead me to believe that the shared creative impulse fostered by community-life has not been exhausted in the legacies from the past and will legitimize the present by the audacity and creativity of the choices.

It is also my belief that associativism may play an important part as a particular instance of communitarian action. As a founding member of our Association, I shall finish my essay by offering a memoir about the origins of the Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies / Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo Americanos — APEAA, by going back to a circumstance that determined our existence as a group of associates: the arrival of Juliet Antunes, the Cultural Attaché of the American Embassy in Lisbon. It was a kind of golden Age, when the United States Administration was so worried because of the 25<sup>th</sup> of April Revolution that they sent what they considered to be their best staff, for fear of losing Portugal to the Communist influence. Juliet Antunes was indeed distinguished and very intent on conscience-raising. She came directly from London where she held the same office, and was appalled at

finding such a diminutive number of Portuguese scholars interested in pursuing a career in American Studies. She had met with Irene Ramalho Sousa Santos in the United States before her arrival, and was so impressed by her that she jumped to the conclusion that there must be a flourishing Department working under her surveillance in Portugal. The American scene at the Portuguese University held her speechless for a brief while. We were indeed very few, but willing! Juliet was not, however, of an easily discouraged nature. In April 1978, she invited me, Isabel Caldeira and Carlos Azevedo to attend the Norwich meeting of the European Association for American Studies at the University of East Anglia, and a couple of months later it was the turn of António Jorge Gonçalves Rodrigues and Leonor Telles, both founding members of this Association, to attend an American Studies meeting in Seville. In November 1979, she promoted an American Studies journey at the American Cultural Center, attended by members from Universidade de Coimbra, Universidade de Lisboa and Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Colleagues associated to departmental English sections were also invited. The late Malcolm Bradbury, an English professor and writer, who was very much linked to American Studies at the University of East Anglia and to the European Association for American Studies, was the lecturer invited for the occasion. The idea of a mixed Association of American and English Studies, similar to the Spanish, was then conceived, the first official meeting having taken place in Coimbra, in May 1980, and the second in Lisbon, in October-November of the same year. By the end of the Coimbra Meeting, the regulating statutes of the Association were voted and the first President elected. Juliet Antunes, actually Professor Juliet Antunes who teaches at the Georgetown University, Washington DC, was very happy on the occasion, her broad smile betraying the feeling of an accomplished mission. This is an evocative and long-due acknowledgement of her involvement in American Studies in Portugal and the foundation of our Association. Having started with a salutation to Juliet Antunes, I also wish to evoke two prematurely departed colleagues who highly contributed to the shape and orientation of the Portuguese Association. They were Professor Fernando Mello Moser, the first elected president of APEAA, and Hélio Osvaldo Alves who, some years later, was elected to the same position. They were both linked to English Studies whose membership always over-numbered the American counterpart, but

what I wish to emphasize in these two personalities is their humanitarian outlook on life as well as their incommensurable willingness to come forward with the most beneficial propositions concerning the interest of their colleagues. They will always be associated in my mind to the golden age of APEAA, when we shared our, in many cases, incipient knowledge during the sessions and, once these were over, we cultivated friendly enduring relationships with our colleagues from the different universities of the country. Our second President, fortunately in very good health, Professor Maria Irene Ramalho Sousa Santos, the recipient of several international honors, was also vice-president of the European Association for American Studies and did not fall behind Fernando Mello Moser and Hélio Osvaldo Alves where willingness to help younger colleagues was concerned. In my case, I may mention her invitation to stay at her home in Coimbra and make use of her excellent book collection when I was researching for the Ph.D.

On a concluding note, it is my belief that associativism branches out of the same tree as the communitarian enterprise. It generates an interest in dialogue, fosters cross-fertilization of projects, and furthers research and creative partnership. This may happen both at the national and international level, each time meetings and conferences are organized by APEAA, EAAS or ESSE, bringing together scholars and students committed to the inquiry on American or English Studies. Such meetings offer the opportunity to exchange ideas, assess differences and advance knowledge. Simultaneously, they may also propitiate the acquaintance with other colleagues whose pursuit of similar interests and goals awakens in us the sentiment that the road we have taken is not solitary but intriguing and demanding. This is the real province of associativism. It is, I dare say, a predisposition to share and commune with the other. Even if it may sound a little outmoded, it still provides a lasting rampart against the individualistic ethos and the assault on the values upon which men and women may grow, as they did in the past and hopefully will do in the future, to the best of their potential and intellectual achievement.



## Works Cited

- Auster, Paul. *The Invention of Solitude*. New York, N. Y.: Penguin Books, 1988.
- Baker, Carlos. *Emerson Among the Eccentrics*. New York, N. Y.: Penguin Books, 1996.
- Bellamy, Edward. *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*. New York, N. Y.: Modern Library, 1942.
- Boulton, Geoffrey, Colin Lucas. "What are universities for?" *LERU*, position paper pub. in September 2008. [http://www.leru.org/files/publications/What\\_are\\_universities\\_for\\_September\\_2008.pdf](http://www.leru.org/files/publications/What_are_universities_for_September_2008.pdf) (accessed on 28/02/2013).
- Crane, Hart. "The Broken Tower". *Complete Poems And Selected Letters*. Ed. Langdon Hammer. New York, N. Y.: The Library of America – 168, 2006. 106-107.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature. Essays & Lectures. Nature; Addresses, and Lectures. Essays: First and second Series. Representative Men. English Traits. The Conduct of Life*. New York, N. Y.: Ed. Joel Porte. The Library of America-15, 1983. 7-49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Transcendentalist". *Nature. Essays & Lectures. Nature; Addresses, and Lectures. Essays: First and second Series. Representative Men. English Traits. The Conduct of Life*. Ed. Joel Porte. New York, N. Y.: The Library of America-15, 1983. 193-230.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Vol VII. 1838-1842. Ed. A.W. Plumstead and Harrison Hayford. Cambridge: Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1969.
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins. *Herland*. Introd. Ann J. Lane. New York, N. Y.: Pantheon Books, 1979.
- Melville, Herman. *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade. Pierre: or, The Ambiguities. Israel Potter; His Fifty Years of Exile. The Piazza Tales. The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade. Uncollected Prose. Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative)*. Ed. Harrison Hayford. New York, N. Y.: The Library of America-24, 1984. 835-1112.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Moby-Dick: or, The Whale. Redburn: His First Voyage. White-Jacket: or the Word in a Man-of-War. Moby-Dick: or, The Whale*. Ed. Thomas Tanselle. New York, N. Y.: The Library of America-9, 1984. 771-1408.
- Porter, Katherine Anne. *Ship of Fools*. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1962.

- Rich, Adrienne. "North American Time." *Your Native Land, Your Life: Poems*. New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 1993. 33-36.
- Santo Agostinho. *A Cidade de Deus*, Vol III. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2008. 1863-1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Confissões*. Tradução e Notas de Arnaldo do Espírito Santo, José Beato e Maria Cristina de Castro-Maia de Sousa Pimentel. Introdução de Manuel Barbosa da Costa Freitas. Notas de âmbito filosófico de Manuel Barbosa da Costa Freitas e José Maria Silva Rosa. Edição bilingue. Lisboa: Centro de Literatura e Cultura Portuguesa e Brasileira/Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2000. 215-261.
- Spengemann, William Charles. *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale UP, 1980.
- Tack, Theodore, O.S.A. *If Augustine Were Alive: Augustine's Religious Ideal for Today*. New York, N. Y.: Alba House, 1988.
- Whitman, Walt. *Leaves of Grass. Complete Poetry and Collected Prose. Leaves of Grass (1855). Leaves of Grass (1891-92). Complete Prose Works (1892). Supplementary Prose*. Ed. Justin Kaplan. New York, N. Y.: The Library of America-3, 1982. 27-145.
- Wilson, R. Jackson. "Emerson as Lecturer: Man Thinking, Man Saying." *The Cambridge Companion to Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. Joel Porte and Sandra Morris.

### ABSTRACT

By probing into the Latin word *communitate* this essay first considers possible deviations from the original meaning in order to link it to the specific field of English and American Studies and, afterwards, proposes to evaluate its accommodation to new modes of conscience throughout the changing times. Some key figures will be mentioned but the mainstay of the argument will be built around Ralph Waldo Emerson who, as an “American scholar”, has made some excellent inroads into the relationship of the self with his /her community, and on how much human creativity depends on this relationship. This will be illustrated by reference to a diversity of writers and other artists whose achievements are strongly imbued with the sense of the self at work within the community, this same sense being then explored in association with creativity and the notions of academy and associativism.

I will, finally, switch from this more speculative instance of my essay to the history of APEAA. Ever since the thirty four plus something years of this Association’s foundation/existence, it has afforded a practical example of how the Humanities, as practiced in our field of studies, may achieve their goals with a little imagination and a good measure of willingness. The example of some of the founding figures of APEAA, the innovative paths they were able to launch and which we are nowadays pursuing, have certainly heralded the future capability to make the most of this Association’s potential and its role as a meeting place, which, at different levels (national and international) provide the opportunity for a fruitful dialogue among the variety of disciplines and methodological preferences of its members.

### KEYWORDS

Community; Academy; Ralph Waldo Emerson; Associativism; The Portuguese Association for Anglo-American Studies (APEAA)

## RESUMO

Auscultando o vocábulo latino *communitate*, o ensaio debruça-se sobre possíveis desvios ao sentido original do mesmo, de forma a correlacioná-lo com as áreas dos Estudos Ingleses e Americanos, para, de seguida, avaliar a sua adequação a novos modos de consciência ao correr das mudanças operadas em diferentes períodos da história humana. Serão referidas algumas figuras-chave, mas o cerne do argumento foca compreensivelmente Ralph Waldo Emerson que, na sua qualidade de “académico americano”, se entregou a uma séria reflexão sobre as relações do indivíduo em vida comunitária e como essas relações haviam de influenciar a sua própria criatividade. Ilustrado por referência a uma diversidade de escritores e outros artistas, este mesmo sentimento virá a ser explorado em ligação com a criatividade e as noções de vida académica e associativa.

Observações de ordem mais especulativa darão lugar a considerações concretas sobre o historial da APEAA na parte final do ensaio. A partir da sua fundação e ao longo dos seus trinta e vários anos de existência, esta Associação tem vindo a oferecer um bom exemplo de como as Humanidades, tal como são postas em prática nas nossas áreas de estudo, conseguem alcançar os seus propósitos com um pouco de imaginação e alguma dose de boa vontade. O exemplo de algumas das figuras fundadoras da APEAA, os caminhos inovadores que encetaram e que nós nos dispusemos a prosseguir, desde logo anunciaram a possibilidade de tirar o maior partido possível das potencialidades desta Associação em tempos vindouros, bem como o seu papel, tanto a nível nacional como internacional, enquanto lugar de encontro e oferta de oportunidade para um diálogo frutuoso entre a variedade de disciplinas e a diversidade de preferências dos seus membros.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Comunidade; Academia; Ralph Waldo Emerson; Associativismo; Associação Portuguesa de Estudos Anglo-Americanos (APEAA)

---

# Calling for a Thought on Food in Anglo-American Studies

*Maria José Pereira Pires*

Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies  
ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies



# Calling for a Thought on Food in Anglo-American Studies

## 1. Food: Holder of Interpersonal and Cultural Meanings

When we think of food, it is the well-known saying ‘tell me what you eat... and I’ll tell you who you are’ that commonly comes to mind.<sup>1</sup> Whereas this has always been taken as a truism in an individual sense, it is now more often used when characterising the identity of a country at a global level, plus the regional level through the different cultural and geographical resources of the country. Nonetheless, the relevant factor here is not so much “*you are* what you eat” — but “*what you eat* is what you are”. Recognisably, food, without which man cannot survive, is an unquestionable protagonist in the social, political and economic evolution of history. As Sarah Sceats argues, it is a basic social signifier, a holder of interpersonal and cultural meanings:

It is, and has been, constructed as symbolic in all sorts of ways, either intentionally (Passover, the Eucharist), through custom (harvest suppers and hot cross buns) or by commerce (the ‘ploughman’s lunch’); the resonances are, initially at least, culture-specific. (125)

---

<sup>1</sup> This well-known idea ‘Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es’ (Brillat-Savarin ix) was presented as an aphorism in *Physiologie du Gout, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante* (1826) by the French lawyer and politician, who gained fame as an epicure and gastronome, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin and shortly after by the German philosopher and anthropologist Ludwig Feuerbach who used the truism ‘man is what he eats’ (‘Der Mensch ist was er ißt’), since Feuerbach stood in opposition to any philosophical system-building for an empirical study of how people respond to the world and to each other.

Accordingly, many of the important questions centre themselves on the ethical dimensions of foodways, agricultural practice, and cultural meaning; these are undeniably central to several pedagogies.<sup>2</sup> Yet, we can also flip this assertion around to suggest that many cultural and social questions can be answered by examining food. Our consumption of food takes place within a wider framework in which foods are produced, regulated, represented, and associated with specific identities (Ashley 60). From a historical perspective, the main fields associated with food consumption have been those concerned with diet, nutrition, and health. Therefore, it becomes understandable that a person's attitude toward food can reveal not just personality traits but an entire *food ideology*, as well; a set of beliefs that encompasses a whole way of thinking about the world, and usually an ideal way of being in that world.

## 2. Legitimizing Food-cultural Studies

As mentioned above, it becomes pertinent to approach the food-cultural studies and the so called 'state of the arts' in this area of knowledge in Anglo-American studies. The fact is that there has been a growing appreciation, acceptance, and even legitimacy of food-cultural studies as a distinct field. This seems to be a sign, to a certain extent, of the growing acknowledgment that ground-breaking scholarship often crosses disciplinary boundaries. Some believe that the identification of food-cultural studies as a discrete field is possibly not of much relevance in the academic environment. I question precisely the firmness of this statement based on the issue of their claimed inherent *interdisciplinarity*. There is no doubt about the usefulness of such collaboration, since it permits to understand phenomena and relationships, even though food-cultural studies is not a unified field. I believe it is necessary to build a solid framework of thought,

---

<sup>2</sup> The term 'foodways' aims at a vast cross-disciplinary approach to food and nutrition, studying food consumption on a deeper than concrete level. Besides food scholars, also anthropologists, sociologists, and historians often use this term to describe the study of why we eat what we eat and its meanings. An example is the refereed journal *Food and Foodways*, published by Taylor & Francis.



a verifiable one. Even though this was considered to have been somehow absent — mainly because of Jennifer K. Ruark's article "More Scholars Focus on Historical, Social, and Cultural Meanings of Food, but Some Critics Say It's Scholarship-Lite Selected Books in Food Studies" (1999) — it does not make that much sense these days.

Conversely, some scholars have been worried for the last decade that much of the research is so interdisciplinary that it lacks rigor. Steven L. Kaplan, a professor of history at Cornell University and one of the editors of *Food and Foodways* (the international journal that began publication in the late 1980s) is one of them. For him, some people were still not aware of what food is: "It's about the whole range of issues from feasting to fasting — from great famines and the humble efforts of ordinary people to forge a minimal survival diet, to the more extravagant and elaborate dimension of bourgeois self-indulgence and the aestheticization of food" (Ruark A19). I share his concern on some theoretical work in food studies, as he added in Ruark's article:

Before the rise of food studies in the humanities, food was treated only as fuel. [...] Now we have, paradoxically, the reverse problem: a great many people are talking about food in terms of vaguely symbolic language, without mooring it in the tension between the symbolic and the physical. (*Ibidem*)

One may also confirm that food studies approaches benefit from a certain freedom and creativity. This provides some balance from the strength offered by what otherwise could be considered a limiting disciplinary quality. This is implied by Carole Counihan when she answers that methodologically she works as an anthropologist (Miller 173). I share her feeling that food studies are necessarily "interdisciplinary in subject matter, in thinking, in theoretical and analytical approaches" (*ibid.* 173-174). Such a position does not oppose other methodologies, but differs from those who, similarly to Psyche Williams-Forsen, claim that food becomes the centre of analysis while they then use a variety of methods and theories to examine it (*ibid.* 196). Accordingly, Williams-Forsen does recognize the variety of methods one is able to employ "under the umbrella of food studies" (*ibidem*). I am, therefore, changing my view on food-cultural studies as being an interdisciplinary field to consider them a field in need

of a cross-disciplinary approach — where the several disciplines work together for the same goal (i.e. a project) but not necessarily merge with one another. Thus, there have been some attempts to work on that in the US and in the UK.

## 2.2. Prolific Publishing

In fact, the range of research concerning the field of food-cultural studies over the last fifteen years validates their increasing relevance to Anglo-American studies. One can see the way the food studies movement has encouraged scholars and students in long-established academic disciplines to follow a line of investigation on food themes. Publishing of scholarly work related to the role of food in society, culture, and commerce has also been facilitated. The last couple of years have also been prolific in terms of new academic journals on food studies, culinary history societies, and publishers who are announcing food series. The *Food 2013 Catalogue* presented by Berg (a Bloomsbury Company) is a good case in point. Berg, a Bloomsbury Company, for instance, presented the *Food 2013 Catalogue* with the following titles: *Writing Food History: A Global Perspective* (August 2012) edited by Kyri W. Clafin and Peter Scolliers; for October 2012 there is Shelley L. Koch's *A Theory of Grocery Shopping: Food, Choice and Conflict*, and *Culinary Capital* by Peter Naccarato and Kathleen LeBesco; *Food Words: Essays in Culinary Culture* (March 2013) edited by Peter Jackson and Warren Belasco, who are also editing with Anne Murcott *The Handbook of Food Research* (August 2013); Brian Gardner's *Global Food Futures: Feeding the World in 2050* (April 2013); David Evans' *Food Waste: Home Consumption, Material Culture and Everyday Life* (June 2013); Isabelle de Solier's *Food and the Self: Consumption, Production and Material Culture* (June 2013); Ken Albala's *The Food History Reader: Primary Sources* (August 2013); Nicola Humble's *The Literature of Food: An Introduction from 1830 to Present* (September 2013); Kaori O'Connor's *The Never-Ending Feast: The Archaeology and Anthropology of Feasting* (September 2013); Christina Grasseni's *Alternative Food Networks* (October 2013); *Geographies of Food: An Introduction* (December 2013) by Mike Goodman, Lewis Holloway, Moya Kneafsey, and Damian Maye; finally for January

2014 there is the four-volume collection: *Food History: Critical and Primary Sources* edited by Jeffrey M. Pilcher, and *Fun Food: Children's Food Marketing and the Politics of Consumption* by Charlene Elliot. In 2011 Leo Coleman had already edited *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* and in 2012 Fabio Parasecoli and Peter Scholliers edited the set of six volumes *A Cultural History of Food*.

Some of these listed publications can be easily placed as reference publications, and others belong to History, Literature, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology, Material and Popular Culture, and Cultural and Communication Studies. This clearly shows the magnitude of the current interest in food issues, but also how the literary approach is outnumbered by historical and anthropological approaches in the food studies which are oriented towards the human sciences. In spite of this phenomenon, I witness a certain reluctance from some scholars in acknowledging what is here an evident interdisciplinary contextualization. It was at the British Sociological Association conference *Food and Society* organized by the Food Study Group in 2-3 July 2012 in London that this came to my notice.

### **2.3. A Call to Explore Complex Interactions**

Also interesting is to check now the call for papers for the BSA in 2013 — “Food, Drink and Hospitality: Space, Materiality, Practice” held in June in London and organized in conjunction with *Oxford Gastronomica*, Oxford Brookes University, The British Sociological Association's Food Study Group and the *Hospitality & Society Journal*. They state that whereas philosophical enquiry has enriched the understanding of hospitality by providing intellectual legitimacy to its study as it broadens interest in that topic (Barnett; Derrida; Dikeç), it has also led to “abstract re-conceptualisations of hospitality and a tendency to use notions of hospitality to view relations at national, regional and city scales rather than at the level of everyday micro-geographies involving transactions of food and drink” (*The British Sociological Association*). In addition, they also claim that while there has been a tendency for this kind of work to deal with philosophical debates on hospitality and society neglecting commercial practices, for instance, other academics working with commercial

hospitality have for the most part disregarded abstract philosophical debates and perspectives.

With such a tendency in mind in this area, there have been efforts to build links between abstract and more concrete notions of hospitality — as well as between the social and commercial manifestations of hospitality — by a number of studies (Bell; Molz; Lashley; Lugosi; Lynch). Therefore, by inviting those who wanted “to explore the complex interactions between food, drink and hospitality, and to make explicit connections between the abstract and philosophical dimensions of hospitality and its material, embodied and sensual practices” (*ibidem*) the event attempted to build on this kind of emerging body of work. In other words, they expected to develop cross-disciplinary dialogue and, thus, encouraged contributions from colleagues working in sociology, anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, cultural and media studies, gender studies, business and management, design, literary studies, health and nutrition and psychology, plus any related fields. Finally, they also welcomed empirical and theoretical works using a variety of theoretical approaches and methods which comprise the following: Ethnographic, Symbolic Interactionist, Actor-Network Theory, Discourse Analysis, Visual Methods, Phenomenological, Post-Colonial, Critical Theory and Gender Studies Perspectives. Thus the question, has the so acclaimed interdisciplinary matter grown into a need for developing cross-disciplinary dialogue?

### **3. A Panorama of Culture through the Prism of Food**

Looking back to what the American literary critic, feminist, and writer on cultural and social issues, Elaine Showalter, considered just a decade ago, in her piece “Food: My Dinner with Derrida” (2002), one can see how Showalter has looked at the semiotics of food possibly through Barthes 1950s semiotic analysis of steak and chips (Trubshaw): “The academic world [...] has changed a lot, and the food evolution has been semiotic as well as sustaining. Since the sixties, among both U.S. and U.K. scholars, food has signified sex, power, and art”. She travels from the 1960s when “food began to stand for erotic desires and possibilities” (Showalter) in the celebrated eating scene in the Tony Richardson’s movie *Tom Jones* (1963) to the end of the century — with the “wonderful 1999 memoir

*My Kitchen Wars*, by cookbook writer Betty Fussell, who described her discovery of sensuality in French cooking while she was at Princeton University in the 1960s” (*ibidem*) showing how each new food opened up new sexual analogues. Showalter summarizes this path in the following way:

[...] the academic men and women who were whisking in the sixties began traveling and tasting in the eighties and nineties. [...] I suppose it was inevitable that the next phase would be to make food, cooking, and eating an academic discourse — a breakthrough that may have come when Susan Leonardi, a professor of English at the University of Maryland, published an article on recipes in *PMLA*. (*Ibidem*)

No wonder there are references to Darra Goldstein’s observation at the beginning of this century, when this Williams College professor and cookbook writer who edits *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* (University of California Press) reflected on food as “one of the best ways to understand a culture and the rituals around it [since] you can see a panorama of culture through the prism of food” (*ibidem*).

Looking also at the American framework in a couple of academic institutions, Berg highlights the following projects: the master’s program in gastronomy in Boston University (1990s) which focused on the cultural and culinary aspects of food consumption; the admission to undergraduate, master’s and doctoral programs in food studies by the Department of Nutrition and Food Studies at New York University (1996), allowing by this means the legitimization of such an emerging field as a state-accredited academic entity; and the New York University programs that called attention to how individuals, communities, and societies relate to food within a cultural and historical context. Accordingly, food studies became “an umbrella term that includes foodways, gastronomy, and culinary history as well as historical, cultural, political, economic, and geographic examinations of food production and consumption” (Berg). As expected, this broad definition would raise issues concerning the scope, methodology, and acceptance of food studies as a distinct academic entity (*ibidem*).

### 3.2. The American Studies

In fact, according to Warren Belasco American Studies professors are inherently interdisciplinary, so they tend to venture confidently where more prudent scholars might be indecisive on where to tread and, as a food scholar, he feels “the compulsion to be useful and practical [since] the potential to join theory with practice is what brought [him] to the field in the first place” (302). In contrast, he considers that his own experience editing the food journal *Food, Culture & Society* has been rather cautionary, given that “food” covers so diverse areas — from dietetics to agriculture to media studies — and he is constantly being brought up short by how little he understands, knows, or wants to know: “As there is already so much to keep up with in my own specialty—modern US cultural history—can I really be knowledgeable and useful by encroaching on other people’s turf?” (*ibidem*). As a final point, Carolyn de la Peña comments on the relevance of being trained in American Studies:

This makes sense. As an interdisciplinary field, American Studies offers fewer cautions than other disciplines about dabbling in multiple methods (a little ethnography here, a little media studies there, a little history here, throw in some literary analysis). This is probably why we find ourselves on these frontiers that stretch—uncomfortably at times—our expertise. (Belasco 312)

As Charlotte Biltkoff points out, if one is to work with scientists, nutritionists and policy makers, one has to understand how these think and also have the tools to read their data through a cultural lens (*ibidem*). Accordingly, one has to acquire new forms of data on living people and current events. Considering herself mostly an historian, de la Peña claims to have often used her historical knowledge to create a surprising moment at a table of scientists only to have them perplex her by asking “what does your research show about that today” or “what do consumers say now”. Not being trained to pose similar questions or respond to those questions does not imply that she is not eager *to do so* as a food scholar who wants to influence the way food and nutritional knowledge are produced. Therefore, there is the feeling of a need to be aware of this gap between what one knows and what is in fact *usable information* for scientists,

nutritionists and policy makers, really admit that it matters (*ibidem*); and then, as Amy Bentley recommends, set off to perfect what she calls one's "methodological literacy". De la Peña concludes, though, that whilst humanities methods may be effective in revealing the cultural dynamics of food production and consumption, these same methods single-handedly end up being convoluted when one tries to "get from theoretical or historical data and patterns to the present moment with conviction" (*ibidem*).

While American Studies, as a celebrated interdisciplinary field, seems to offer fewer cautions than other disciplines about dipping into multiple methods, when it comes to food studies scholars working with other professionals they feel the need to take in the tools to read wide-ranging data through a cultural lens. Still, the questions raised most recently identify a further concern also specified by others than the American Studies. A good example is the 2013 Food Culture Studies Caucus of the American Studies Association (ASA) Conference held in Washington D.C.. This network was created for scholars who work on projects that connect the production, consumption, and representation of food across the numerous disciplines that cohere in American Studies. In view of that, this caucus intends to study food and eating culture since these present the prospect of a "radically cross-disciplinary and transnational re-engagement of key topics in studies of the Americas" ("Food Cultural Studies Caucus"). Furthermore, even though the caucus is aware of the interconnections with other Food Studies communities, it stresses how divergent it becomes when offering a choice for those who perceive food and eating culture as essential "to the themes that are at the forefront of American Studies, including race, class, gender and identity, immigration, community and diaspora, social and labor history, empire, globalization and state formation" (*ibidem*).

In the above mentioned conference, held in November 2013, there was a special session on "Food, Debt and the Anti-Capitalist Imagination" and at its centre was the way the contradictions of capitalism are sharply clear in the systemic collapse of both food production and distribution and, consequently, the recent debt crisis and austerity programs across the world. Thus, it was from diverse (inter)disciplinary perspectives that this panel sought to identify the relationship between food production/consumption and the capitalist mechanisms of domination together with

the resistance to that same domination. Among the three questions presented by the panel, I draw attention to the first one: “How does thinking about the relationship between food, debt, finance, and capitalism in general, require us to rethink paradigms of critique in the humanities and social sciences such as North/South, hemispheric and transnational relations, as well as those of class, race, gender, sexuality” (*ibidem*). There was an evident focus on the questions of food/fuel, profits and hunger, the urban/rural partition, abundance/scarcity, sustainability, food and consumerism, and finally on the question of food and austerity in the media, film and literature. In addition, there was an intention of making sense of food in a broader institutional and political context.

All in all, the recent calls on food studies presented here come to show the tip of the iceberg when considering their so acclaimed inherent interdisciplinarity — the same as with American Studies, for instance. As pointed out by Warren Belasco, one should be prudent when intruding in other disciplines and this cautionary suggestion brings light over a matter which I believe has developed more towards the need of a cross-disciplinary dialogue. Far from bringing the matter to a conclusion, this is merely a call for a thought on food.

## Works Cited

- Ashley, Bob, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones, Ben Taylor. *Food and Cultural Studies*. London / New York: Routledge, 2004.
- Barnett, Clive. “Ways of relating: Hospitality and the acknowledgement of otherness.” *Progress in Human Geography* 29 (2005): 5-21.
- Belasco, Warren *et al.* “The Frontiers of Food Studies”. *Food, Culture and Society* 14.3 (September 2011): 301-314.
- Bell, David. “The hospitable city: Social relations in commercial settings.” *Progress in Human Geography* 31(2007): 7-22.
- Berg, Jennifer, Marion Nestle, Amy Bentley. “Food Studies.” 2003. *answers.com*. *Gale Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, n.p. February 16, 2013.
- Brillat-Savarin, Jean Anthelme. “Introduction by Alphonse Karr.” *Physiologie du Gout, ou Méditations de Gastronomie Transcendante*. Paris: Gabriel de



- Gonet (1848 [1826]): i-x. Also available online at: <ftp.bnf.fr>, July 30, 2010.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Dikeç, Mustafa, Nigel Clark, Clive Barnett (eds.). *Extending hospitality: Giving space, taking time*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009.
- “Food Cultural Studies Caucus”, *ASAFoodStudiesCaucus*. n.p, n.d. April 9, 2013.
- Germann-Molz, Jennie, Sarah Gibson (eds). *Mobilizing hospitality: The ethics of social relations in a mobile world*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.
- Lashley, Conrad, Paul Lynch, Alison Morrison (eds). *Hospitality: A social lens*. Oxford: Elsevier, 2007.
- Lugosi, Peter. “The production of hospitable space: Commercial propositions and consumer co-creation in a bar operation.” *Space and Culture* 12 (2009): 396-411.
- Lynch, Paul *et al.* “Theorising hospitality.” *Hospitality and Society* 1 (2011): 3-24.
- Miller, Jeff, Jonathan Deutsch. *Food Studies: An Introduction to Research Methods*. Oxford / New York: Berg, 2009.
- Sceats, Sarah. “Food and Manners: Roberts and Ellis.” *Food, Consumption and the Body in Contemporary Women’s Fiction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000:125-154.
- Showalter, Elaine. “Food: My dinner with Derrida.” *prospect.org*. *The American Prospect* 13.1 (January 2002) n.p. 20 December 2012.
- The British Sociological Association*. <britsoc.co.uk>. n.p, n.d. May 1, 2013.
- Trubshaw, Bob “Semiotics.” <indigogroup.co.uk>. *Foamy Custard* (2005) n.p. September 20, 2012.
- Ruark, Jennifer. “More Scholars Focus on Historical, Social, and Cultural Meanings of Food, but Some Critics Say It’s Scholarship-Lite Selected Books in Food Studies”. *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Washington, District of Columbia (July 9, 1999): A17-A19. Also available online at: <chronicle.com>, August 22, 2010.

### ABSTRACT

The growing acceptance and legitimacy of food-cultural studies as a distinct field seems to be a sign of the growing acknowledgment that ground-breaking scholarship often crosses disciplinary boundaries. Whereas some believe that the identification of food-cultural studies as a discrete field may not be of much relevance in the academic environment, I question the firmness of this statement based on the issue of their claimed inherent interdisciplinarity. The range of research concerning the field of food-cultural studies over the last fifteen years validates their increasing relevance to Anglo-American Studies. One can see the way the food studies movement has promoted scholars and students in long-established academic disciplines to follow a line of investigation on food themes. The last couple of years have also been prolific in terms of new academic journals on food studies, culinary history societies, and publishers announcing food series.

While American Studies, as a celebrated interdisciplinary field, apparently offers fewer cautions than other disciplines about dipping into multiple methods, when it comes to food studies scholars working with other professionals they take in the tools to read wide-ranging data through a cultural lens. Has the so acclaimed interdisciplinary matter grown into a need for developing cross-disciplinary dialogues?

### KEYWORDS

Academia; Anglo-American Studies; food-cultural studies; interdisciplinarity

### RESUMO

A crescente aceitação e legitimidade dos estudos culturais de alimentação enquanto uma área distinta parece ser um sinal do reconhecimento crescente de que estudos inovadores muitas vezes ultrapassam as fronteiras disciplinares. Considerando que alguns acreditam na identificação dos estudos culturais de alimentação como uma área discreta sem grande relevância no meio acadêmico, questiono a firmeza desta afirmação com base na sua alegada interdisciplinaridade intrínseca. A amplitude

da pesquisa nestes estudos ao longo dos últimos quinze anos valida a sua crescente relevância para os estudos anglo-americanos e é visível a forma como os estudos culturais de alimentação têm promovido estudos em disciplinas acadêmicas há muito estabelecidas. Os últimos anos também têm sido prolíficos em termos de novos periódicos acadêmicos em estudos de alimentação, da criação de sociedades de história da culinária e editores que anunciam publicações nesta área.

Enquanto os Estudos Americanos, reconhecidamente interdisciplinares, aparentam oferecer uma maior predisposição no uso de vários métodos, quando se trata dos estudos culturais de alimentação, os estudiosos que trabalham com outros profissionais tendem a ler dados abrangentes através de uma lente cultural. Ter-se-á a tão aclamada questão interdisciplinar transformado numa necessidade para o desenvolvimento de outros diálogos disciplinares?

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Academia; Estudos Anglo-Americanos; “food-cultural studies” (estudos culturais de alimentação); interdisciplinaridade

---



# O Rosto Velado de Moisés: Religião e Orientalismo em Obras de Thomas Moore e Walter Scott

*Jorge Bastos da Silva*

Universidade do Porto

CEAUL – Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa



## O Rosto Velado de Moisés: Religião e Orientalismo em Obras de Thomas Moore e Walter Scott

A emergência e a afirmação da literatura que nos habituámos a qualificar de “romântica”, a partir das décadas finais do século XVIII, constituem um processo tributário de uma multiplicidade de factores — teóricos ou poetológicos, estéticos, sociopolíticos, filosóficos e globalmente mundividenciais — que, denotando matrizes comuns, não deixaram de assumir feição diversa nos vários lugares da cultura europeia. No plano do gosto literário, e no que respeita, de modo específico, à poesia inglesa, certamente a dimensão da escrita em que alcançam mais distinto realce os vectores a que nos referimos, constata-se um afastamento dos códigos do Classicismo superiormente representado pela obra de Pope, tendência que surge acompanhada de um progressivo descurar do cânone clássico ou neoclássico, isto é, da convicção de que o legado de autores como Homero e Sófocles oferecia um modelo consumado da arte, de que dele podia ser extraído um conjunto de soluções operatórias para o escritor e bem assim de normas orientadoras do exercício judicativo do crítico. A interiorização dos valores não apenas estéticos mas também éticos reflectida nas obras de um Thomson e de um Young contribuiu para o regime de enunciação característico da poesia “conversacional” de Coleridge e Wordsworth, ostensivamente vocacionada para proporcionar ao leitor a partilha — e mais: a participação — de experiências que se crêem humanamente enriquecedoras. Tais experiências apresentam-se vinculadas à pessoa do poeta, vertidas num dispositivo retórico que tipicamente o identifica com a figura do sujeito lírico e centradas numa circunstância que se encena como realmente vivida, intensificada e transfigurada pela emoção, pela memória e pela imaginação. A singeleza do *encontro* (de Wordsworth com a ceifeira solitária, por exemplo, e do poema “The Solitary Reaper” com o leitor) actualiza a definição wordsworthiana do poeta como “um homem

que se dirige a outros homens”;<sup>1</sup> e esse encontro (de facto, um duplo encontro), que se postula transformador, revelacional, transcende implicitamente a dialéctica neoclássica (ou, na verdade, horaciana) do *prodesse et delectare*, ou do *dulce et utile*. Nas suas modalidades comunicativas mais características, e que melhor correspondem ao discurso teórico que lhe é cognato, a poesia romântica exalta mas não instrui, comove mas não deleita (pelo contrário, as mais das vezes prepondera um veio melancólico, de arrebatamento violento ou mesmo de angústia, que dificilmente se enquadra em qualquer conceito comum de prazer).<sup>2</sup> Ressalve-se que o repúdio do didacticismo não coincide com uma admissão de inconseqüência moral, nem funda, em rigor, uma apologia da arte pela arte; mas em todo o caso passa a prevalecer a ideia do alto valor intrínseco da vivência do sujeito criador, quando não a arriscada presunção da sua auto-suficiência. Ao invés, a escrita de Pope reconhece e convoca expressamente o lastro de memória cultural que lhe subjaz, do qual depende e com o qual conta. A tópica da imitação, no preceituário, e a sua prática são sintomáticos desse interesse em capitalizar (recorremos a uma imagem de que Pope não desdenharia) com a tradição. Em *Imitations of Horace*, por exemplo, Pope aproveita o poeta latino para dizer *com ele* — com a sua autoridade, o seu prestígio, a sua arte — o que tem a dizer de sua lavra acerca das realidades do seu próprio tempo, à luz de princípios já conhecidos do autor da Antiguidade e por ele poeticamente cristalizados.

O esquecimento voluntário desta memória parecerá, pois, ser um aspecto constituinte da cultura literária do Romantismo. Mas tal juízo é precipitado. Pois o que se verifica é antes a despromoção de uma memória civilizacional unitária, de pretensões virtualmente universalistas, todavia sempre temperadas pela consciência de se tratar de uma herança cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> Do prefácio de 1800 de *Lyrical Ballads*: “What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? [...] He is a man speaking to men” (*Prose* 288). A imediatidade é todavia ambivalente e ilusória, porque o testemunho pessoal depende da mediação da memória, como Wordsworth esclarece: “I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion *recollected in tranquillity*” (297, *italico* nosso).

<sup>2</sup> Para duas leituras do tema centradas na obra de Byron, ver Felluga (71-141 e *passim*) e Bastos da Silva, “O Génio e o Desespero”.



do paganismo; e verifica-se, concomitantemente, a procura de memórias identificativas de carácter local ou nacional, simultaneamente restringindo a perspectiva para abraçar o autóctone e ampliando o horizonte de referência para abarcar o exótico. Ganha assim vulto um quadro mais plural, que se abre para um interior agora encarado na plena diversidade das suas radicações e, do mesmo passo, para um exterior que é apreciado pelo seu valor de alteridade. Neste contexto, tornam-se operadores fundamentais o desejo de recuperação da poesia popular, encarnado nas recolhas de baladas levadas a cabo por Percy e Scott, e, por outro lado, a dimensão do histórico, que pode passar também pela recuperação de elementos folclóricos de outros tempos e outras paragens (sendo que as obras de Thomas Moore e Walter Scott sobre as quais nos deteremos neste artigo ilustram precisamente este ponto). Sublinhe-se, no entanto — e tomando aqui como hipótese de trabalho que Classicismo e Romantismo são designações periodológicas de sentido e pertinência relativamente consensualizadas —, que *não há* pura e simples contradição, nesta vertente como em muitas outras, entre aquelas duas construções da historiografia literária. Pelo contrário, os poetas que pontificaram na chamada segunda geração do Romantismo — Shelley, Keats, Byron — deixaram bem plasmado nas suas obras o apreço em que tinham e a influência que sofreram de tragediógrafos, mitógrafos e épicos antigos. Mas mais interessante ainda, porque facto com frequência negligenciado, é notar que, a despeito do seu apego a um conjunto selecto de autores da Antiguidade greco-latina, e mau grado o dogmatismo que assumiu nos casos mais irredutíveis (pensamos na intransigência de um Rymer), muitos foram os intelectuais situáveis no arco do Classicismo que não enjeitaram o indeclinável encargo de resgatar de um eventual descaso e olvido os autores modernos em que acharam maior mérito. Recorrendo, mais uma vez, ao exemplo maior de Pope, lembre-se que, para seu adestramento técnico, na juventude, entendeu dever imitar Chaucer, Spenser e Waller, entre outros poetas ingleses; que foi responsável por uma importante edição da obra dramática de Shakespeare; que o volume *Imitations of Horace* incorpora reescritas de duas sátiras de Donne; e que tanto as suas traduções das epopeias homéricas como os jogos de intertextualidade sobre os quais assentam os poemas herói-cômicos *The Rape of the Lock* e *The Dunciad* conferem a Milton um estatuto análogo ao de Homero e Virgílio.

O que se constata com o advento do Romantismo não é, portanto, uma viragem pronunciada mas o acentuar de uma tendência para ampliar o panteão da literatura, flexibilizando os seus princípios definidores e compatibilizando padrões de gosto divergentes. Essas linhas de rumo importam na contemplação de opções estilísticas e no cultivo de gêneros alheios ao cânone do clássico, e servem, ao mesmo tempo, no plano do imaginário, a procura de um novo ou renovado sentimento de pertença étnica e civilizacional, de passados e mitos culturais alternativos. A este respeito, merece destaque o significado dos poemas ossiânicos de Macpherson, que, sendo embora falsificações (convalidadas por um Blair que nelas encontrou “a poesia do coração”),<sup>3</sup> denotam a aposta no reconhecimento de uma origem-outra, gaélica, totalmente estranha ao passado evocado pelo Classicismo. Tal como merecem destaque a hispanofilia de Southey e as suas incursões épicas ou romanescas por temas orientais em *Thalaba the Destroyer* e *The Curse of Kehama*, assim como o seu poema *Madoc*, que relata as aventuras de um príncipe galês na América Central, entre os Aztecas.<sup>4</sup> Este último poema, aliás, e regressamos ao argumento que frisa a inexistência de uma fractura entre neoclássicos e românticos, dir-se-ia glosar um mote dado por William Temple, que em *An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning*, de 1690, chama a atenção para as diversas Antiguidades de outras latitudes que não as da Europa, olhando não só a oriente para a Índia e para a China, mas também a oeste para o México e o Peru. Não podíamos estar mais

---

<sup>3</sup> Blair corroborou a tese do primitivismo e do nativismo míticos do bardo, escrevendo: “His poetry, more perhaps than that of any other writer, deserves to be stiled, *The Poetry of the Heart*. It is a heart penetrated with noble sentiments, and with sublime and tender passions; a heart that glows, and kindles the fancy; a heart that is full, and pours itself forth” (356).

<sup>4</sup> De resto, a deslocação, em todos estes casos, reverte não apenas a favor de outras coordenadas étnicas e geográficas mas também temporais, uma vez que as obras destes autores incidem predominantemente na Idade Média. Para uma perspectiva global e sucinta da voga medievalista no Romantismo literário britânico, ver Alexander (1-64 e *passim*). Para visões panorâmicas do envolvimento dos autores do Romantismo com o imaginário do Levante, cf. os estudos de Leask, Sharafuddin, Haddad e Cavaliero.

claramente situados no cerne do Classicismo do que com Temple, que a historiografia literária tende a considerar um conservador que toma partido contra os Modernos na célebre Querela.

Entre as deslocações de perspectiva assim descritas sucintamente, assoma como presença de primordial relevo a Bíblia, que se vê restaurada a posição nodal no universo das Letras em articulação com a re-espiritualização da sociedade e da cultura que, na segunda metade do século XVIII, sobreveio ao putativo esgotamento da orientação predominantemente secular do Iluminismo. Assim, em *The Laocoön* Blake afirma: “The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art” (777). E Coleridge, no percurso que vai de *Biographia Literaria* e *Lay Sermons* até *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit* e ao inacabado *Opus Maximum*, desenvolve um entendimento quase místico da psicologia humana, que, fazendo reverberar a auto-definição do divino oferecida no Livro do Êxodo, subsume num “infinite I AM”, e propõe uma doutrina do *Logos*, inspirada no Evangelho de João, que identifica o texto bíblico com o transcurso histórico e com a fulguração da linguagem poética.

Uma instanciação desse recentramento no património imaginativo da Bíblia judaico-cristã é o motivo do véu, que tem notória incidência na poesia e nos pronunciamentos teóricos de diversos autores do Romantismo. Na mitografia blakeana, mormente em *The Four Zoas* e *Jerusalem*, a consumação da humanidade (o Apocalipse) depende da remoção por Los do véu que cobre o rosto de Vala. Outras figuras femininas veladas, associadas ao desejo e à posse erótica, à imaginação redentora e/ou à transcendência, encontram-se em textos como *Alastor* e *The Revolt of Islam*, de Shelley, e *The Fall of Hyperion*, de Keats. No plano do discurso teórico, Wordsworth declara em *The Prelude*:

Visionary power  
Attends upon the motions of the winds  
Embodied in the mystery of words;  
There darkness makes abode, and all the host  
Of shadowy things do work their changes there  
As in a mansion like their proper home.  
Even forms and substances are circumfused  
By that transparent veil with light divine,

And through the turnings intricate of verse  
 Present themselves as objects recognised  
 In flashes, and with a glory scarce their own.<sup>5</sup>

E Shelley, em *A Defence of Poetry*, define a poesia ora como um véu, ora como um desvelar, ou de si mesma ou do mundo. “All high poetry is infinite”, afirma; “Veil after veil may be undrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed” (Brett-Smith 48). E noutro passo: “[Poetry] strips the veil of familiarity from the world, and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty, which is the spirit of its forms” (56). Por outro lado, a poesia captura e fixa o que de outro modo se desvaneceria, confere substância e permanência ao conteúdo da visão imaginativa, à intuição e ao anúncio das realidades de que só ela se apercebe: “Poetry makes immortal all that is best and most beautiful in the world; it arrests the vanishing apparitions which haunt the interlunations of life, and veiling them, or in language or in form, sends them forth among mankind” (55).

A co-ocorrência do motivo do véu com a ideia da *encarnação* de um princípio ou de uma realidade espiritual remete para uma fonte que se identifica com narrativas vetero- e neotestamentárias. Como procurámos demonstrar num estudo intitulado *O Véu do Templo*, a imagética romântica é neste ponto devedora de um *topos* que articula as duas grandes componentes textuais, ou os dois grandes corpos canónicos, da Bíblia. Os Evangelhos sinópticos, ao referir o momento da morte de Cristo, mencionam que se rasgou então o véu que no interior do Tempo de Jerusalém, como outrora no Tabernáculo do Deserto, segundo instruções expressas de Jeová relatadas no Livro do Êxodo (26:31-35), delimitava o espaço de acesso geral e apartava o Santo dos Santos (cf. Mateus 27:50-54; Marcos 15:37-38; Lucas 23:33-49). O rompimento do véu significa a anulação e a superação da ordem espiritual do Judaísmo, assim substituído por uma nova verdade teológica. Quadra bem com as aspirações revelacionais da poética do Romantismo o aproveitamento desse motivo por um Blake ou por um Shelley.

Aproxima-nos dos objectos centrais deste artigo um exemplo que se localiza no romance de Scott *Count Robert of Paris*, cuja acção se situa

---

<sup>5</sup> Livro V, vv. 619-629, da versão de 1805 do poema (Wordsworth 184).

no tempo da Primeira Cruzada, na Constantinopla do imperador Aléxio Comneno, à qual acorrem os cruzados, pedindo acolhida e auxílio para a travessia do Bósforo a caminho da Terra Santa. No capítulo XIV é descrita a corte do imperador como um “Sanctum Sanctorum” ao qual são admitidos os cavaleiros peregrinos mais eminentes, explicando o imperador: “our ancestors chose to make rules for exhibiting us to our subjects, as priests exhibit their images at their shrines.” (*Novels* IV, 773).<sup>6</sup> Deste modo, o imperador surge conotado com o divino, sendo porém exibido em vez de ocultado de acordo com preceitos antigos (ao contrário do que se verificava no Tabernáculo e no Templo judaicos), e a corte torna-se um espaço dotado de uma aura de sacralidade. Contudo, esse ídolo que é o imperador mostra-se, ironicamente, um indivíduo de conformação moral muito ambígua, pois assiste-se de seguida a um banquete que é o prelúdio da traição dos hóspedes pelo próprio Comneno, que pretende envenená-los para depois os aprisionar, por se temer tanto deles como dos potentados muçulmanos que rodeiam os seus territórios.

Há na Bíblia, entretanto, uma outra valência do motivo do véu, que contribui de modo menos óbvio para a conexão tipológica que liga o Templo a Cristo. Exploram essa valência Moore e Scott, para com ela compor duas visões do Oriente muçulmano, visões fortemente contrastantes entre si e que envolvem personagens *masculinas* que surgem de rosto velado. Neste caso, o referente bíblico relevante não é o Templo nem é Cristo, mas sim Moisés. Segundo a narrativa do Êxodo, após o cativo egípcio, na travessia do deserto em direcção à Terra Prometida, Moisés pôde contactar directamente com Deus, que por seu intermédio comunicou os ditames principais da Lei e celebrou a aliança com o Povo Eleito. O episódio, no qual Moisés se singulariza para que seja singularizada a nação judaica, faz intervir o motivo do véu, nos termos seguintes, de acordo com o texto da *King James Bible*:

---

<sup>6</sup> O texto refere uma “cortina mística” (“mystic curtain”; IV, 774) que se aparta para deixar ver o trono do imperador. A cortina equivale ao véu, aqui como em outros textos que iremos examinar: surge posta sobre o rosto de Mokanna em “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan” e na capela das carmelitas em *The Talisman*.

And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.

And *till* Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.

But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel *that* which he was commanded.

And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him. (Êxodo 34:32-35)

Embora tal não seja explicitado, detecta-se neste passo um nítido paralelismo com a configuração do interior do Tabernáculo, de cuja construção Moisés será um instrumento no mesmo Livro bíblico. O paralelismo é estabelecido pela exclusão da generalidade dos crentes (aqui, o contacto com o sagrado é proporcionado unicamente a Moisés, pois só na sequência deste episódio será instituída uma classe sacerdotal na linhagem do seu irmão Aarão); e é reforçado pela imagética de “entrar” e “sair” da presença do divino. Acresce que essa presença é resguardada dos outros por meio de um véu, que assinala a exclusão do povo comum, como se fosse indigno ou impuro, veiculando ao mesmo tempo a ideia de que o divino é intangível e se manifesta através de um fulgor insuportável.

O poema de Thomas Moore “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan”, pertencente ao volume *Lalla Rookh*, de 1817, reporta-se a este passo do Antigo Testamento (empregando o nome islâmico de Moisés, Mussa) para narrar uma história de perversidade política no contexto da Idade Média muçulmana. A abertura do poema, que situa a acção na Pérsia, remete expressamente para o episódio de Moisés no Sinai:

There on that throne, to which the blind belief,  
Of millions rais'd him, sat the Prophet-Chief,  
The Great MOKANNA. O'er his features hung  
The Veil, the Silver Veil, which he had flung  
In mercy there, to hide from mortal sight  
His dazzling brow, till man could bear its light.

For, far less luminous, his votaries said,  
 Were ev'n the gleams, miraculously shed  
 O'er MOUSSA's cheek, when down the Mount he trod,  
 All glowing from the presence of his God! (9-10)

Mokanna, o profeta velado,<sup>7</sup> comanda vastos exércitos, que põe ao serviço da sua ânsia de conquistas e do seu ódio feroz à humanidade, mas a coberto de uma mensagem de cunho milenarista, que promete um reino futuro de paz e de verdade:

“Then shall the reign of Mind commence on earth,  
 “And starting fresh, as from a second birth,  
 “Man, in the sunshine of the world's new spring,  
 “Shall walk transparent, like some holy thing!  
 “Then, too, your Prophet from his angel brow  
 “Shall cast the Veil, that hides its splendours now,  
 “And gladden'd Earth shall, through her wide expanse,  
 “Bask in the glories of this countenance! (18)

Reclamando-se da condição de verdadeiro profeta (perpassa o texto o tema da cisão entre sunitas e xiitas, tendo inclusivamente lugar uma batalha entre as forças do Mahdi e as forças do califado), Mokanna apresenta-se aos seus prosélitos como o sucessor dos patriarcas Adão, Moisés, Jesus e Maomé, e inculca-se como o defensor da liberdade. Na realidade, é uma personagem sinistra, demoníaca, um impostor cuja perfídia ressalta no momento em que assume toda a sua iniquidade perante a jovem noiva antes de a mandar fechar-se no harém. Mokanna declara a sua intenção de subjugar todos os homens e retira o véu para exhibir um rosto que produz horror:

“And, now thou seest my soul's angelic hue,  
 “'Tis time these features were uncurtain'd too; —  
 “This brow, whose light — oh rare celestial light!  
 “Hath been reserv'd to bless thy favour'd sight;  
 “These dazzling eyes, before whose shrouded might  
 “Thou'st seen immortal Man kneel down and quake —

---

<sup>7</sup> De acordo com Mohammed Sharafuddin (139), a palavra *mokanna* quer justamente dizer “velado” em árabe.

“Would that they were Heaven’s lightnings for his sake!  
 “But turn and look — then wonder, if thou wilt,  
 “That I should hate, should take revenge, by guilt,  
 “Upon the hand, whose mischief or whose mirth  
 “Sent me thus maim’d and monstrous upon earth;  
 “And on that race who, though more vile they be  
 “Than mowing apes, are demi-gods to me!  
 “Here — judge if Hell, with all its power to damn,  
 “Can add one curse to the foul thing I am!” —

He rais’d his veil — the Maid turn’d slowly round,  
 Look’d at him — shriek’d — and sunk upon the ground! (47)

Desmaia a jovem inocente. É incapaz de suportar a deformação física e moral desse anjo dos infernos que a desposou (e desposou-a no ambiente macabro de um sepulcro) e que tão flagrantemente contrasta com o resplendor do rosto de Moisés quando desce o Sinai.<sup>8</sup> No final, perdida que está a guerra contra o exército do califa (que o texto afirma ser o legítimo representante do Islão), Mokanna lança-se numa cisterna cheia de “burning drugs” e “liquid flame”, “Fit bath to lave a dying Prophet’s frame!” (116), para que o seu corpo se dissolva por completo e ele possa assombrar os monarcas vindouros, ao abrigo de uma crença messiânica assente na convicção de que ele ascendeu aos céus. Pelos contornos misteriosos da sua morte, Mokanna espera, pois, alcançar uma forma de imortalidade, que é confessadamente maligna:

“So shall my votaries, wheresoe’er they rave,  
 “Proclaim that Heav’n took back the Saint it gave; —  
 “That I’ve but vanish’d from this earth awhile,  
 “To come again, with bright, unshrouded smile!  
 “So shall they build me altars in their zeal,  
 “Where knaves shall minister, and fools shall kneel;  
 “Where Faith may mutter o’er her mystic spell,  
 “Written in blood — and Bigotry may swell  
 “The sail he spreads for heav’n with blasts from hell!

---

<sup>8</sup> Já perto do fim, a acompanhar um discurso ímpio, Mokanna também se descobre perante a multidão dos seus seguidores, que fogem em debandada (cf. 114-115).



“So shall my banner, through long ages, be  
 “The rallying sign of fraud and anarchy; —  
 “Kings yet unborn shall rue MOKANNA’s name,  
 “And, though I die, my Spirit, still the same,  
 “Shall walk abroad in all the stormy strife,  
 “And guilt, and blood, that were its bliss in life!  
 [...]

“Now mark how readily a wretch like me,  
 “In one bold plunge, commences Deity!” (116-117)

A história de Mokanna é interseccionada por uma história de amores desafortunados. No início do poema, Azim e Zelica, os dois jovens e nobres amantes, julgam-se mutuamente mortos. Zelica, crendo ser genuíno o profeta, torna-se sua noiva (como vimos, fica transida de horror quando lhe contempla o rosto, caindo inanimada). Por seu turno, o valente Azim, que esteve preso na Grécia, adere com sincero entusiasmo à causa de Mokanna:

kneeling, pale  
 With pious awe, before that Silver Veil,  
 Believes the form, to which he bends his knee,  
 Some pure, redeeming angel, sent to free  
 This fetter’d world from every bond and stain,  
 And bring its primal glories back again! (15)

Os dois jovens vêm a reencontrar-se, num episódio em que, de harmonia com os costumes islâmicos, Zelica enverga um véu, que lhe cai quando uma vez mais desfalece de emoção (cf. 72). Compreendendo a infâmia de Mokanna, que lhes tinha mentido, Azim deserta e passa a combater pelo califa. No final do poema, após a morte de Mokanna, distingue-se entre os exércitos uma figura coberta com o véu argentino de Mokanna. É Zelica, que se roja sobre a lança de Azim, descobrindo o rosto ao tombar (cf. 119-120). Azim vem a expiar essa morte infausta por longos anos na condição de penitente, junto ao túmulo da amada que perdeu.

É muito distinta a visão do Médio Oriente muçulmano que nos dão os romances de Walter Scott relacionados com as Cruzadas, em particular *The Talisman*, de 1825 (já que nos restantes, *Ivanhoe*, *The Betrothed* e *Count Robert of Paris*, as Cruzadas são uma empresa que surge em pano de fundo). Ao invés da malvadez frenética e diabólica de Mokanna, e em

vez do fanatismo e da superstição de timbre escatológico dos seus seguidores, em *The Talisman* confrontam-se as hostes cristãs com a dignidade de costumes e de carácter dos povos muçulmanos, personificada no sultão Saladino, figura aliás proteica e quase omnipresente.

A história do romance decorre num período de tréguas durante a Terceira Cruzada. Do lado cristão, tem como protagonistas Ricardo Coração-de-Leão, o duque da Áustria, o rei de França, o grão-mestre dos Templários e outros senhores nobres, incluindo o príncipe herdeiro da Escócia, que no decurso da maior parte da intriga se encontra disfarçado de humilde homem de armas, com o nome de Sir Kenneth of the Couchant Leopard. Acompanham os cavaleiros a rainha Berengária de Inglaterra e as damas da sua corte, entre as quais se encontra Lady Edith, dama de sangue Plantageneta a cuja mão Sir Kenneth aspira.

A acção de *The Talisman* inicia-se com Sir Kenneth, sozinho, a atravessar o deserto e a cruzar-se com um cavaleiro muçulmano, vindo com ele a terçar armas numa contenda que deixa comprovadas a galhardia e a cortesia de ambos (o sarraceno é Saladino disfarçado). De seguida, os dois cavaleiros, sem embargo da diferença de religião, acolhem-se à caverna de um anacoreta, conhecido como o eremita de Engaddi, um frade carmelita com fama de homem santo. (Na história pessoal do sacerdote, chamado agora Theodorick, antigo cavaleiro de nome Alberick of Mortemar, fica demonstrada a contiguidade — apontada por Scott, como veremos, no “Essay on Chivalry” — da cavalaria, da devoção e da transgressão. Acresce a ironia de, qual Moisés *manqué*, o eremita fazer predições que vêm a mostrar-se erradas.) Durante a noite, Sir Kenneth é acordado pelo enigmático frade, que, tendo-se assegurado de que o emir permanece adormecido, pede ao cavaleiro escocês que o acompanhe e com ele siga um obscuro anão. Este condu-los por mais fundas passagens subterrâneas até que atingem a capela do mosteiro das monjas carmelitas. O episódio, no capítulo IV do romance, tem uma atmosfera onírica, fantasmagórica até, e a sua exacta natureza só será clarificada mais tarde.

Para espanto do cavaleiro, o eremita pede a Sir Kenneth que lhe coloque um véu sobre o rosto (um véu aliás sujo e roto), dizendo-lhe: “I may not look on the treasure which thou art presently to behold, without sin and presumption” (*Novels* IV, 23). Ao longo do episódio, o eremita dará os mais vívidos sinais de penitência, angústia e humildade (por

motivos que só mais tarde se perceberão). Afectado de forte emoção, explica a Sir Kenneth:

Thou art now about to look upon the richest treasure that the earth possesses[;] woe is me, that my eyes are unworthy to be lifted towards it! Alas! I am but the vile and despised sign, which points out to the wearied traveller a harbour of rest and security, but must itself remain for ever without doors. (*ibidem*)

Como Moisés, que conduziu os Israelitas em direcção à Terra Prometida mas não pôde lá entrar, o anacoreta conduz Sir Kenneth por uma ligação secreta. Os dois homens chegam a uma câmara de cheia de luz e aromas perfumados, que Sir Kenneth (sob cujo ponto de vista o episódio é construído) percebe ser uma pequena capela gótica. Guarda-se ali, num relicário colocado sobre um altar e protegido por uma cortina, um pedaço do santo lenho. Não ousando o eremita transpor o limiar da capela, e retirando-se sem comungar, Sir Kenneth assiste a parte de uma cerimónia religiosa que inclui uma procissão de monjas envergando véus negros, bem como de outras mulheres, noviças ou visitantes, veladas de branco. Virá a perceber que uma delas é Lady Edith, e esta, reconhecendo-o também, deixa cair a seus pés um botão de rosa, e depois outro, ao passar. Ele adivinha-a pelas mãos, por um anel e pela beleza entrevista do cabelo: “[A]nd, veiled too, as she was, he might see, by chance, or by favour, a stray curl of the dark tresses, each hair of which was dearer to him a hundred times than a chain of massive gold. It was the l0ady of his love!” (IV, 25).

O episódio combina três incidências do motivo do véu: o rosto velado de Moisés, o Santo dos Santos e um amor eivado de adulação religiosa (no capítulo XII, Sir Kenneth referir-se-á a Lady Edith como “my transcendent lady”; IV, 56). Este último aspecto é comentado longamente pelo narrador, em jeito de excursão:

The romantic passion of love, as it was cherished, and indeed enjoined, by the rules of chivalry, associated well with the no less romantic feelings of devotion; and they might be said much more to enhance than to counteract each other. [...] But it was peculiar to the times of chivalry, that in his wildest rapture the knight imagined of no attempt to follow or to trace the object of such romantic attachment; that he thought of her as of a deity, who, having deigned to shew herself

for an instant to her devoted worshipper, had again returned to the darkness of her sanctuary — or as an influential planet, which, having darted in some auspicious minute one favourable ray, wrapped itself again in its veil of mist. (IV, 25-26)

Tal convergência do sagrado e do amoroso é igualmente assinalada por Scott no “Essay on Chivalry”, redigido para a *Encyclopaedia Britannica* em 1814 e publicado em 1818, ensaio que aliás descreve a cavalaria como uma extravagância que autoriza e oculta as maiores libertinagens:

[I]t was peculiar to the institution of chivalry, to blend military valour with the strongest passions which actuate the human mind, the feelings of devotion and those of love. The Greeks and Romans fought for liberty or for conquest, and the knights of the middle ages for God and for their ladies. (*Essays* 4)

The defence of the female sex in general, the regard due to their honour, the subservience paid to their commands, the reverent awe and courtesy, which, in their presence, forbear all unseemly words and actions, were so blended with the institution of chivalry, as to form its very essence. (14)

De resto, este ensaio contém observações muito severas acerca do modo como o idealismo característico do espírito da cavalaria degenerou em superstição, licenciosidade, insurreição e tirania.<sup>9</sup> A estes vícios juntavam-se uma animosidade e um zelo religioso que Scott se mostra indisponível para admirar. Essa beligerância irrazoável, e essa intolerância para com o Islão, que permitia e encobria os mais nefandos excessos, aparecem bem retratadas em *The Talisman*, constituindo uma linha de conduta cuja legitimidade se vê infirmada, em especial pela composição da figura de Saladino:

---

<sup>9</sup> Cf. o seguinte trecho: “Founded on principles so pure, the order of chivalry could not, in the abstract at least, but occasion a pleasing, though a romantic development of the energies of human nature. But as, in actual practice, every institution becomes deteriorated and degraded, we have too much occasion to remark, that the devotion of the knights often degenerated into superstition, — their love into licentiousness, — their spirit of loyalty or of freedom into tyranny and turmoil, — their generosity and gallantry into harebrained madness and absurdity” (5).

The knight, whose profession was war, being solemnly enlisted in the service of the gospel of peace, regarded infidels and heretics of every description as the enemies whom, as God's own soldier, he was called upon to attack and slay wherever he could meet with them, without demanding or waiting for any other cause of quarrel than the difference of religious faith. [...] In the middle ages, this course might be pursued on system: for the church allowed an exploit done on the infidels as a merit which might obliterate the guilt of the most atrocious crimes. (*Essays* 6-7)

O exemplo mais vil desta crua hipocrisia é em *The Talisman* o grão-mestre dos Templários, cuja ignomínia, aliás, é evidenciada não apenas na sua relação com os muçulmanos mas com os próprios senhores cristãos. E, ou por coincidência, ou porque dos Templários tivesse Scott opinião arraigadamente negativa, também nos capítulos finais de *Ivanhoe* aparece um grão-mestre como representante da mais acabada intolerância — neste caso, dirigida contra os judeus. Mas, em última instância, trata-se de preocupações éticas que, na novelística de Scott, extravasam do conjunto de romances que se prendem com as Cruzadas. Como nota um biógrafo, “In all the medieval novels the cult of violence and the adulterous cultivation of *amour courtois* are condemned” (Wilson 161) — o que significa que o problema abrange também um romance como *The Fair Maid of Perth*, obra aliás de tema histórico escocês.

Saladino — que curiosamente também surge, no capítulo XXVII de *The Talisman*, com uma espécie de véu suspenso do turbante, ou para proteger o rosto das poeiras finas da região do Mar Morto, “or, perhaps, out of Oriental pride” (*Novels* IV, 108)<sup>10</sup> — é no romance a expressão

---

<sup>10</sup> Apontando a existência de afinidades entre *The Talisman*, no seu início e no seu desfecho, e o Livro I da epopeia de Spenser *The Faerie Queene*, Andrew Lincoln escreve: “The quasi-allegorical critique of chivalry culminates in Richard's diplomatic reconciliation with Saladin, an event that stands in place of the Redcrosse Knight's marriage with Una — Saladin taking the place of the bride, with his snow-white garb, and veiled and jewelled turban” (116; cf. 108-109). Para a nossa análise, a observação é preciosa, porque também Una tem o rosto coberto com um véu, que só é removido no final do Livro, quando o protagonista — como Ricardo, símbolo da Inglaterra e ostentando nas armas uma cruz — fez prova do seu mérito.

mais elevada do garbo, da generosidade e da justiça da cavalaria, sem vestígios daquela reticência que é expressa por Scott no ensaio citado.<sup>11</sup> Pode dizer-se que na figura do sultão se condensa o tema axial da novelística de Scott — em palavras de Murray Pittock, “the stadial process of civilization and its teleology of civility” (195). Saladino e Ricardo tratam-se por “irmãos”, e na verdade o sultão dá amiúde mostras de possuir maior sabedoria e um temperamento mais ponderado do que o impetuoso Plantageneta. De tal modo é Saladino respeitado que lhe é pedido que assuma o papel de árbitro numa disputa de honra entre senhores cristãos. Por outro lado, importa notar que o campo dos cruzados se encontra dividido por susceptibilidades e ambições rivais, e mesmo marcado por perfídias e desonras. Do lado muçulmano, pelo contrário, apresenta-se um vasto conjunto de povos congregados sob o estandarte de Saladino. No capítulo XX são tacitamente contrapostas as “mil tribos” (“thousand tribes”) que se diz constituírem o exército do sultão à “discórdia civil” (“all the horrors of civil discord”) que Ricardo tem notícia de estalar em Inglaterra na sua ausência (cf. IV, 83). Bem distante do extremado preconceito anti-islâmico do poema de Thomas Moore, verifica-se, pois, que em *The Talisman* a representação literária dos “infiéis” gera oportunidades de reflexão sobre a nobreza de carácter e a dignidade pessoal que transcendem as clivagens entre culturas e religiões — assim como ultrapassam, em última instância, as distâncias e divergências entre épocas, ao aferir condutas e caracteres por um padrão ético de valor implicitamente tido por universal. A par do tema da cavalaria, o motivo bíblico do véu opera, neste contexto, como um elemento de ligação, comum à memória de judeus, cristãos e muçulmanos,

---

<sup>11</sup> Pode dizer-se que a ambivalência da composição da figura de Saladino — admirável apesar de muçulmano — ilustra as observações de Andrew Lincoln sobre a presença do Outro na ficção scottiana: “The representation of ‘otherness’ in Scott is always notionally governed by a polite Anglo-British perspective, which assumes the cultural superiority of the civilised observer — white, Christian, and usually masculine. But in his work the civilised observer’s confrontation with cultural or racial difference is often a point at which polite presuppositions are challenged and unsettled. Repeatedly Scott’s fictions move towards a drama of non-recognition: they construct parallels and likenesses that have to be denied; they emphasise the need to maintain difference where sameness is exposed” (90-91).

prestando-se a apropriações imaginativas que, podendo estar carregadas de ironia em alguns casos, lembram contudo que as três grandes religiões do Livro partilham referências fundamentais.<sup>12</sup>

As diferenças entre *The Talisman* e *Lalla Rookh*, no que concerne à valoração dos povos levantinos, reflectem as disparidades de posicionamento político — e mesmo diferenças no plano das identidades religiosas e nacionais — entre os respectivos autores. Ao romancista escocês, Tory e unionista, educado dentro do culto presbiteriano mas inclinando-se ao longo da vida para a Igreja Episcopal, atraído pela memória da causa jacobita mas comprometido com a dinastia de Hanôver, é caro o tema da conciliação social e política entre povos.<sup>13</sup> *Ivanhoe* termina com o rei Ricardo a instaurar a concórdia entre os súbditos saxões e normandos. *The Betrothed* mostra a possibilidade de entendimento entre ingleses, galeses e flamengos imigrados. *The Talisman*, a esta luz, com a sua intriga envolvendo os muçulmanos e o seu cenário a remeter para origens partilhadas pelas três religiões abraâmicas, surge como uma reiteração dos mesmos princípios em perspectiva religiosa e civilizacional ampliada. Em todos estes casos, a supressão dos antagonismos decorre de um esbatimento crítico da presunção de que as polaridades morais coincidem com as polaridades socioculturais: o leitor é convidado a identificar-se com os saxões oprimidos

---

<sup>12</sup> Não se encontra no romance, todavia, uma visão genuinamente pluralista em matéria religiosa, quer da parte do narrador, quer da parte das personagens. No capítulo XXII, quando um grupo de muçulmanos, chefiados pelo nobre e sábio El Hakim Adonbec (que não é senão outro disfarce adoptado por Saladino), faz as suas “falsas” adorações durante uma travessia do deserto, na presença de Sir Kenneth, o narrador observa: “The act of devotion, however, though rendered in such strange society, burst purely from his natural feelings of religious duty, and had its usual effect in composing the spirits, which had been long harassed by so rapid a succession of calamities. The sincere and earnest approach of the Christian to the throne of the Almighty teaches the best lesson of patience under affliction; since wherefore should we mock the Deity with supplications, when we insult him by murmuring under his decrees?” (IV, 89). A referência às “murmurações” constitui paralelismos textuais reforçados face ao Antigo Testamento (cf. Êxodo 16:7-12; Números 14:26-27, 17:5-10).

<sup>13</sup> Como é sabido, Scott desempenhou um papel destacado na visita a Edimburgo de Jorge IV — ataviado de kilt — em 1822 (cf. Smith 199-204).

pelos normandos, com os nobres galeses acossados pelos ingleses, com os cristãos que vão libertar a Terra Santa do jugo muçulmano — para vir a reconhecer, com o avanço da intriga, que o normando Ricardo é capaz de livrar o seu reino de abusos e injustiças, que é possível a Henrique II restabelecer a concórdia na fronteira anglo-galesa, que Saladino pode ser mais merecedor de soberania do que os Cruzados. A dissolução das polaridades aponta para uma síntese virtuosa, que pode ser consumada no universo ficcional ou ficar entrevista como lição para a contemporaneidade. No caso de *Ivanhoe*, Scott optou por uma solução mista, justapondo ao casamento de Wilfred com Rowena, promovido por Ricardo e aceite pelo velho Cedric, o exílio de Rebecca.<sup>14</sup> No capítulo XLIV e último, perante uma Rowena velada, a bela judia, “a noble and commanding figure, the long white veil, in which she was shrouded, overshadowing rather than concealing the elegance and majesty of her shape”, declara estar de partida, com o seu pai, para o reino muçulmano de Granada: “Not in a land of war and blood, surrounded by hostile neighbours, and distracted by internal factions, can Israel hope to rest during her wanderings” (*Novels* II, 379).<sup>15</sup>

Moore, por seu turno, sendo irlandês e católico (todavia tomando esposa protestante), e movendo-se assiduamente nos círculos do partido Whig, inscreveu em *Lalla Rookh*, de modo cifrado mas enfático, o seu juízo acerca da condição de uma Irlanda que precisaria de se emancipar do domínio britânico. Mokanna é, inequivocamente, uma personagem do território do maligno, e Mohammed Sharafuddin, talvez o estudioso que melhor se debruçou sobre a obra, sublinhou já o tema da tirania e das mistificações que a servem em “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan”

---

<sup>14</sup> O tema excede os limites deste conjunto de romances. Basta ver como o primeiro capítulo de *Woodstock* — à semelhança do início de *Ivanhoe* — expõe os antagonismos político-religiosos das Ilhas Britânicas nos anos de 1640, antagonismos que a trama, de certo modo, se encarregará de resolver.

<sup>15</sup> Para a judia, viver entre os muçulmanos é mais seguro. Na verdade, não parece haver qualquer personagem no romance, seja saxão, seja normando, que esteja isenta de antissemitismo. E é curioso que seja o lascivo templário Brian de Bois-Guilbert, no capítulo XXXVI, a dizer: “Will future ages believe that such stupid bigotry ever existed!” (II, 344). É mais um dado a desconstruir as simples polaridades morais.



(cf. Sharafuddin 139-169).<sup>16</sup> Contudo, a radicalização da visão do político, no que respeita à causa da independência da Irlanda, aflora com maior clareza ainda no terceiro poema do volume. “The Fire-Worshippers” relata uma revolta falhada dos seguidores do Zoroastrismo — mais uma das religiões do Livro, e historicamente a primeira — contra o conquistador islâmico. As implicações católico-patrióticas do poema — hoje dizemos: as implicações anti-coloniais — eram, aliás, reconhecidas pelo próprio autor (cf. Sharafuddin 136-139, 169-183, 187-193; Pittock 117-118; Cavaliero 155-156).

*Lalla Rookh* e *The Talisman* dão-nos, assim, duas visões distintas do Oriente (ou das sociedades muçulmanas): um Oriente pérfido, sensual, quase selvático, de tirania e obscurantismo; e um Oriente em que os “infieis” (Saladino, sobre todos, com a sua nobreza de carácter e de procedimentos) são sábios e se comportam mais de acordo com o ideal da cavalaria do que muitos e destacados “nazarenos”, e aliás conhecem (e à sua maneira reconhecem) a figura de Jesus. Estas duas representações românticas do Oriente islâmico não deixam de corresponder a imagens que por inícios do século XIX já se haviam tornado convencionais, em relatos imaginários e verídicos, e a contraposição dessas imagens nas obras de Moore e Scott releva, sem dúvida, de marcadas diferenças na percepção que tinham os autores da situação da Irlanda e da Escócia, ambas nominalmente integradas no Reino Unido mas a viver situações tidas como efectivamente distintas.<sup>17</sup> Como é óbvio, o exotismo — de tempos, de lugares, de costumes — não deve iludir quanto à premência do conteúdo ideológico transmitido pelos textos.

---

<sup>16</sup> Cabe, de passagem, referir semelhanças entre “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan” e o poema de P. B. Shelley *The Revolt of Islam*. Emily A. Haddad (21-25) sublinha o papel da religião e do sexismo como “camaradas da tirania” na história de Laon e Cythna. Haddad não se interessa pelas ocorrências do véu, mas é oportuno mencionar que ambas as obras representam governos teocráticos despóticos servindo-se do motivo do véu — ainda que o motivo opere em sentidos opostos, já que em *The Revolt of Islam* o véu se associa a um movimento revolucionário (sobre o poema de Shelley, cf. Bastos da Silva, *O Véu do Templo* 113-119).

<sup>17</sup> A questão é discutida por R. F. Foster (10-29), que em parte a foca na obra de Maria Edgeworth, do lado irlandês (todavia sem deixar de referir Moore), e na de Scott, do lado escocês.

A ideia de que o romance histórico não proporcionava (apenas) o prazer inócuo (se tal prazer é inócuo) do escapismo, antes era capaz de veicular uma crítica ideológica aguda, é reconhecida pela crítica desde a época do próprio Scott. Lê-se numa das formulações mais recentes dessa ideia: “The gap between the present and the past allowed the staging of a political and cultural critique that was discountable, as if relevant only to a bygone age. The exploration of the past could be experienced as bracing historical realism, which offered the shock of historical recognition without self-confrontation. Scott commanded a new audience, and provided a new map for nineteenth-century fiction, because he was able to offer an imaginative space in which his contemporaries could encounter their own anxieties while appearing to escape from them” (Lincoln 2). cremos que, em grande medida, o mesmo pode ser dito a respeito de “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan” e “The Fire-Worshippers”.

No início deste artigo, fizemos notar que a poesia lírica romântica não raro cumpre o desiderato de interpelação e elevação imaginativas da consciência do leitor evocando experiências afectas a um sujeito que se reporta a um determinado *encontro* com uma realidade que se descobre nova e preenchida de significado (aludimos, a este propósito, ao poema de Wordsworth “The Solitary Reaper”). Dito de outra maneira, o poema romântico, em algumas das suas modalidades ético-retóricas mais representativas, apresenta-se como a textualização de um conteúdo pessoal, postulando a relevância vivencial desse conteúdo para o leitor, que constitui idealmente uma segunda instância de sim-patia — o leitor cuja consciência participa e reproduz, nos moldes que lhe são adequados, a suposta experiência original do poeta. Percorridos alguns aspectos importantes de “The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan” e *The Talisman*, torna-se possível reflectir sobre as modalidades de realização desse mesmo papel edificante, alcançado através da empatia (e mesmo da antipatia), que devem supor-se próprias da narrativa romanesca. Sem ambicionarmos abordar toda a complexidade da questão, arriscamos sugerir a este respeito que a ideia do *encontro* também aqui se aplica, mas trata-se agora de um encontro com personagens, proporcionado ao leitor pela mediação de um narrador (o que, por reversibilidade do raciocínio, chama a atenção para o facto de o sujeito lírico romântico ser uma personagem e de o poema lírico conter significativos elementos de narratividade, a despeito da sua retórica centrada

no eu). Presumivelmente, o confronto do leitor com as personagens envolve processos afectivos, de identificação ou repulsa, e a formulação de juízos morais, num espectro que vai da condenação à admiração. Ora, o registo romanesco é mais propenso a uma exploração de exterioridades, na estruturação da intriga bem como nos cenários e nos adereços,<sup>18</sup> do que a sondar as profundezas da subjectividade das figuras. É significativo que a definição de *romance* dada por Scott no seu “Essay on Romance” — “a fictitious narrative in prose or verse; the interest of which turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents” (*Essays* 65) — subordine a psicologia ao apelo dos “incidentes”.<sup>19</sup> O rigor de detalhe amiúde invocado por Moore e Scott, que documentam zelosamente a autenticidade da sua visão do Oriente e do passado, é um aspecto correlativo (e é um traço comum ao coetâneo Southey, que por vezes o leva ao paroxismo). O privilégio concedido a aspectos externos e até espectaculares, como as metamorfoses de Archimago em *The Faerie Queene* e o travestismo de Viola em *Twelfth Night*, é característico, e tem correspondência nos jogos de identidades de Saladino em *The Talisman* (como de Ivanhoe, Ricardo e Wamba em *Ivanhoe*, e de tantas outras figuras em outros romances de Scott). Por conseguinte, um traço

---

<sup>18</sup> Optamos avisadamente por vocabulário que remete para a área do drama. De facto, o romance dá-nos, com frequência, experiências encenadas dentro do próprio texto. No episódio da capela gótica no capítulo IV de *The Talisman*, o eremita qualifica de uma “visão” aquilo que se depara a Sir Kenneth (cf. *Novels* IV, 24), e o leitor não apenas assiste à experiência do cavaleiro, com ele, como assiste ao facto de ele estar a assistir. Esta composição narrativa não é alheia à dimensão de teatralidade que integra o conceito scottiano do ofício de escritor e que constitui uma componente auto-referencial que se estende dos paratextos ao próprio corpo da ficção histórica. Tal dimensão de teatralidade é posta em evidência por Caroline McCracken-Flesher (143-147) numa análise de *The Pirate*, no contexto de uma discussão arguta do (muitas vezes contestado) lugar de Scott dentro — mas criticamente dentro — do Romantismo.

<sup>19</sup> O ensaio, publicado num suplemento da *Encyclopaedia Britannica* em 1824, oferece uma leitura do “romance” desde os menestréis da Idade Média até autores bem recentes e pode ler-se a par do “Essay on Chivalry” como um díptico articulado. A apreciação de Graham Tulloch de *Ivanhoe* como “romance” — isto é, como obra de carácter romanesco, por oposição à narrativa realista (uma distinção feita pelo próprio Scott no “Essay on Romance”; cf. *ibidem*) — contém observações que são largamente aplicáveis a *The Talisman*.

da fisionomia do imaginário romanesco passará pela construção de personagens *emblemáticas* mais do que *carismáticas* — se nos é lícito adiantar esta distinção: personagens que vemos a partir de fora mais do que a partir de dentro, perfilando-se de acordo com um entendimento formal, mesmo estilizado, das relações interpessoais. O investimento no “histórico” e na “cor local” conjuga-se com aquela “mutabilidade” de que fala o poema de Spenser.<sup>20</sup> Sendo a dissimulação da identidade — por dolo ignóbil ou logro necessário — um artifício nuclear, e sendo tantas vezes dramatizada pela mudança de vestuário, o motivo do véu, remanescente da esfera da revelação profética e do legislador inspirado dos Hebreus, é com perfeita consequência chamado a intervir em narrativas que exploram, com mais ou menos acentuada ironia, uma teologia do poder.

### Works Cited

- Alexander, Michael. *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Bastos da Silva, Jorge. “O Génio e o Desespero: Byron e a Violência da Visão Romântica”. *O Rebelde Aristocrata. Nos 200 Anos da Visita de Byron a Portugal*. Org. Maria Zulmira Castanheira e Miguel Alarcão. <http://ler.letras.up.pt/site/default.aspx?qry=id03id1304id2302&sum=sim>. Porto: FLUP / CETAPS, 2010. 7-23. 5 de Setembro de 2013.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *O Véu do Templo. Contributo para uma Topologia Romântica*. Porto: Porto Editora, 1999.
- Blair, Hugh. *A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal*. Howard Gaskill, ed. *James Macpherson: The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*. Intr. Fiona Stafford. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996. 343-408.

---

<sup>20</sup> Haddad, que vimos já referir-se à poesia de Shelley, observa: “*The Revolt of Islam* takes advantage of the presumption that the Orient is a place where the excitingly implausible — even the impossible — can appear unproblematically verisimilar” (26). O Oriente é, pois, um ambiente adequado aos efeitos quase mágicos do talismã e às prodigiosas metamorfoses de Saladino no romance de Scott. Aliás, não será ousado acrescentar que, em última análise, o talismã a que alude o título é o próprio Saladino, garante e referência da ordem, da virtude, da saúde e da justiça.

- Blake, William. *Complete Writings with Variant Readings*. Ed. Geoffrey Keynes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992 [1966].
- Brett-Smith, H. F. B., ed. *Peacock's Four Ages of Poetry, Shelley's Defence of Poetry, Browning's Essay on Shelley*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972.
- Carroll, Robert, and Stephen Prickett, eds. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Cavaliero, Roderick. *Ottomania: The Romantics and the Myth of the Islamic Orient*. Rev. ed. London: I. B. Tauris, 2013.
- Felluga, Dino Franco. *The Perversity of Poetry: Romantic Ideology and the Popular Male Poet of Genius*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005.
- Foster, R. F. *Words Alone: Yeats and his Inheritances*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Haddad, Emily A. *Orientalist Poetics: The Islamic Middle East in Nineteenth-Century English and French Poetry*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.
- Leask, Nigel. *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- Lincoln, Andrew. *Walter Scott and Modernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- McCracken-Flesher, Caroline. "Walter Scott's Romanticism: A Theory of Performance". *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*. Ed. Murray Pittock. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 139-149, 228-230.
- Moore, Thomas. *Lalla Rookh; An Oriental Romance*. 3rd ed. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1817.
- Pittock, Murray. *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Scott, Walter. *Essays on Chivalry, Romance, and the Drama*. London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1887.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Waverley Novels*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, [1868?], 4 vols.
- Sharafuddin, Mohammed. *Islam and Romantic Orientalism: Literary Encounters with the Orient*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1994.
- Smith, E. A. *George IV*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

- Tulloch, Graham. "Introduction". Walter Scott. *Ivanhoe*. Ed. Graham Tulloch. London: Penguin, 2000. xi-xxix.
- Wilson, A. N. *A Life of Walter Scott: The Laird of Abbotsford*. London: Pimlico, 2002 [1980].
- Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850: Authoritative Texts, Context and Reception, Recent Critical Essays*. Ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill. New York: Norton, 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Selected Prose*. Ed. John O. Hayden. London: Penguin, 1988.

**ABSTRACT**

The present article examines the depiction of the Islamic Middle East in works by two British authors of the Romantic Period, namely Thomas Moore's poem "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan" (from the 1817 collection *Lalla Rookh*) and Walter Scott's novel *The Talisman* (1825). The analysis is mainly focused on the way in which authors resort to a biblical reference — the veil worn by Moses, as mentioned in the Book of Exodus (34:32-35) — in their development of the themes of revelation and prophecy, either to signify political perverseness and ideological manipulation or to express contrition and penance. Especially in the case of Scott, it will become clear that the literary depiction of the "infidel" grants the author the opportunity to reflect upon aspects of nobility of character and personal dignity which overcome the chasm between cultures and religions — just as they ultimately overcome the distances and the differences between different historical periods. By referring to the figure of Moses, which is common to the memory of Jews, Christians and Moslems, both Moore's and Scott's work bring to our attention the fact that the three great religions of the Book share fundamental elements.

**KEYWORDS**

Moses; Romanticism; Middle East; religion; chivalry

**RESUMO**

O presente artigo analisa a representação do Médio Oriente muçulmano em obras de dois autores britânicos do período romântico, nomeadamente o poema "The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan" de Thomas Moore (do volume *Lalla Rookh*, de 1817), e o romance de Walter Scott *The Talisman* (1825). A análise atenta de modo especial no recurso a um referente bíblico — o véu sobre o rosto de Moisés mencionado no Livro do Êxodo (34:32-35) — que os autores retomam e modulam, desenvolvendo a temática da revelação e do profetismo, ora para significar perversidade política e manipulação ideológica, ora para exprimir contrição e

penitência. Sobretudo no caso da obra de Scott, verifica-se que a representação literária dos “infieis” gera oportunidades de reflexão sobre a nobreza de carácter e a dignidade pessoal que transcendem as clivagens entre culturas e religiões — assim como ultrapassam, em última instância, as distâncias e divergências entre épocas. Tanto a obra de Moore como a de Scott recordam-nos, desde logo por via da referência à figura de Moisés, comum à memória de judeus, cristãos e muçulmanos, que as três grandes religiões do Livro partilham aspectos fundamentais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Moisés; Romantismo; Médio Oriente; religião; cavalaria

---



# There are Many Sides to the English Coin

*Rita Maria Pottier de Lima Amorim*  
School of Social and Political Sciences (CAPP)  
University of Lisbon



# There are Many Sides to the English Coin

## Introduction

The English language spread out of colonization, decolonization and globalization, inevitably giving rise to controversies and debate, i.e. to the many sides of the English coin. Its current status as the global or international language involves a complex relationship with historical, cultural, social, political and educational issues (Graddol 9).

Nowadays, speakers of World English(es) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) “vastly outnumber those of English as a native language (ENL) and even those of English as a second (immigrant) language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL)” (Jenkins, “Current Perspectives” 159). A well-established sociolinguistic reality is thus that non-native speakers currently outnumber native speakers (House 557; Dewey 333), or that native speakers “are in a minority for [English] language use” (Brumfit, “Individual Freedom” 116). Although English is being used as the globe’s predominant functional contact language, under the names of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), English as International Language (EIL), International English, Global English and English as a global language (Jenkins, “English as a Lingua Franca” 3-4), the emphasis is now on the international use of English (Seidlhofer “A Concept of International”<sup>8</sup>)<sup>1</sup>.

The present status of “the world’s most common lingua franca” and “truly global language” (Azuaga and Cavalheiro 37), is due to a combination of important factors or strategies. The historical and geographical spread

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Henshall (2012), Lazaretnaya (2012), Pereira (2012), Melo Cabrita & Ferro Mealha (2012), and other authors of *Anglo Saxonica*, Ser III, Nº4, 2012.

of English outside the British Isles began with the long and far-reaching process of colonisation by the British Empire, and persisted during the subsequent process of decolonisation. When the USA took over Britain as the world's economic, military and cultural superpower, the language received its next great boost. English is currently projected by multiple global transactional and translingual flows and its presence and visibility are overwhelming. However, not everyone speaks English and it is certainly not the most spoken language, as that place belongs to Mandarin Chinese. There are no exact figures for the total number of English speakers as it is difficult to establish who is a user (Cavalheiro "Taking on EIL" 75). Current estimates for the number of EFL/ELF speakers vary from one billion (Jenkins, "World Englishes" 4), to two billion (Crystal "Two thousand" 3; Graddol 14) to between two to three billion (Ur 1). Today, the bi/ multi-lingual non-native speakers around the world are using English for cross-cultural functional communication to suit their needs and purposes, regardless of their different proficiencies. The scope and range of the processes of adoption and adaptation mean that English has acquired a life of its own that is as large as the world. Barros (225) refers to the plethora of new Englishes that resulted from British colonial expansion and the current processes of globalisation. It is the constant growth of varieties, dialects and linguistic processes as nativization, Anglicization, hybridization, borrowing and code switching that attests the evolution of the language. The current vicious circle of demand and supply involving English is leading to more diffusion and popularization in an almost self-promoting way. Its future, however, is uncertain, as it may continue as a fairly intelligible global language or develop into multiple mutually-unintelligible varieties.

The globalized and globalizing existence of English has provoked controversies and debate over linguistic and non-linguistic issues of power, ownership, intelligibility and identity. On the one hand, the linguists who are more critical<sup>2</sup> claim English as a highly political issue, an imposition of the West or the Centre to dominate the disadvantaged Periphery undervaluing their cultures and languages. On the other hand, the linguists who

---

<sup>2</sup> Robert Phillipson, Alistair Pennycook and Tove Skutnabb-Kangas are the most quoted critical linguists, or anti-imperialists.

are less critical<sup>3</sup> believe that regardless of its past, English has become an inevitable means to access modernity, owned by everyone and chosen freely for the benefit of all. It is argued that in the ever-changing present world order, citizens need and use English as an independent functional contact language to achieve intelligibility and manage communication.

## 1. English in the World

English has always been in the middle of ‘huge explosions of international activity’ (Crystal “English as a Global” 10), thus acquiring a global presence and status. To truly understand the diffusion and prominence of a language such as English, one must first follow its worldwide trajectory considering its history, development and usage.

### 1.1 The Spread

The story of the English language is in fact the stories of many peoples and lands “first around a country and then around the world” (Crystal, “Evolving English” 8). English started out by outliving the invasions of other peoples’ languages, emerging “as an independent language after several centuries of subordination...” (28) and remaining the dominant language of its motherland, the British Isles. The tables turned and this survival language set off invading other languages in close and distant lands throughout its vast and lengthy travels. The British Empire extended to four continents and lasted more than three hundred years. During this time, English was used as one of the tools for conquest, domination and subjugation. Although each colony had its own political, social and linguistic path, original settlement by English native speakers followed by political incorporation, was common to all. Graddol, *et al* describe three types of settlement; colonies such as America or Australia where English-speaking settlers displaced the local population, territories as India or Nigeria where a small number of settlers maintained the local population

---

<sup>3</sup> Brutt-Griffler, Crystal, Dewey, House, Jenkins, Seidlhofer are some of the authors regarded as less critical.

in subjection and allowed some locals to learn English as additional language, and places such as Jamaica or Barbados, where the local population was replaced by a labour force mainly from West Africa (202-203). Struggles, tensions and nationalist reactions and movements inevitably led to independence, first in North America and gradually in the rest of the territories. In the years that followed independence, mixed feelings between keeping the British cultural values and language and a feeling of nationalism arose, especially where English remained the language of law, government, education and other sectors of society as the media, advertising, cinema, television and literature.

English spread through the new established commercial routes and contacts, and the linguistic results were the 'exchange' of many words between English and other languages, and the appearance of pidgins, creoles and new varieties of English. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Industrial Revolution and Britain's control of most of the world's commerce gave English a further head position. Around 1945, the USA became the new fastest growing economy and dominant voice of the English-speaking world. All who wished to participate in international business and trade or who wanted to be a part of the new US-led cultural thing had to tune into English.

## **1.2 The Legacies — Voyager and Follower**

The British empire has given way to the empire of English.  
(Phillipson, "Linguistic Imperialism" 1)

After independence, the Commonwealth of Nations maintained a close cultural tie with most British territories and English was kept as the linking language, acquiring different statuses (official, semi-official, special, first or second language) in vital areas of society. The level of linguistic penetration of British English depended on various social, political, cultural and educational factors, namely the willpower of the local authorities or ruling minorities, who saw this 'voyager language' as a sign of prestige and future opportunities. Mixed feelings of resentment and pride developed because English became a symbol of both oppression and nationalism.

Its 'follower', American English, was globally seen and heard as the voice of finance, trade, economics, politics, pop music, movies, TV shows,

news media, and technology as the USA became a symbol of desires, ideals, and opportunities. This worldwide fascination for a society with a mix of cultures where individual merit and success were impersonated in the ideals of ‘the self-made man’, ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ and ‘the American Dream’, coined the USA as a symbol of modernity, prestige, progress, prosperity, democracy and freedom of the individual. This nation became a superpower with a worldwide hold on popular culture. The ‘Americanization’ of world culture is closely tied to consumption, to globalization and to the ever-present English, which is at the heart of its drive. Whether driven by top-down pressures or bottom-up processes of identification (Phillipson, “English-only” 88-89) many still wish to have access to English: “more people than ever want to learn English (...) English learners are increasing in number and decreasing in age” (Graddol 10).

## 2. The World in English

To grasp the worldwide popularity and visibility of a language which “...has at last become of age as a global language” (Graddol 12), one must consider the factors closely connected to the present world order which justify its current global standing:

The use of language is inextricable from the social relationships and identities of its users. Both are profoundly affected by globalization, and it is not surprising to find that the growing use of English as a global language is part of a wider sociolinguistic change, as the world becomes more urban, and some people become more wealthy and middle class. (49)

Lifestyles are changing and becoming homogenized and globalized. English is a basic skill, a taken-for-granted common denominator of this global existence, and nothing succeeds like success. Demographic changes spread and shift a language as it travels in and with people. The ‘spreaders’ of English have been migrant workers, refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants, tourists, visitors, international students, troop movements, peace-keeping forces, emergency aid workers and NGO’s staff, trying to keep pace with economic development. As the working language of most international organizations and spheres of activity (academic and scientific research, television, cinema, music), English is rewarded with a broader dissemination:

“The domains are all interconnected, and additional domains [...] also reveal how Globalization processes are strengthening English” (Phillipson, “English-only” 66). Fields as international news and world politics resort to English for global reach because a “...cause will gain maximum impact if it is expressed through the medium of English” (Crystal, “English as a Global Language” 90). Industries as the Media, advertisement, and the internet in general, have also been responsible for the spread of the language as: “All major corporations advertise and market their products in English” (Mc Crum *et al* 37). The English language is a competitive tool for economic success and empowerment, a high commodity value, just like computer literacy.

The popularity of English, its grassroots’, cosmopolitan and state-of-the-art character is due to what Mc Crum *et al* refer as an “... exotic energy that is re-charging the language at the level of the street, the bar and the market place” (393). According to Ostler, the current status of English has to do with population, position and prestige (542). From 1986 to 2010, the figures for English users have gone from more than 750 million (Mc Crum *et al* 9), to a quarter and then a third of the world’s population (Crystal, “One Language” 8), to a possible two billion (Graddol 14), to between two and three billion (Ur 1). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, what is relevant is the volume and range of spoken and written interactions in the common language of the (now predominant) non-natives, here named the ‘communality’ of English, and the volume and variety of functions and purposes it serves, here named the ‘functionality’ of English. The realistic emphasis is on the ‘occasions of English use’, on its worldwide presence and visibility, and on “how it infiltrates every day speech...” (Griffin 55). According to Cavalheiro, we grasp the globality of English by considering its different roles and functions and by the “more and diverse opportunities for using (...) in multicultural and multilingual settings” (“Taking on EIL” 75-76.)

The capacity to adapt to different linguistic circumstances and backgrounds receiving influences from anywhere and everywhere, means that varieties, dialects and ‘usages’ keep increasing and evolving. Changes in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation mean that there is no longer one lingua franca as one variety. The title of Crystal’s book ‘One language, many voices’ (2012), expresses well how intelligibility and identity, hetero-



geneity and homogeneity coexist “as languages are shaped by their users” (Jenkins, “(Un)pleasant? (In)correct?” 10), or have no existence “apart from the people who use it” (Crystal, “Evolving English” 8).

The relationship that stems from the fact that “...economic globalisation encouraged the spread of English but the spread of English also encouraged globalisation” (Graddol 9), leads us to Dewey’s belief that “a wider, deeper, accelerated interconnectedness has far-reaching implications regarding languages, especially one so often described as a *lingua franca*.” (333) and to Onysko’s claim that “a major effect of the globalizing function of English is the integration and use of anglicisms in various language-cultural areas”, which provokes “different reactions among speakers ranging from attraction to repulsion” (34).

### 3. Controversial Voices

But the real “powerhouse” is still English. It doesn’t have to worry about being loved because, loved or not, it works. It makes the world go round, and few indeed can afford to a “knock it.” (Fishman 24).

Jenkins considers there are three groups of critical linguists: the anti-imperialists, as Phillipson, who prefer to argue that English(es) was not the most used global language; those as Canagarajah or Kachru who emphasize the importance of appropriating English for local use; and those as Brutt-Griffer who present “the spread of WEs as resulting from the agency of its non-mother tongue speakers rather than from their passivity and exploitation” (“Current Perspectives” 165), and have much in common with researchers of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). For James, the three linguistic positions are as follows: the *‘globalists’* worry about the global, *homogenizing* aspects of the language internationally and see the future of diversity negatively because English is linguicidal; the *localists* worry about the *heterogenising* effects of the spread of English, and have an optimistic view of the worldwide diverse forms of English; and the *glocalists* who “celebrate the linguistic and cultural dynamics of English use emerging from the meeting of global and local influences as seen in the general context of translingual and transcultural flows worldwide” (81). Lysandrou and Lysandrou (“Progression and Dynamic” 97) propose a theoretical

perspective where English has a positive role in *physical space* promoting development, and a negative role in *price space* facilitating dispossession, hence the ‘complicitous’ and yet ‘contestatory’ attitudes to the ascendancy of English referred by Swales (“The English language” 286).

### 3.1 One Side of the Coin

Linguists such as Phillipson, Pennycook or Skutnab-Kangas who are more critical of the widespread use of English consider it a political, economic, cultural, social, and educational matter that is closely connected to issues of power, imperialism and ideology. In this line of thought, English is viewed as a ‘killer language’<sup>4</sup>, ‘Tyrannosaurus rex’ (Swales “Tyrannosaurus rex” 374) and a ‘lingua frankensteinia’ (Phillipson “Lingua Franca” 251) for its hegemonic position in several domains that may threaten other languages (Cabrita and Mealha 56-57). The growing role of English as an international language (Azuaga & Cavalheiro 41) is considered by the critical linguists as “aggressive expansion” (Llurda 314). For Phillipson, we are living a time of *neo colonialism* or *post imperialism* (“Linguistic Imperialism” 45), where English is an imperial language because its status is due to the supremacy of native-speaking nations, particularly America and Britain and to their continued language promotion (132). Certain structures and practices are used to “...legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (47). English gives access to modernization, science and technology (280), and is still a means to determine social class, to include and exclude in terms of social prestige and wealth. This group of linguists believes this is a covert form of British colonialism, a continuation of the colonial legacy and imperialist control exerted through ideas and communicated by the English language.

According to Phillipson, the norms and behaviour of the West that some call *Westernization* or *Americanization*, are embedded in and trans-

---

<sup>4</sup> See Price (1984), Nettle and Romaine (2000).

mitted through English in cultural activities as films, music and television (“Linguistic Imperialism” 59; “English-only” 72-73). This ‘propaganda of a language’ (7, 136) promotes exploitation, dependence and the unequal distribution of power. Similarly, Pennycook claims this is a fundamental part of the discourse which fails to consider the causes and effects of the spread of English, and legitimizes the dominant and fallacious ideology internalized by the dominated but not in their interest (150-151). For the author, it sells English as the obvious natural choice for the world: “By and large, the spread of English is considered to be natural, neutral and beneficial [...] because a rather blandly optimistic view of international communication assumes that this occurs on a cooperative and equitable footing” (9). Phillipson believes the hidden political and cultural implications of having English sold by the academic and political discourses as common-sensical (“Linguistic Imperialism” 8, 271), neutral (287), and indispensable for survival in the global economy, are that its users run the risk of denial and subversion of their own interests (“English for globalization” 195) for English is not culturally and ideologically neutral.

The author claims that maintaining the hierarchy of languages of colonial times means English proficiency continues to ‘open doors’ granting socio-economic privileges to those who speak it, but ‘close doors’ repressing or excluding those who do not speak it (“English-only” 7). This means that most people in colonial countries are caught in the contradiction of opting for English as the inevitable means to function globally, and in so doing, choosing a medium that may even deny their interests (“English for globalization” 195). Through the theory of the ‘*Worldliness of English*’, Pennycook states that after independence, territories wanted to promote their local or national languages but had to promote English in order to accomplish social and economic progress, by participating in international trade and having access to international scientific and technological knowledge. For the author, EIL has its origins in the two ideologies of colonial times, *Orientalism* and *Anglicism*. For both, the denial of English was as important as the insistence on it (74). When considering the uses of English in colonial and postcolonial societies, Pennycook argues that English is both the language of imperialism and of opposition and resistance, i.e. a new way of “enunciating the struggle for independence” (262).

Indeed, the word ‘scholar’ came to refer to all those who were articulate in English. As opposition to colonial rule became more clearly articulated, however, it was, by and large, these very intellectuals, those who could speak the colonizers’ language, those who could communicate to the wider community across and beyond the newly-created nations, who came to articulate anticolonial sentiments. (261)

*Linguistic Imperialism* is for Phillipson, the state of affairs where “the dominance of English is asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (“Linguistic Imperialism” 47), and *Anglo-centricity* is “the situation where the powerful English-speaking countries continue to use the money-making English Language Teaching (ELT) industry to maintain global linguistic hegemony” (132). Moreover, he claims that English is kept at the top of the hierarchy of languages due to the unequal allocation of resources (279). This benefits Centre nations (North) at the expense of the Periphery (South) (1), keeping an asymmetrical relationship (65) where English represents superiority, civilization and progress, and other languages inferiority, backwardness and regress.

Phillipson speaks of the spread of EIL as now being an economic goal in itself, with the following ‘selling’ arguments: what English *is* (intrinsic qualities); what it *has* (material and personal resources); and what it *does* (the uses to which it is put) (“Linguistic imperialism” 271-273). For the author, these are so convincing that English is equated with development, aid, progress and prosperity (8), or as Alexander puts it: “Under the guise of English as an auxiliary international language to ‘ease’ commerce, trade, and even academic and educational ‘mobility’, millions of individuals are being ‘channelled’ into the process of ‘Englishization’” (90). This will cause a ‘global diglossia’ (Muhleisen 117), ‘Linguistic curtailment’ (Pennycook 14), ‘language death’ (Phillipson, “English-Only” 66, 161) or ‘linguicism’ (Phillipson, “Linguistic Imperialism” 241). English is viewed as the “global bully’s language of choice” (Ostler 544), attached to an ideology which is deaf to the voices of those who reject English in favour of other languages (Bailey 177).

### 3.2 Other Sides of the Coin

Other scholars who are less critical of English, view it as a new global form of the language, a new phenomenon (Graddol 11) which should be considered in its international context, as independent, less politically-charged and with a new ‘functional specialization’ role. Hegemony of English is kept through the demand and supply, necessity and usage of the Expanding Circle of non-natives, who now outnumber natives. This predominance of non-native/non-native interactions means English belongs to whoever uses it internationally or globally. English is in “a class of its own, a supranational, auxiliary means of communication” (House 571) and non-inner circle countries have played an important role in its global development (Dewey 338).

English has become denationalized and accepting the ‘de-owning’ of the language (House 557) is important so as to free it from the ownership of mother-tongue native speakers and emancipate it from the Anglo-American world. Most criticism made to English is greatly due to the USA’s hegemonic acts, but the argument that the spread of English is due to a fascination for American culture no longer holds as the USA is losing international prestige or ‘geopolitical influence’ (Dewey 335) while English continues as international language and there are other economic superpowers (Graddol 32). It is important to acknowledge its “transformation (...) from being the language of a few powerful countries (i.e. the U.K., USA) to becoming the international language it is today” (Llurda 316).

English is strongly tied to globalization, but the discrepancies and unequal distribution of goods have more to do with money, technological innovations, economics, and education, than with English (Graddol 120). Blaming English for these wrongs and inequalities is attacking the wrong target (Crystal, “English as a Global”, 25), as the so-called processes of globalization do not originate in or benefit exclusively Western countries (Dewey, 335). Globalization has brought new sociolinguistic realities, where it is local forces that are diffusing and changing English. Its widespread popularity or grassroots’ demand means English is for communication, not identification or integration: “Lingua franca English then, as the linguistic manifestation of a myriad of set of contexts of using, can also be seen as a — globalised and globalising — linguistic resource for intercultural communication and transcultural flows” (James 86).

The past of colonial legacy with all its negative consequences is considered a historical fact. Kachru concludes: “The international profile of the functions of English is encouraging: we may at last have a universal language as an offshoot of the colonial period” (68). The emphasis must be on ‘discontinuities’ (Crystal, “English as a global” 24), and the need to move on. According to most of these linguists, Phillipson and Pennycook only consider power relations among countries. They forget that several first world countries which have strong languages were not colonized by Britain and have adopted English. In fact, the harshest attacks on English come precisely from these countries (Crystal, “English as a Global” 24). Graddol (64), among others, sees Phillipson’s linguistic imperialism theory as unacceptable because “English is not the main reason for global language loss” (64) as “the processes of language domination and loss have been known throughout linguistic history, and exist independently of the emergence of a global language” (Crystal, “English as a Global” 20). Dewey claims “...interaction increasingly transcends regions and borders” (338) resulting in more hybridization and freeing international English from the hands of native speakers as a source of authority to subjugate. For House, the linguistic imperialism attitude is patronising towards non-natives classifying them as: “‘pawns’ in an imperial game” (560); individuals incapable of making their own choices; passive objects of linguistic imperialism denied of their ‘agency’. Non-natives should be capable of developing “an identity with the local model of English without feeling that it is a ‘deficit’ model” (Kachru 68).

The colonizers were not the only ones responsible for colonial language policies: “English owes its existence as a world language in large part to the struggle against imperialism, and not to imperialism alone” (Brutt-Griffler 78). Jenkins states that linguistic imperialism did not have much to do with the spread of English (“Current Perspectives” 169) and the mixed feelings of former colonial countries are felt in the paradoxes of nationalism and wanting a piece of the world cake, suffering colonisation but profiting from it.

For these authors, local and national languages perform certain functions, while English is a “means to achieve a global presence” (Crystal, “English as a Global” 24). In some countries of Asia or Africa, local authorities regulate English for functional purposes as achieving an

international voice, bringing together disagreeing communities (Crystal, “The English language” 262), or empowering ‘the subjugated and the marginalized’ (Crystal, “English as a Global” 24). English as a lingua franca in a postmodern world suggests more and better communication and interconnectedness, and in turn, more pluralism and diversity. English as ‘language for communication’ need not be a linguistically-excluding factor or a form of anti-multilingualism; displacing national or local languages because their purposes, roles and uses are different as they are ‘languages for identification’ (House 562). Like technology, English is considered a basic skill (Graddol 72), a key component of modern identity (50).

### Concluding Remarks

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, pan-world-English is constantly evolving to meet the needs of global users (Crystal, “Evolving English” 138) predominantly in “contexts where it serves as a lingua franca, far removed from its native speakers’ linguacultural norms and identities” (Seidlhofer, “Closing a conceptual” 134), and having acquired “a life of its own in totally non-English situations” (Mc Crum *et al* 31). Non-native speakers are the main active agents of appropriation (Brutt-Griffler), as they have “the power to adapt and change the language” (Seidlhofer “A Concept” 7), freeing it from native speakers’ control and attesting its independence. There is an almost vicious circle of demand and supply, availability and adaptability as common people resort to this contact language when they need to ‘think locally, act globally’” (Hogan 1966 in Hui 126). This prevailing use of English for ‘intercultural communication’ (Cabrita and Mealha 56), or “international communication across national and linguistic boundaries” (Jenkins “Current Perspectives” 160) has given rise to a plethora of labels that are sometimes used interchangeably. The diverse terminology, EFL and ESL, and more recently EIL and ELF<sup>5</sup>, (with databases VOICE and ELFA<sup>6</sup> now being gathered), does not correspond to one “clearly

---

<sup>5</sup> See Llurda (2004) for a description and discussion of the current developments in terminology.

<sup>6</sup> See Azuaga (2012), Gonçalves (2012).

distinguishable, unitary variety” (Seidlhofer “A Concept of International English” 7).

The most internationally-shared, functionally-used means of communication, owes its existence to all users who wish or need to become ‘English-knowing bilinguals’ (Ur 4), and choose to use it for their own purposes: “Historical loyalties (e.g. to Britain) have been largely replaced by pragmatic, utilitarian reasoning” (Crystal, “The Cambridge Encyclopedia” 113). Internationally, English is used for a nation’s self-interest in a more connected world where “our networks extend further, transcending national and regional boundaries and resulting in still more hybridization” (Dewey 349). It becomes relevant to detach English relieving it from the heavy burden of its past or run the risk of ironically “keeping native speakers centre-staged, flattering their self-importance in a world that is fast passing them by” (Graddol 112).

The current global projection of English comes from its ‘functionality’ and ‘communality’ among the outnumbering non-natives whose contexts of use are both colonial and non-colonial territories. A common language and multilingualism are not contradictory (Crystal “English as a Global” Preface to the first edition). Toleration and promotion of all national languages without competition for the role of international language are implicit in ‘English-only is not enough’. Internationally, English is for communication and intelligibility, not identification (Cabrita and Mealha 57). Only a generalised conciliatory position may maximise benefits ensuring English functions as a complementary language “providing greater voice to the marginalized” (Dewey 337) and facilitating the process of “universal empowerment and gain” (Lysandrou and Lysandrou, “Global English” 230).

## Works Cited

- Alexander, Richard. J. “Global Languages Oppress But Are Liberating, Too: The Dialects of English.” *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*. Ed. Christian Mair. New York: Rodopi, 2003. 87-95.
- Azuaga, Luiza. “Introduction.” *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012):13-19.



- Azuaga, Luísa and Cavalheiro, Lili. "Three Continents, one Language: Studying English in a Portuguese Landscape (Brazil, Cape Verde and Portugal)." *Anglo Saxonica* III.4 (2012): 36-49.
- Bailey, Richard W. *Images of English, a Cultural History of the Language*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999.
- Barros, Rita Queiroz de. "of men's and them": Caribbean English in V.S. Naipaul's "Love, love, love, alone." *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012): 221-249.
- Brumfit, Christopher. *Individual Freedom in Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Brutt-Griffler, Janine. *World English: A study of its development*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Press, 2002.
- Cabrita, Eduarda Melo and Mealha, Isabel Ferro. "EIL in Legal and Medical Portuguese: Contracts and Medical Research Articles." *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012): 53-72.
- Cavalheiro, Lili. "Taking on EIL in School Curriculum." *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012): 73-83.
- Crystal, David. *The English Language, a guided tour of the language*. London: Penguin Books, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (Second edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *English as a Global Language* (Second edition). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Two thousand million?" *English Today* 24.1 (2008): 3-6.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evolving English: One language; Many voices*. London: The British Library. 2010.
- Dewey, Martin. "English as a lingua franca and globalization: an interconnect perspective." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 17. 3 (2007): 332-354.
- Fishman, Joshua. "The Sociology of English as an Additional Language" *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures* Ed. Braj B. Kachru, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Gonçalves, António M. A. "Of Nodes and Ties — Towards a Functional Model of Context for English as a Global Lingua Franca." *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012): 88-111.

- Graddol, David. *English Next*. Available online at <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-research-english-next.pdf> British Council, 2006.
- Graddol, David, Dick Leith and Joan Swann. *English, history, diversity and change*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Griffin, Jeffrey. "Global English infiltrates Bulgaria." *English Today* 68.17.4 (2001): 53-60.
- Hogan, T. "Globalization: Experiences and explanations." *Social Self, Global Culture*. Ed. A. Kellehear. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- House, Juliane. "English as a lingua franca: A threat to multilingualism?" *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 7.4 (2003): 556-578.
- Hui, Du. "The globalization of the English language: Reflections on the teaching of English in China." *International Education Journal* 2.4 (2001): 126-133. Available online at <http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/mainframe.htm> (October 2013).
- James, Allan. "Theorising English and globalization: semi diversity and linguistic structure in Global Englishes and Lingua Franca English." *Journal of Applied Language Studies* 3.1 (2009): 79-92.
- Jenkins, Jennifer. "Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca." *Tesol Quarterly* 40.1 (2006): 157-181.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *World Englishes, A Resource Book for Students* (Second edition). New York: Routledge, 2009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Un)pleasant? (In)correct? (Un)intelligible? ELF speakers' perceptions of their accents." *English as a Lingua Franca: Studies and Findings*, Ed. Anne Mauranen and Elina Ranta, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. 10-36.
- Kachru, Braj, "Models for Non-Native Englishes." *The Other Tongue: English across Cultures*. Ed. Braj B. Kachru, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992.
- Lazaretnaya, Olesya. "English as a Lingua Franca in Russia: from a Macro to a Micro Perspective." *Anglo Saxonica* III 4 (2012): 167-185.
- Llurda, Enric. "Non-native-speaker teachers and English as an International Language." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 14.3 (2004): 314-323.

- Lysandrou, Photis, Lysandrou, Yvonne. "Global English and proregression: understanding English language spread in the contemporary era." *Economy and Society* 32.2 (2003):207-233.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Proregression and Dynamic Stasis: The Ambivalent Impact of English as Reflected in Postcolonial Writing." *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*, Ed. Christian Mair. New York: Rodopi, 2003. 97-106.
- Mc Crum, Robert, MacNeil, Robert and Cran, William. *The story of English*. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Muhleisen, Susanne. "Towards Global Diglossia: English in the Sciences and the Humanities." *The Politics of English as a World Language: New Horizons in Postcolonial Cultural Studies*, Ed. Christian Mair. New York: Rodopi, 2003.107-118.
- Nettle, Daniel and Romaine, Suzanne. *Vanishing Voices: The Extinction of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Onysko, Alexanser. "Exploring discourse on globalizing English." *English Today* 97.25.1 (2009): 25-36.
- Ostler, Nicholas. *Empires of the word: A language History of the world*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.
- Pennycook, Alistair. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language*. London: Longman, 1994.
- Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1992.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "English for globalization or for the world's people?" *International Review of Education* 47. 3-4 (2001):185-200.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *English-only? Challenging Language Policy*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Lingua Franca or Lingua Frankensteinia? English in European Integration and Globalisation". *World Englishes* 27.2 (2008): 250-267.
- Phillipson, Robert & Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove. "English Only Worldwide or Language Ecology". *TESOL Quarterly* 30.3 (1996): 429-452.
- Price, Glanville. *The Language of Britain*. London: Edward Arnold, 1984.
- Seidlhofer, Barbara. "Closing a Conceptual Gap: the Case for a Description of English as a Lingua Franca." *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11.2 (2001): 133-158.

\_\_\_\_\_. "A Concept of International English and related issues: from 'Real English' to 'Realistic English'." Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 2003.

Swales, John. "The English language and its teachers: thoughts past, present, and future" *Elt Journal* 40.4 (1993):283-291.

\_\_\_\_\_. "English as *Tyrannosaurus rex*." *World Englishes* 16 (1997): 373-382.

Ur, Penny. "English as a Lingua Franca and some implications for English Teachers." 2009. Available online at [http://www.tesol-france.org/Colloquium09/Ur\\_Plenary\\_Handouts.pdf](http://www.tesol-france.org/Colloquium09/Ur_Plenary_Handouts.pdf) (September 2013).

### ABSTRACT

Having spread through the processes of colonization, decolonization and globalization, English has no doubt reached the status of international language of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Today's most shared functional medium of communication has attained unprecedented reach, scope and use. Global transactional and translingual flows mean English is present and constantly evolving in most spheres of human activity and society. English is predominantly adopted and adapted by the Expanding Circle of non-native speakers regardless of proficiency. It has been popularly diffused and has acquired different appellations, functionalities, and nationalities, and raised issues of intelligibility, identity, and ownership. On the one hand, there are linguists who are critical of English, viewing it as a killer language, a form of linguistic imperialism or continuation of the cultural legacy. On the other hand, we find those who are less critical of the status of English, seeing it as an independent language, an inevitable resource of modern times. This paper considers arguments from different sides of the English coin and suggests that international English belongs to the world users who need it for global communication and intelligibility in the present, ever-changing world order.

### KEYWORDS

International English; global means of communication; linguistic imperialism; identity and intelligibility

### RESUMO

A língua inglesa que se difundiu através dos processos da colonização, descolonização e globalização, alcançou sem sombra de dúvida o estatuto de língua internacional do século XXI. Sendo o meio de comunicação funcional mais comum dos dias de hoje, atingiu uma extensão e alcance de uso sem precedentes. Devido a movimentos transacionais e linguísticos a nível global, o Inglês está presente e em evolução em quase todas as áreas de atividade humana e da sociedade. A língua inglesa é atualmente adotada e adaptada principalmente pelos

não-nativos do *Expanding Circle*, independentemente das suas competências linguísticas. Tem sido popularmente difundida, adquirindo diferentes nomenclaturas, funcionalidades e nacionalidades, e levantando questões de inteligibilidade, identidade e posse. Por um lado, os linguistas mais críticos consideram o Inglês como uma língua assassina, uma fonte de imperialismo ou a continuação do legado colonial. Por outro, os linguistas menos críticos consideram o Inglês como uma língua independente e um recurso inevitável dos tempos modernos. Este artigo considera os argumentos dos vários lados da moeda e sugere que, tendo em conta a atual ordem mundial, o Inglês como língua internacional pertence aos utilizadores de todo o mundo para comunicação e inteligibilidade a nível global.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Inglês como língua internacional; meio de comunicação global; imperialismo linguístico; identidade e inteligibilidade

---

# Mapping out the Invisible Visible: Science, Technology and the Remaking of Visual Culture

*António Lopes*

University of Algarve

CETAPS – Centre for English Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies





# Mapping out the Invisible Visible: Science, Technology and the Remaking of Visual Culture

## Introduction

I will start by stating the obvious: τέχνη is an integral part of the human being. It not simply just another product of our intelligence, an outcome of an inquiring, imaginative mind, but rather a determining factor of human existence, not only because it allows us to “control natural happenings” and “transcend our natural condition” (Nussbaum 204), but also because it shapes our praxis and our modes of thinking, along with the ways in which we interact and learn about ourselves and the world.

This dimension of the human being has been picking up speed over the last couple of centuries to the point where one can barely assimilate into our experience all the potential that technology has to offer. Since the slower step of reflective thought that characterises the humanities is easily outrun by the latest technological developments, our ability to achieve an adequate depth of understanding of the interaction between the human being and the τέχνη of the twenty-first century is continuously being challenged. That is particularly noticeable in the case of the latest medical visualisation techniques, which compel us to rethink the modes of perception not only of the body, but also of the mind.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is explore the ethical, phenomenological, ontological and aesthetic implications of the technological advances in this area, in particular where functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) applied to the study of brain-generated images is concerned. Using as a point of departure a visual experiment that I conducted in a seminar on visual cultural and contemporary society, which prompted these reflections, I will take a brief tour into the most recent scientific breakthroughs in this field before questioning the position

of the humanities, the age-old guardian of imaginative and creative thought, in relation to the ethical and power issues raised by the experiments.

However, I intend to take one step further and discuss phenomenological repercussions of the findings on the way our consciousness is perceived (in this case, as an object that perceives itself). Consequently, the ontological status of *self* must be revised. Technology can now pinpoint where exactly consciousness manifests itself in our body. What is more: not only has the *self* become visible or localizable, but it can also be digitalised and is, as a consequence, reproducible. This, in turn, has aesthetic implications in so far as the computer-generated images invite us to take a contemplative stance of human nature, expanding the horizons of the visible into regions previously shrouded in mystery and beyond our ability to imagine. And yet, one can legitimately ask oneself if such alluring, technologically fabricated images do actually mirror the real world or are simply its simulacrum — an illusory space that serves to conceal the truth about the world. At this point of the argument, I will borrow Jean Baudrillard's concept of simulation and his critique of consumer society to question how easily one takes for granted the veracity of the mediated imagery in our construction of reality.

### **In the Realm of Visual Experiments**

Before delving into the main subject of this paper, I would like to report on an experiment that I conducted at the visual culture and contemporary society seminar for Masters Students in Visual and Technological Education at the University of the Algarve. I started by showing them two parallel images and asked them to examine and compare both. As all of them observed, there existed a certain similarity of shape and colour between the images on the right and the ones on the left. At the same time, they also noticed that all the pictures on the left bore some stylistic resemblance to each other. After a while, a number of students had already identified some of the images on the right as details of paintings, though they were not sure about the artists (actually, they were all British artists, namely William Turner, John Constable and Francis Bacon).

However, the images on the left remained puzzling and intriguing. I then added a third image to each set: a still from a movie or a television

documentary. One of the characters that the students immediately recognized was the iconic Chief Inspector Clouseau, starred by Steve Martin in the 2006 production of *Pink Panther*. Once again, the students realized that there seemed to be a vague resemblance between the still and the other two images, a similitude that could be established at the level of some formal qualities, in particular in terms of colour, shape, volume, proportion or composition. The images in the middle appeared to be formally closer to the paintings on the right, but that was intentionally misleading.

The truth was that they originated in the clips on the left. In fact, they were reconstructions of people's dynamical visual experiences as they watched a set of movie trailers while their brain activity was being scanned with an fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) machine.<sup>1</sup> The details of paintings had been added to the set, on the one hand, to make the students aware of the ways in which they, as viewers, perceived and decoded the image and, on the other, to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the images resulting from the computer-generated reconstructions.

What the students were watching for the first time was the result of a research conducted by Shinji Nishimoto and Jack Gallant, both with UC Berkeley, who have resorted to fMRI and computational models not only to map out those specific areas of the brain that respond to visual stimuli, but also — by inverting the process — to reconstruct images generated in the brain. They used a computer programme to associate the visual patterns in the movies with the subjects' brain activity. With the aid of a movie reconstruction algorithm, the researchers succeeded in decoding the brain signals that resulted from watching those trailers and then went on to translate those signals back into images. The results were made public in *Current Biology* in October 2011.

The authors of the study have advanced some future clinical applications of these experiments. They claim that in the future this type of research may lead to improvements in the diagnosis of diseases and in the assessment of therapeutic interventions. It is also believed that it may

---

<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0uw9YBnMSc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0uw9YBnMSc), last accessed on November 18, 2013.

provide the means to look into the minds of patients in a state of coma or suffering from neurodegenerative diseases. Eventually, it may constitute the basis for a future Brain-Machine Interface (BMI) to help people with cerebral palsy or paralysis to interact with the world around them, especially in the control of prosthetic limbs.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime there have been more staggering developments in this area. Using the same brain scanning technology in conjunction with electroencephalography, a team of Japanese neuroscientists at the ATR Computational Neuroscience Laboratories in Kyoto, led by Yukiasu Kamitani, analysed the brain activity of sleeping subjects. They focused on those brain areas that are involved in higher order visual functions (the visual cortical areas), and built a model which, by means of objective neural measurement, is believed to have uncovered the subjective contents of dreams.

This study, recently published in the journal *Science* (March 5, 2013), stepped up the scientific challenge by ushering us, albeit timidly, into the more ethereal and intangible world of dreams, a space which Havelock Ellis, inspired by Freud's *Die Traumdeutung*, once described as that "dim and ancient house of shadow, unilluminated by any direct ray from the outer world of waking life" (Ellis 1). In a sense, one might say that what Kamitani and his fellow researchers have sought to do has been precisely to "illuminate" that "ancient house" with the magnetic fields of an fMRI machine.

No less impressive is a study by Alexander Huth, Shinji Nishimoto, An T. Vu and Jack Gallant (2012), in which fMRI was also used to map a continuous semantic space across the cortical surface, a space where object and action categories are organised according to the semantic similarity that exists between them. By resorting to voxel-wise models (voxel=volumetric pixel) that read the Blood Oxygen Level Dependent (BOLD) responses across the brain, the cortical representations of 1705 object and action categories were analysed and it was concluded that semantic selectivity is arranged in smooth gradients covering a significant part of the visual and non-visual cortex, a conclusion which countered the belief that

---

<sup>2</sup> Available at [gallantlab.org/question.html](http://gallantlab.org/question.html); accessed on November 18, 2013.

each category was located in specific areas of the brain. On the other hand, it was also found that different subjects share a common semantic space as well as a common cortical organisation of space.

The similar techniques have been applied to the reconstruction of speech from human auditory cortex. Pasley, David *et al.* (2012) succeeded in capturing fragments of people's thoughts with the aid of a computer that basically deciphered the brain activity (especially in the superior temporal gyrus) of patients who were played a series of words for five to ten minutes. The algorithms were able to detect and repeat individual words such as "Waldo", "structure", "doubt" and "property". Their findings unveiled the neural encoding mechanisms of speech acoustic parameters that occur in higher order human auditory cortex.

### **Reservations and Quandaries**

Having reached this point of technological advancement, we are bound to ask the unavoidable question: where do we, scholars in humanities, stand in relation to these latest developments in the field of neurobiology, developments which have clear implications in our understanding of phenomena involving cognition, consciousness, imagination and language? Should we simply ignore them or try to come to terms with them? Should we keep a wary distance from them or remain optimistic about the potential offered by these revelations?

It is true that these scientific breakthroughs have crossed the threshold of the private nature of the visual imagery that occurs in the brain, but this should hardly set ethical alarm bells ringing. This sort of technology is still in a rather early stage of development and many of the ethical issues that it might raise regarding privacy, individual freedom, free will, or human rights appear to be overdramatized in the face of its limitations and the somewhat incomplete or inaccurate character of its results. "Science" may still be regarded by some as that other culture on which the humanities, self-absorbed in its own sense of superiority, should continue to look down with suspicion, dismissing it as a grossly mechanical, measurable and quantifiable way of looking at life, bereft of philosophical concerns, creative imagination or intellectual refinement — an attitude C. P. Snow had already condemned in his *Two Cultures* (2001[1959]).

No doubt those intellectuals who hold a disdainful or pessimistic view of science may feel tempted to censure these explorations as the coming into being of those nightmarish scenarios which dystopian fiction has always sought to warn us about. Actually, there has been a profusion of sci-fi films of late revolving around mind reading gadgets, memory erasing devices or dream inception machines. Think of *Brainstorm* (1983), *Total Recall* (1990), *Strange Days* (1995), *The Matrix* Trilogy (1999 and 2003) *Minority Report* (2002), *Inception* (2010) or, more recently, *Oblivion* (2013). And even the benevolent intentions of the scientists who speak of the clinical benefits of the future applications of their findings cannot expunge the intellectual discomfort of knowing that if there were effective mind control mechanisms mediated through technology we would run the risk of being entirely left at the mercy of totalitarian zealots.

Nonetheless, one does not have to go that far in speculation to grasp some of the implications that these researches have in our understanding of power. Foucault would have certainly revelled in the opportunity to play with the prospect of this new form of power brooding over humanity. After all, is this not *surveillance* taken to its ultimate extreme? The principle of unhiddenness (the Heideggerian *aletheia* or *Unverborgenheit*) that governs scientific knowledge has now made its forced entry into the realm of the innermost private. But does this necessarily mean that we are standing before a new form of power exercised over our bodies in the name of scientific truth? Are these technological implements simply the contemporary materialization of Jeremy Bentham's idea of creating a space serving as many purposes as "*punishing the incorrigible, guarding the insane, reforming the vicious, confining the suspected*" and "*curing the sick*" (his italics) (Bentham 40)? In other words, is the fMRI to be regarded as the new Panopticon of the twenty-first century?

### **Beyond Ethical Concerns**

These fears notwithstanding, what I believe is more challenging is to engage in a reflection (I think this is the word that best fits the context) on the way in which these findings compel us (a) to reconsider the *phenomenological* relation that exists between the visual, the body, and the perception of the self, (b) to assess the *ontological* consequences of what might

provisionally be called the *digitalization of the self* and (c) to explore the *aesthetic* dimension of the experiment, both in terms of the subjects' experience as something located within the limits of our contemporary visual culture, and of the plasticity of the visual forms generated by the algorithm.

I shall now discuss each of these points in greater detail.

(a) In order to meet the first challenge, I should like to refer to António Damásio via Merleau-Ponty. In his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty made the case for a dialectical concept of consciousness. As he argued, "consciousness is not an eternal subject perceiving itself in absolute transparency" (493); it arises instead from our perceptual experience of the world. In other words, it hinges on the way in which our body — being immersed in the world — perceives it and acts in it.

The ability of our consciousness to reflect on the world and about ourselves is organically connected with our bodily experiences. "All consciousness," he contended at some point, "is, in some measure, perceptual consciousness" (459) — a position which clearly challenged the argument that Sartre put forth in his *Being and Nothingness* concerning the division of being into three separate modes, namely, being-for-itself, being-in-itself and being-for-others.

António Damásio also subscribes to the principle defended by Merleau-Ponty: there is no consciousness detached from the body in which it emerges. In his essay entitled *The Feeling Of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness* (2000), he advances the thesis that consciousness is viscerally connected with the regulatory principles of life that govern our body, ranging from something as basic as the eukaryotic cell all the way up to the complexity of the neural circuits of the cerebral cortex. He also speaks of our ability to map our body, that is, to construct a sense of self through a series of images or representations of the body, and to interact with the outer world by means of mental patterns that we construct of objects — "the temporally and spatially integrated mental images of something-to-be-known" (11) — the unified pattern of which constitutes what he calls consciousness. (He also proposes the idea that our social and cultural existence is marked by our permanent attempt to extend those regulatory principles to our relationship with other human beings.)

Thus, the research conducted by Nishimoto and Gallant can be regarded, in phenomenological terms, as an extension of that typical process of human consciousness which consists in the creation of self-monitoring images, this time by means of a technological implement that helps consciousness to watch the brain decipher its own workings, thus unveiling part of the mechanisms that give rise to consciousness. Their research is not just an attempt to provide a scientific explanation for the way in which we process the visual input or how that phenomenon can actually be decoded in order to reach out to those living chained in their locked-in worlds.

From a phenomenological point of view, this research has provided an external (mediated) way of *looking* inwards, at the way we *look* at things and, by means of mapping out the mental patterns that constitute our visual experience, it has succeeded in unveiling the bodily dimension of consciousness. In other words, it reveals the embodiment of the image: it locates the precise point where the image becomes embedded in our body, i.e. where the image becomes body. And this ability to consciously perceive, as before a mirror, how consciousness operates in such intricate and subtle manners only adds to our wonder of human existence. Clarice Lispector once wrote:

Não há homem ou mulher que por acaso não se tenha olhado ao espelho e se surpreendido consigo próprio. Por uma fração de segundo a gente se vê como a um objeto a ser olhado. A isto se chamaria talvez de narcisismo, mas eu chamaria de: alegria de ser. Alegria de encontrar na figura exterior os ecos da figura interna: ah, então é verdade que eu não me imaginei, eu existo. (Lispector 226)

[There's no man or woman who has not looked at oneself in the mirror and marvelled at oneself. For a fraction of a second we see ourselves as an object being watched. One might call this narcissism, but I would rather call it the joy of being. Joy of finding in the outer figure the echoes of the inner figure: oh, so it is true I did not imagine myself, I do exist.]  
(my translation)

In a sense, what Nishimoto and Gallant do is offer us the opportunity to see our consciousness as “an object being watched”. The images that they



provide in the 2011 study produce a *mise-en-abîme* effect: we are given the sensory experience of a sensory experience. It is in this perpetual circularity that resides the dialectic of the relation between subject and object, one annulling the other while simultaneously ratifying the existence of the other. I am the subject who *acknowledges* the presence of the object (that is, I *know* of its existence) and at the same time *recognize* myself in it (i.e., I accept my being the Other). What I see is the object staring back at the subject — which is to say turning the subject into another object. In other words, this experiment conducted in real-time conditions (imagine the subject being shown a real-time image of what his brain is processing) would reveal both the circular and reflexive essence of the subject — as the *object of the object* — a *metaperception* that probably occurs at the level of the “mirror neurons”, found in the ventral premotor cortex, which, according to Oberman and Ramachandran (2009), are responsible for the construction of a model of the self (see also Hanlon 139).

(b) These latter considerations already blend into the *ontological* issue, which is basically about the human individual as *being* and how technology and science have brought us to the point where the materiality of our existence has acquired a new dimension: the digital being. In other words, this technology has expanded the possibilities of digitalization not only of the *body*, but of the *self*. By digitalization of the *self* I mean the ability of high-tech devices to capture in digital form the manifestations the individual consciousness, in terms of its cognitive, affective and perceptual properties, as well of the representations of one’s identity and of real or imaginary objects. Croon Fors has already advanced the concept of Technoselves to account for the close relationship that exists between the processes of digitalization of contemporary life and subjectivity (Fors, 2013). My purpose here, however, is to push that idea further and to discuss, though briefly, the possibility of the subject being converted into digital code, while considering at the same time the ontological implications of such radical transformation of our perception of the self.

Science has always had the need to go beneath the surface of the bodies, assuming that their outward appearance and opacity constitute, up to a certain point, a barrier to the comprehension of the inner workings of nature, the hidden mechanisms of life and the causes of degeneration and death. In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) Michel Foucault examined this

propensity of science from mid-eighteenth century to lay bare the hidden structures of the body in search of empirical evidence. Anatomical dissection is not just a quest for the truth, but a practice rooted in the belief that the truth — which invariably remains hidden — can only be grasped through the eyes. The *Visible Human Project* (VHP)<sup>3</sup> at the University of Michigan, which literally offers us slices of the human body in different orientations (transverse, sagittal and coronal) and imaging methods (Colour Cryosection, CT, MRI and Tri-Panel), is an eloquent example how far this need for the visual appropriation of the body has gone. Despite all the hi-tech gadgetry involved, it is still pretty much an echo of a period in which, to quote Foucault, “illness, counter-nature, death, in short, the whole dark underside of disease came to light, at the same time illuminating and eliminating itself like night, in the deep, visible, solid, enclosed, but accessible space of the human body” (Foucault 241).

Ever since Wilhelm C. Röntgen discovered the X-ray in 1895, quite a number of other imaging methods have been developed to enhance our scientific and medical knowledge of the body. Be it ultrasound, CT (Computed Tomography) or CAT (Computerized Axial Tomography), PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scanning or MRI, all these acronyms have gradually seeped their way into everyday language. This also corresponds to an evolution in our conceptualization of the human body, not just as a complex system of cells and organs, but as an ensemble of molecular structures and biomolecular components whose organisation at nanometric scale is believed to provide the explanation for the most diverse aspects of human life, ranging from ageing to tissue regeneration, from mental disorders to antisocial conduct.

It is at nanometric scale that the fMRI operates: what we see is in fact a digitalised version of processes occurring at the level of atomic nuclei polarized by strong magnetic fields. In the present case, however, it not just an inert body that is being scanned as in the case of the VHP, but the real-time processes of neural activity in complex networks that lie at the basis of the human consciousness, which is also to say of our sense of self.

---

<sup>3</sup> Available at [vhp.med.umich.edu/browsers/female.html](http://vhp.med.umich.edu/browsers/female.html); accessed on November 18, 2013.

In that respect, despite the fact the Nishimoto-Gallant experiment only focuses on one particular aspect of our consciousness — the domain of the visual — it presents itself nonetheless as a *digital translation* (though only partial) *of the self*.

British philosopher Derek Parfit once posed the question of the permanence of the self in case the body was run through a Scanning Replicator machine. This device would first turn the body into digital information at an atomic and subatomic level and then create an exact replica, including all the thoughts and memories, as it eliminated the original (289 ff). Would it still be the same person or its simulacrum? In the present case, are we getting closer to the possibility of digitally replicating the self? Does this justify Baudrillard's indictment against a society that values simulation over reality? Are we one step closer to transforming the self into bytes? In her *On Photography* (1977), Susan Sontag mentioned that "primitive people fear that the camera will rob them of some part of their being" (123). Are the questions that I am asking the contemporary version of those atavistic fears that made primitive people shun the camera?

But the digitalization of the self goes beyond the purely ontological question. Given the ability of ICT to rapidly spread out these findings, they have also to be examined in terms of their potential impact on popular culture. As Sturken and Cartwright remind us, scientific images are "integral to the production and meanings of images in popular culture, art, advertising and the law" (348). This leads us to the third approach.

(c) Whether we appreciate them in aesthetic terms or not, these images are now part of the visual vocabulary of science and can easily be appropriated by the present-day visual culture, be it popular or erudite — the experiment I reported on above being a case in point. The unidentifiable blurred faces, the restless colours, the uncanny shadows in motion, the diffuse forms that refuse to be tamed by our imagination, the stains that spread out like oil spills, might as well be on display as a video installation at a museum of contemporary art like the MoMA or the Tate Modern, challenging the visitor to respond in the same terms as s/he would before the work of a Damien Hirst or a Bruce Nauman. It is just as provocative and unsettling. It is at a time meaningful and mysterious. It appeals to a certain transcendence and yet is profoundly rooted in the materiality of technology and of the body.

Curiously enough, the experiment itself does not just provide an aesthetic experience: it may also help to disclose the very biological foundations of aesthetics. Semir Zeki had already contended back in 1998 that the study of aesthetics must somehow be grounded in the understanding of the workings of the visual brain. He had also shown that the brain reacts differently when objects are dressed in the right or wrong colours, with some its parts becoming more or less active (Zeki 100-101). Nishimoto and Gallant may have given some more steps towards such understanding. Although their primary concern was not to look into the mode in which the sense of beauty manifests in the brain, the experiment may have opened the doors to a more exhaustive comprehension of the dynamics of such processes.

There is, however, another important aspect about these images that links them to the popular visual culture of contemporary society. The fact that the Nishimoto-Gallant experiment is mostly based on Hollywood movies and YouTube video clips, that is, on artefacts that are representative of our contemporary visual culture — in particular the “visual” provided by the media — means that the perceptions that are being measured are of a fabricated nature. What is being measured is not a direct, immediate, straightforward visual perception of the real world, but a mediated visual experience.

This is the Baudrillardian principle at work through and through: the researchers assume that the cortex deals with images of a simulated reality in the same way as it deals with the images of the real world in which the subjects are physically immersed. There are important visual characteristics that could not have been taken into account in the Nishimoto-Gallant study, such as natural light, three-dimensional depth, full-parallax, motion parallax, etc. The movies that the subjects were watching while their brains were being scanned had been cropped to a square and spatially downsampled to 512 x 512 pixels, before being displayed on an LCD goggle system (20° x 20° at 15 Hz). Since there is no portable fMRI machine to test the subjects under more realistic conditions, the results of the experiment are always-already slanted by the artificiality of a world that is, by definition, governed by the principle of simulation.

In this light, the images resulting from brain reading are to be viewed not as a faithful *re-presentation* of real, concrete, palpable objects in the

physical space surrounding the subject, but as simulations of simulations. This idea had already been explored by Nick Bostrom in a controversial article in the *Philosophical Quarterly* (2003) and was recently explored by a team of physicists at the University of Bonn, who tested the hypothesis that the observed universe might be a numerical simulation (Beane, Davoudi & Savage 2012).

Unsurprisingly, some of the films that I mentioned earlier, namely *The Matrix* trilogy and *Inception*, explore this notion of reality as a multi-layered structure of narratives of simulated worlds within other simulated worlds. This is taken to such a degree in *Inception*, for example, that even death, the very negation of human existence, appears to be a mere moment of transition between worlds, the coming to an end of a simulacrum which is immediately followed by the awakening into another simulacrum, leading us down a string of dream worlds that, instead of inducing a suspension of disbelief, only enhances our suspicion about the truth that lies behind our being-in-the-world.

This not just a phenomenological issue: it is also an aesthetic issue in that many of the artefacts that now make up our contemporary visual culture are, thanks to the latest technological developments (holography, autostereoscopy, S3D film and 3DTV), gradually leaning towards an erasure of the boundaries between what is visually artificial and natural, between a simulated reality and the real world. What partly guides my aesthetic sensitivity today is not the search for beauty, but this vertigo caused by such an erasure, this excessive sensory experience that is all-absorbing in its immediacy, demanding our full attention and leaving little room for reflection. Perhaps this is the next horizon of our aesthetic experience: not a horizon where beauty is rooted in truth, but where the simulacrum is expected to fuse with reality.

## Works Cited

- Beane, S., Davoudi, Z. & Savage, M. J.. "Constraints on the Universe as a Numerical Simulation". 2012. Last accessed on May 5, 2013 at [arxiv.org/pdf/1210.1847.pdf](http://arxiv.org/pdf/1210.1847.pdf).
- Bostrom, N.. Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?. *Philosophical Quarterly*, No. 211 (2003): 243-255. Last accessed on May 5, 2013 at [people.uncw.edu/](http://people.uncw.edu/)

- guinn/courses/Spring11/517/Simulation.pdf
- Bentham, Jeremy. *The Works of Jeremy Bentham, Now First Collected: Under the Superintendence of His Executor, John Bowring*. Part III. Edinburgh: William Tait, 1838.
- Damásio, A.. *The Feeling Of What Happens: Body, Emotion and the Making of Consciousness*. Orlando: Harvest, 2000.
- Ellis, Havelock. *The World of Dreams*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1922.
- Fors, Anna Croon. "The Ontology of the Subject in Digitalization." In Luppicini, R. (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on Technoself: Identity in a Technological Society*. IGI Global, 2013. 45-63. doi:10.4018/978-1-4666-2211-1.ch003
- Foucault, M.. *The Birth of the Clinic*. Oxon: Routledge, 2003.
- Hanlon, M.. *10 Questions Science Can't Answer (Yet): A Guide to the Scientific Wilderness*. New York: Macmillan, 2007.
- Horikawa, T., et al.. Neural Decoding of Visual Imagery During Sleep. *Science*, 2013. doi: 10.1126/science.1234330
- Huth, A. H., Nishimoto, S., Vu, A. T. & Gallant, L.. A Continuous Semantic Space Describes the Representation of Thousands of Object and Action Categories across the Human Brain. *Neuron*, 76, December 2012: 1210-1224.
- Lispector, Clarice. *A Descoberta do Mundo*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1984.
- Merleau-Ponty, M.. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Colin Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Nishimoto, S., Vu, A. T., Naselaris, T., Benjamini, Y., Yu, B. & Gallant, J.. Reconstructing Visual Experiences from Brain Activity Evoked by Natural Movies. *Current Biology*, 21 (19) (2011): 1641-1646.
- Nussbaum "Techniques of Transcendence". In Hall, R. L. *The Human Embrace: The Love of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Love: Kierkegaard, Cavel, Nussbaum*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000: 173-256.
- Oberman, L.; Ramachandran, V.S.. "Reflections on the Mirror Neuron System: Their Evolutionary Functions Beyond Motor Representation". In Pineda, J.A. *Mirror Neuron Systems: The Role of Mirroring Processes in Social Cognition*. Humana Press, 2009: 39-62.

- Parfit, Derek. *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Pasley, B. N., David, S. V., Mesgarani, N., Flinker, A., Shamma, S. A., Crone, N. E., Knight, R. E. & Chang, E. F. Reconstructing Speech from Human Auditory Cortex. *PLoS Biol*, 10 (1) (2012): e1001251. doi:10.1371/journal.pbio.1001251.
- Sontag, S.. *On Photography*. New York: Rosetta Books, 2005.
- Snow, C.P. *The Two Cultures*. London: Cambridge University Press, 2001 (1959).
- Sturken, M. and Cartwright, L.. *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Zeki, S. "Art and the Brain". *Daedalus* no. 127, No. 2, 1998: 71-103. Last accessed on April 15, 2013 at <http://www.vislab.ucl.ac.uk/pdf/Daedalus.pdf>

### ABSTRACT

Recent MR brain scan research has put to the test our conceptions of the visual. The investigation has been conducted by Shinji Nishimoto and Jack Gallant, both with UC Berkeley, who have resorted to functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) and computational models not only to map out those specific areas of the brain that respond to visual stimuli, but also — by inverting the process — to reconstruct images generated by the brain. This scientific and technological breakthrough begs important questions about the way in which we relate to the image (from a phenomenological perspective, for example), as well as about the role of imagination in contemporary societies (from a cultural studies angle). This paper aims to discuss the impact that these forms of interface between technology and the human body can have in the context of 21<sup>st</sup> century visual culture. Will this objectification of our imaging capacity level to the ground our beliefs in the ineffability of the creative process? Will it offer the opportunity to explore other avenues for artistic expression and cultural development in societies like the American or the British, whose younger generations have been so profoundly marked by hyper-reality and digitality?

### KEYWORDS

Visual Culture; fMRI Brain Scan; Vision Reconstruction; Digitality; Phenomenology

### RESUMO

A investigação mais recente no campo da neurofisiologia recorrendo à ressonância magnética pôs em causa as nossas concepções do visual. A pesquisa foi levada a cabo por Shinji Nishimoto e Jack Gallant, da Universidade da Califórnia em Berkeley, que recorreram à imagiologia por ressonância magnética funcional (fMRI) e a modelos computacionais não só para mapear as áreas específicas do cérebro que respondem aos estímulos visuais, mas também, ao inverterem o processo, para reconstruir as imagens geradas no cérebro. Este avanço científico e tecnológico



levanta importantes questões acerca do modo como nos relacionamos com a imagem (por exemplo, numa perspectiva fenomenológica), assim como acerca do papel da imaginação nas sociedades contemporâneas (do ângulo dos estudos culturais). Este artigo visa discutir o impacto que estas formas de interface entre a tecnologia e o corpo humano podem ter no contexto da cultura visual do século XXI. Será que esta objectivação da nossa capacidade de gerar imagens destruirá as nossas crenças na infabilidade do processo criativo? Será que oferece a oportunidade de explorar outros domínios de expressão artística e de desenvolvimento cultural em sociedades como a americana ou a britânica, onde as gerações mais novas estão tão marcadas pela hiperrealidade e pelo digital?

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Cultura Visual; Ressonância Magnética Funcional; Reconstrução Visual; Digital; Fenomenologia

---



# Bridging Anthropology and Literature through Indian Writing in English

*Margarida Martins*

ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies



## Bridging Anthropology and Literature through Indian Writing in English

Are literature and anthropology distinct fields of work? Why should we build a barrier that separates one discipline from the other? What are the risks and advantages of connecting the two? In a traditional and slightly reductive classification of these two disciplines one likes to consider anthropology as a science and literature as an art. An anthropologist when writing his or her ethnography provides an objective analysis and description of other cultures and their social interactions and practices. A writer creates characters, imaginary worlds and stories for his fiction. But from recent debates, a fact is that many anthropologists are willing to agree that these two disciplines are in fact closer than was formerly and academically accepted.

As someone initially trained in social or cultural anthropology, then turned to the study of literature, I have never quite managed to separate the two disciplines. When interpreting novels, anthropological theory always seems to interfere in my reading, and when researching through anthropologist's writing, I tend to find analogies in fiction. In my current field of research on Indian English literature and in the process of writing my thesis on the novels *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai and *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, I find my background in anthropology very helpful in the understanding of socio-cultural practices, linguistic patterns and in the depiction of tradition, identity and liminality. Just as I realize from my reading that these and other Indian English writers have greatly contributed to an understanding of important aspects of contemporary cultural Indian reality.

The main purpose of my paper therefore is to expand on my personal views on the relationship between these two disciplines and its importance in my own research. To do so, I rely mostly on anthropologists

who have written on the subject such as Clifford Geertz, James Clifford, Paul Stoller and Amitav Ghosh who is both an anthropologist and an Indian writer. But also in my field of research, I have used the work of anthropologists such as for example, Margaret Mead for understanding generational differences and their attitudes towards cultural change, Mary Douglas for interpreting the body narrative, social theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau and David Harvey to analyze the sociology of urban and social spaces and practices, not to forget the importance of socio-linguistics in the novels I am working on.

In James Clifford's 1986 collection of essays *Writing Culture* he makes the polemic claims on the need to open up new spaces and possibilities for understanding anthropology. In the past, the study struggled to defend its place in the academy as a (social) science as opposed to an art. Literature, the art of fictional and figurative writing stood for everything that was not objective, factual or plainly written. But the difficulty in formally separating one discipline from another allied to the values of trespassing formal academic boundaries especially in the fields of social sciences and literature has altered certain established perceptions. "Ethnography is an emergent interdisciplinary phenomenon. Its authority and rhetoric have spread to many fields where "culture" is a newly problematic object of description and critique" (Clifford *Culture* 3).

Writers of fiction don't construct worlds from nothing. Ideas are born of personal experience, individual histories, observation, discourse, facts and social practices among other external input which compose the backbone of a story. But they then rely on internal processes such as memory, emotion, imagination, subjectivity and perception to reconstruct the world aesthetically through the text. The narrative therefore becomes the virtual space through which social practices and individual experience are rendered meaningful.

An ethnographer on the other hand, attempts to reconstructs social and cultural practices captured through interpretative observation as authentically as humanly possible. In the process of doing so, however, some emotional and subjective charge gets caught up in the act. As the anthropologist or ethnographer writes his text, some degree of the literary art will be present in his work. And this has been one of the main

arguments against considering anthropology a science. But according to anthropologist Paul Stoller in his Texas lecture “Writing for the Future” the successful work of an ethnographer relies on the vivid and honest portrayal or re-creation of three fundamental elements of human life: place, dialogue and character. He says ethnography “(In a sense, writing a text for the future) is as a whole, a combination of evocation of place, the sonorous representation of dialogue and the sensitive portrayal of character.”<sup>1</sup> In doing so, the anthropologist is creatively reformulating the world.

A writer too can never be totally disassociated from his social and cultural conditions. The sociology of human relations, of everyday life and its practice, and of the constantly evolving traditions is represented even though unconsciously in fiction. Society is constructed through text. When writing, writers are not only narrating the world, but also talking a little about themselves and about the cultural context and individual circumstances they are coming from. Narratives reveal truths about their authors and authors become participant “indigenous ethnographers”. Roy, being a political activist against the effects of capitalism and globalization on Indian society and economy depicts and denounces this in her novel. Jhumpa Lahiri, author of the 2003 novel *The Namesake* reveals the experiences of first and second generation Indian immigrant communities in the United States of which the author herself is a part of. Places, characters and dialogues are evoked, represented and portrayed as words and the text become livable spaces.

In the same way but shifting the focus to anthropology again, human relations and how they are expressed through social practices become the cultural and literary metaphors that lead to an understanding of everyday life. As ethnographers observe and make sense of social practices, they are involved in the decoding of cultural metaphors, but simultaneously responsible for the creation of literary metaphors through which cultural forms will be transported to the reader. In Cliffords words, “Literary processes — metaphor, figuration, narrative — affect the ways cultural

---

<sup>1</sup> (<http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/587>. Accessed: 29/04/2013)

phenomena are registered, from the first jotted “observations”, to the completed book, to the ways these configurations “make sense” in determined acts of reading.” (Clifford *Culture* 4)

So not only in the metaphors and imagery, descriptive passages evocative of place, character portrayal and dialogue, but also in how the reader will interpret these words according to individual circumstance and context, very close links can be found between anthropology and literature.

Cultural anthropology, as most critical theory, has evolved and undergone processes of transformation throughout the decades. The methodologies and functional practices have evolved since Structuralism, though even Levi Strauss, the father of modern anthropology wrote about the value of the story in his *Mythologiques*. What’s more, societies have undergone thorough changes with decolonization, post-colonialism and now even further as the result of migration, transnationalism, multiculturalism and further implicated by globalization. The more the world becomes aware of the changing nature and vulnerability of cultural forms, the more the anthropologist and the writer have to adapt to the reality of contemporary society. These movements and social changes have not only affected anthropology, but literature as well. So both fields each in its own more scientific or more artistic domains, needs to pose the question of how it is to adapt for a future socio-cultural context.

Paul Stoller asks how an anthropologist can write for the future. To do so, the scholar must break free of academic constraints, write a text that is timeless and that will engage the reader because of the personal qualities of the writing. Clifford Geertz makes the interesting and provocative claim that an anthropologist’s most powerful tool is his “in-wrought perception” which brings his work closer to literature than science.

Gaining some sort of entrée into various people’s ways of being in the world demands not only that you have a reasonably distinct sensibility but also that you know what sensibility is. This is not a job for the disembodied observer, and the methodologically overprepared need not apply. It is the encounter — sometimes the collision, occasionally an embrace, often a confusion and non-plus, a near miss — between your sense of how matters stand, how, as we say, things should go, and the sense of those whom you are



struggling to understand that provides the basis for whatever account of their lives you are able to give. (Clifford. "A Strange Romance" 29)

Likewise, James Clifford challenges the idea that anthropological writing has to be reduced to method, analysis and objective theory by stating that:

[T]his ideology has crumbled. [The essays in his book *Writing Culture*] see culture as composed of seriously contested codes and representations; they assume that the poetic and the political are inseparable, that science is in, not above, historical and linguistic processes. They assume that academic and literary genres interpenetrate and that the writing of cultural descriptions is properly experimental and ethical. Their focus on text making and rhetoric serves to highlight the constructed artificial nature of cultural accounts. (Clifford, *Culture* 2)

In these anthropologists' view the main aim of the discipline and its effectiveness is not necessarily to produce abstract laws that define mankind or give us knowledge of "the other" from a distance, but to provide the reader with a full, engaging experience of another's existence, whether the subject is the next door neighbour, Yanomami or a Yanomami neighbour. So the text is not telling a story or a practice, but in fact, re-creating it, making it happen:

This mutation makes the test habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient. Renters make comparable changes in an apartment they furnish with their acts and memories; as do speakers, in the language into which they insert both the messages of their native tongue and, through their accent, through their own "turns of phrases," etc., their own history; as do pedestrians, in the street they fill with the forests of their desires and goals. In the same way the users of social codes turn them into metaphors and ellipses of their own quests. (de Certeau, *Practice*: xxi-xxii)

So the anthropologist, like the writer of fiction will adapt what he is writing about to his own experience and the reader will further interpret the text.

The narrative is what Stoller calls “living material”. Life, as he says, “does not go in a straight line, from point A to point B, although many times our writing about life goes from point A to point B.”<sup>2</sup> Experience cannot be written about in a simple or straightforward way, especially when we are dealing with human social behaviour. Interpretative, subjective, creative or imaginative qualities are involved in the process. Furthermore, our memory and emotions are aroused as we are transported to another time, another place, a different reality which will never be perceived in the same way by two different people. So we are made aware of “the utility of literary modes for accomplishing what forms of conventional ethnography does not: injecting a personal, multi-vocal, creative, and emotional element into anthropological writing.”<sup>3</sup> Literary practice provides the means by which anthropology can free itself from the constraints of purely empirical analysis to a more interpretative and habitable enterprise.

One further point on the fusion of the two disciplines is on the power that literature has to bring the private into the public, to make the invisible visible and to turn the no one into a someone, an anyone or in a more sociological sense, into an everyone; to give voice to the voiceless. New spaces for representation are opened up through the text just as new possibilities for cultural interpretation are made available. Anthropology too reveals silences and opens up new grounds for exploring human social behaviour and interaction.

The debate that I have been developing in this paper, stresses the importance of breaking down formerly established disciplinary boundaries to open up new discourses where creative and aesthetic practices work hand-in-hand with empirical strategies for exploring the world, its form and practices.

As I near the end of my discussion, I would like to quote Amitav Ghosh’s from an interview entitled: “Anthropology and Fiction”. Being a writer and trained anthropologist he emphasizes the value of bringing together the two disciplines together in his work. According to Amitav

---

<sup>2</sup> (<http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/587>. Accessed: 29/04/2013)

<sup>3</sup> (<http://www.culanth.org/?q=node/587>. Accessed: 29/04/2013)

Ghosh and from the examples in his fiction, anthropologists and writers in their art and practice, and anthropology and literature as academic and creative fields, have only to benefit from each other:

The one most important thing I learnt from anthropology (especially fieldwork) was the art of observation: how to watch interactions between people, how to listen to conversations, how to look for hidden patterns. This has always stayed with me and has influenced everything I've done, especially my journalism. The other thing anthropology did for me was that it took my interest in language in new directions. I became very interested in linguistic anthropology and especially in sociolinguistics. These interests have also stayed with me and have greatly enriched my novels. (Stankiewicz, "Anthropology and Fiction" 541)

In conclusion, is "a theory of narration [is] indissociable from a theory of practices, as its condition, as well as its production?" (de Certeau, *Practice* 78) Fiction writing is an art which displays literary, imaginative, creative, visual, and linguistic as well as many other aesthetic qualities. But it is also a "practice" in that it is not only telling a story, but "making" it, just as anthropology through writing makes it possible for the reader to experience the life of another cultural group. In character description, the re-creation of dialogue, the construction of social interaction, and the depiction of cultural environments it is hard to separate literature from social experience and theory. Anthropology which is a study that aims at reconstructing the daily practices of cultural groups through writing inevitably relies on literary strategies. Literature and anthropology are indissociable in that they provide each other with the essential ingredients for the practice of both disciplines. To take the discussion a little further, this debate raises the interesting points that we have as much to learn about the world from fiction, as to accept the vulnerability and subjectivity of narrativity in scientific discourse. Perhaps "Narrativity haunts such discourses", in de Certeau's words, making it difficult to accept their objective qualities, but then again by succumbing to, in Geertz's words, the "strange romance" between anthropology and literature, new and valuable approaches to research, writing and social practices are born.

## Works Cited

- de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1984.
- Clifford, James; Marcus, George E. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1986.
- Geertz, Clifford. "A Strange Romance: Anthropology and Literature" *Profession* (2003): 28-36. Modern Language Association.
- Stankiewicz, Damien. "Anthropology and Fiction: An Interview with Amitav Ghosh." *Cultural Anthropology* 27.3 (2012): 535-541.
- Stoller, Paul. "Writing for the Future" (Public Lecture). *Sensorium Seminar Series: Anthropology and the Senses* (2012) University of Texas.

### ABSTRACT

In his 2003 article, “A Strange Romance: Anthropology and Literature” Clifford Geertz discusses the relationship between these two disciplines. Geertz understands that anthropology cannot be solely based on a cold scientific analysis of people and customs as it is almost impossible to perform cultural interpretation absent of subjectivity. The anthropologist’s interpretation adds a touch of creativity to ethnography, bringing it closer to fictional narratives. He also points out the risk of anthropologists losing credibility and objectivity by allowing themselves this subjectivity.

The anthropologist uses his/her perspective and interpretation to construct a narrative. As every custom, ritual or tradition is charged with metaphor, symbolism, plot and other stylistic features of literature, it becomes subject to many possible readings and meanings through which other narratives are re-created.

For the purpose of this paper I am fundamentally concerned with exploring the “romance” between anthropology and literature from a theoretical perspective. In my thesis I will be further extending this theoretical reading in a more thorough analysis of the novels of Arundhati Roy and Kiran Desai as examples of narratives that bridge these two disciplines.

### KEYWORDS

Anthropology; Literature; Narrative; Interpretation; Cultural Practice

### RESUMO

Num artigo de 2003, “A Strange Romance: Anthropology and Literature” Clifford Geertz fala da relação entre a antropologia e a literatura. Geertz defende que a antropologia não pode ser baseada numa análise fria e científica de pessoas e costumes pois é impossível conseguir uma interpretação cultural com a total ou parcial ausência de subjectividade. Com a análise do antropólogo, uma etnografia transforma-se numa narrativa criativa que se assemelha à literatura. No entanto,

Geertz também alerta para o risco que antropólogos correm de perderem credibilidade e objectividade ao permitir-se essa liberdade de subjectividade.

A partir de uma interpretação, o antropólogo constrói uma narrativa. Todos os costumes, rituais e tradições estão carregados de metáforas, simbolismo, enredo e outros aspectos literários estando sujeitos a variadas e muitas interpretações a partir de qual outras narrativas são construídas.

Neste artigo vou explorar o “romance” entre a antropologia e a literatura a partir de uma análise teórica. Essa relação será estendida aos romances de Arundhati Roy e da Kiran Desai na minha tese como exemplos de narrativas que estabelecem a ligação entre estas duas disciplinas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Antropologia; literatura; narrativa; interpretação; prática cultural

---

# The Anglo-American World in TEFL in Portuguese Secondary Education

*Fernanda Luísa da Silva Feneja*

ULICES – University of Lisbon Center for English Studies





# The Anglo-American World in TEFL in Portuguese Secondary Education

## 1. Introduction

The year 1607 can be held to mark the birth of a new stage in the history of the English language, laying the foundations for its subsequent expansion worldwide and to the later phenomenon of its globalization as we know it nowadays. Although the history of the English language is, from its earlier roots, linked with geographical expansion and migration, namely to Wales, Scotland and Ireland under Norman power<sup>1</sup>, that movement overseas was pivotal in such a process. With the first permanent settlement by English people in the newfound land of America, named Jamestown after King James I, English became autonomous from its country of origin. The succeeding development and consolidation of the British Empire, which reached its zenith during the Victorian Age, ruling one quarter of the earth's surface, further spurred such a process of linguistic expansion. Because of this extraordinary spread to the whole world, English is nowadays an official language or a language with a special status in at least seventy five countries, ranking fourth in the list of the most spoken languages in the globe as a native language, spoken by around 375 million people, while around 750 million people are believed to speak it as a foreign language.<sup>2</sup> Its geographical spread led to the birth of a

---

<sup>1</sup> Graddol, Leith & Swann (1996), consider the movement of people from England to Wales, to Ireland and to some parts of Scotland as a first diaspora.

<sup>2</sup> These are the official figures published by the British Council in its official webpage, based mainly on David Crystal's and David Graddol's seminal works: *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *English as a global language*, Cambridge University Press, 1997) and *The Future of*

significant number of types or varieties, partly born out of creoles.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the plural form “Englishes” has been grammatically acknowledged and adopted by linguistic studies.

## 2. Language and Culture

This process of expansion and change, however, goes beyond the realm of language, inasmuch as a particular language cannot be separated from the culture where it was generated. The interdependent relation between language and culture has long been claimed, most notably by Sapir and later by Whorf, who both pointed out the crucial nature of language patterns within a group or community in the shaping of our mind; in turn, language is the key tool by which we organize the world around us (Hall 18). Though in different approaches, the sociocultural background of language was also acknowledged both by Mikhail Bakhtin, who pinpointed the underlying connection between each word and its social context, and by Wittgenstein, who highlighted the conventionalized patterns of communicative action within a culture group (Hall 8, 12).

In her study of language and culture in the context of teaching, Joan Hall’s synthesis of this sociocultural dimension of language is further enriched by a dynamic conception of language: “Culture is seen to reside in the meanings and shapes that our linguistic resources have accumulated from their past uses and with which we approach and work through our communicative activities” (16). Therefore, the concept of cultural identity relies also on the power of language itself: “At any communicative moment, through our linguistic actions, we choose particular ways to construe our worlds, to induce others to see our worlds in these ways, as we create and sustain particular kinds of relationships with them and thus make relevant some as opposed to other identities” (Hall 16). In addition, as such iden-

---

*English?* (London, British Council, 1997), respectively. Tom McArthur (*The English Languages*, Cambridge University Press, 1998) also provides relevant data in this field.

<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, British English itself underwent a few changes as for instance the borrowing of foreign words, such as the words shampoo or pyjamas, of Hindi origin, or tycoon, of Japanese origin.

tities reflect our status of members of multiple groups and communities, language goes beyond its strictly linguistic limits, contributing as it does to the construction of memory and forms of representation. Hence, language is sensitive not only to personal but to cultural identities also (Sumara 85-97).

The particular relation between language and cultural identity has been largely addressed in literature. Major Portuguese writers excelled in this approach, such as Fernando Pessoa, who wrote that his homeland was the Portuguese language<sup>4</sup>, or Virgílio Ferreira, who linked the Portuguese language with the primeval, core role of the sea in Portuguese culture - in his brilliant words, our language enables us to see the world and shapes our worldview, our ways of feeling, our thoughts<sup>5</sup>.

### 3. The Portuguese Syllabus of English (Secondary Level)

The recognition of this important relationship between language and culture also underlies the rationale for the Portuguese Curriculum of English, which highlights the function of language learning in the process of students' global development and frames the learning of the language with a sociocultural background of major significance (Moreira et al 2003).

As noted above, the spread of the English language is in keeping with the major role of both Britain and of the United States as superpowers, economically and politically. The discussion of phenomena such as globalization, assimilation and acculturation versus the persistence of cultural roots and identity all belong in this process, but, regardless of the controversy that such issues may trigger, the impact of British and American culture worldwide cannot be overshadowed. Therefore, when we talk about Anglo-American Studies, it is mostly the idea of Britain and of the United States that prevails, although current research on language and culture, and

---

<sup>4</sup> In Portuguese: "A minha pátria é a língua portuguesa".

<sup>5</sup> "Uma língua é o lugar donde se vê o Mundo e em que se traçam os limites do nosso pensar e sentir. Da minha língua vê-se o mar. Da minha língua ouve-se o seu rumor, como da de outros se ouvirá o da floresta ou o silêncio do deserto. Por isso a voz do mar foi a da nossa inquietação" (*À Voz do Mar*, 1998)

specifically on the English language, has been giving increasing attention to other English-speaking countries, namely Canada or Australia.

The scope of Anglo-American Studies includes fields as diverse as culture, history, linguistics, arts and literature, formally organized in graduate and post-graduate courses worldwide. At secondary level, issues of that scope have been systematically included in the curricula of English.

A brief overview of the English Curriculum in Portuguese secondary education might be useful at this point (Moreira et al 2003). The content areas are organized in three major inter-related categories: text interpretation and production, socio-cultural component and English language. Leaving aside the theoretical framework of teaching a foreign language that also informs the syllabus, as it would go beyond the scope of this essay, it is important to note that the cultural background of the main English-speaking countries provides core material for all three areas, here briefly outlined:

(1) text interpretation and production - the four skills are approached and practised through different types of texts that illustrate various speech macro functions and communicative intentions;

(2) socio-cultural component - thematic scope, covering the topics:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 10th year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “A world of many languages”;</li> <li>• “The technological world”;</li> <li>• “Media and global communication”;</li> <li>• “Young people in a global age”.</li> </ul>         |
| 11th year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The world around us”;</li> <li>• “Young people and consumerism”;</li> <li>• “The world of work”;</li> <li>• “A world of many cultures”.</li> </ul>                           |
| 12th year | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “The English Language in the world”;</li> <li>• “Citizenship and multiculturalism”;</li> <li>• “Democracy in a global era”;</li> <li>• “Culture, art and society”.</li> </ul> |

and

(3) English language - use of language, including the word, the sentence, and prosody.

Considering the main purpose of this paper, which aims to reflect on the role of Anglo-American culture and history in the context of the English syllabus at secondary level in Portuguese schools, it is important

to ponder how the three major curricular components we have outlined above address or reflect the Anglo-American world.

For instance, in terms of the English Language, we can refer to examples such as differences in terms of grammar, vocabulary, accent, pronunciation or spelling among the different varieties of English (British English, American English, Australian or New Zealand English, Canadian English and so forth). Even if these aspects may fall into the scope of linguistics, their cultural background is often examined, exploring particular aspects and, often, enlarging students' previous cultural repertoire, acquired through the constant exposure to artifacts and to varied expressions of popular culture specific of these countries, through media, cinema, music and the internet. Reggae music, for example, constitutes a popular vehicle with young people/learners to illustrate both Caribbean English, in its grammatical and lexical deviations, and to reflect on thematic issues such as role models or the importance of music in the spread of values.<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, such a topic, despite its predominantly linguistic character, also promotes students' critical thinking by introducing certain topics for reflection, such as the coexistence of different types of English, the prevalence of some of them over others or the democratization and the open character of the English language as a *lingua franca*<sup>7</sup>.

As far as the socio-cultural component is concerned, it is particularly relevant to note how the cultural and historical patrimony both of Britain and of the United States, which pervades the syllabus's thematic range, converges with the humanist and democratic principles and aims that inform the curricular programme. In fact, these are firmly rooted in the assumption of a multilingual and multicultural Europe, where language learning goes beyond its communicative vocation, promoting an education oriented to citizenship, democracy and humanism (Moreira 2).

---

<sup>6</sup> These are part of the 10th year syllabus, in its sociocultural component.

<sup>7</sup> The importance of the varieties of English in the TEFL is discussed and defended by Raquel Cortez, who emphasizes the contribution of this topic to the enlargement of students' linguistic diversity and also to the development of their cultural tolerance and competence (*O Padrão e as outras variedades no ensino de ILE em Portugal: O caso do 12.º ano*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Lisboa: Universidade Católica, 2002).

Such principles are also rooted in the European approach to language learning, as determined by the Council of Europe, namely with the creation of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), whose final version was published in 2001 by the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe. Besides its homogenizing, normative role in terms of linguistic and communicative competence, this document established the link between language learning and cross-cultural awareness, reinforcing the importance of language learning in the construction of European Citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Such an approach implies that language teaching should focus on cultures associated with the target languages so as to achieve humanistic goals, as understanding people of other societies and cultures is believed to increase tolerance and reduce prejudice (Aase et al 5).

Considering this ideological framework, it is important to mention that the study of the languages and cultures of the Anglo-American countries, namely of Britain and of the United States, provide subject-matters that converge with it. For example, the ideals stated in the American Declaration of Independence (1776) and in the American Constitution (signed in 1787) persist as enduring beacons of present-day democracy, rooted in the British parliamentary tradition or, even long before, in the proclamation of the Magna Carta in 1215, which, though initially intended to find a solution to a political crisis by establishing limits to the king's authority, is widely regarded as the root of modern civil rights and the inspiring source for North American, British and other European countries' Constitutions.

The universality of such principles has also been a source of inspiration at both European and world levels - the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), in the aftermath of World War II, as a formal, consensual tool to preclude the repetition of those atrocities, for instance, relies significantly on many articles of the American Constitution. It is also against this ideological background that the discussion of the constraints, flaws and paradoxes of contemporary society is promoted in the syllabus,

---

<sup>8</sup> The CEFR was developed, precisely, within the scope of the project «Language Learning for European Citizenship» (1989-1996).

thereby aiming to trigger young people's development, nurturing responsible, critical, tolerant citizenship, an idea primarily stated in the preamble to the programme: making contact with other languages and cultures contributes to the construction of students' identities, while language learning itself enhances an analytical, questioning, critical attitude as regards society, thus helping youngsters become active and intervening citizens in their future lives (Moreira 2). This idea is also expressed as one of the general objectives of the syllabus: promoting education for citizenship, fostering a culture of liberty, participation, cooperation, reflection and evaluation and encouraging attitudes of personal responsibility and social intervention (6).

One example of this is the study of "Democracy in a global era", in the twelfth year, which involves the study of historical episodes, of social events, of political ideologies or regimes, of defenders of human rights such as Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks or Mahatma Gandhi, to cite but a few, and most naturally of the corresponding historical and cultural contexts. Another relevant example is the topic "A world of many cultures", in which students reflect on the phenomena of mass immigration, multiculturalism and xenophobia and other forms of discrimination, not only in British and in American societies, but also in other English-speaking parts of the world; and, within another study unit, environmental threats to our world may bring to light the action of prominent figures, sometimes controversial, from Al Gore to film and pop and rock stars. These examples, and the last one in particular, conform, too, to the idea stated in the Syllabus of English (2003) that the subject matter to be taught within each level of English must focus on the increasingly complex ongoing social, cultural, technological and economic changes in contemporary society (Moreira et al 21).

As in many other topics, the thematic approach converges with the promotion of a spirit of multicultural tolerance and democratic citizenship, informed by historical evidence and knowledge, on the one hand, and by a constant method of questioning, reflection and critical discussion, on the other, as mentioned above. As the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe stated about the characteristics of modern languages, besides promoting communication between people with different mother-tongues, they combine humanistic purposes with utilitarian or pragmatic ones, so as to meet present-day needs of global communication at a variety of levels

of human life (Aase et al, 4). Thus, the teaching of modern languages is inevitably more comprehensive, not only in scope and purposes, but also in terms of teaching strategies and tools.

Additionally, we should not overlook the relevance of the resources used for these teaching purposes. Course books at secondary level include a variety of authentic resources that range from newspapers and magazine articles, information from reliable websites, to book excerpts and so on. What is more, in the technological era we live in, information and research are permanently available and thus consistently integrated in the teaching of English, as a way to develop digital skills and to enlarge students' knowledge of the world around them. The authenticity and timeliness of the teaching materials is precisely one of the aspects highlighted in the syllabus, among the principles required to develop multicultural awareness and exchange (which is one of the stated aims of the topic "Sociocultural component" - Moreira 24).

#### **4. The role of Reading and of the Literary Text in TEFL and in the Portuguese Syllabus of English**

This variety of resources available and well-suited to teaching purposes correlates with the first area of the curriculum (text production and interpretation), which it defines as its main focus (Moreira et al 39). Despite being considered in the syllabus as an autonomous content area, it must be acknowledged that "text production and interpretation" serves mainly as the fundamental tool that enables the study of the other two content areas. Reading probably assumes the role of dominant skill, even when taken in an integrated framework, and the written text is the prime teaching material. A random look at a number of course books would provide immediate evidence of this, although recent works have been increasingly paying more attention to the balance of the four skills. Therefore, using a comprehensive diversity of text types meets the variety of communicative situations and contexts.

Extensive reading, whether of literary or of non-literary texts, is referred to in the syllabus within the scope of text types. The syllabus further clarifies that the concept of extensive reading does not refer to the literary text only, relying rather on text diversity and extension and aiming



at promoting general understanding and reading habits (Moreira et al 18). As a result of this, the reading of complete literary works of diverse genres (most of these falling into the category of extensive reading) should be implemented gradually in terms of complexity, according to students' age and maturity level, since such a type of reading also aims to promote their critical thinking (Moreira et al 19).

Although the literary text assumes particular relevance in the Languages and Literatures course, the extensive reading of short stories is a minimum requirement in all courses. Primarily based on the range of topics covered by the socio-cultural component, with which they are obliged to comply, suggested works in the curriculum are by authors as diverse as Maya Angelou, Nadine Gordimer, Stephen King, Alice Munro, James Baldwin, Truman Capote, Alice Walker, Graham Greene, or David Lodge, to mention only a few.

Apparently, this wide range of reading possibilities suggests the relevance ascribed to the literary text in the programme. However, its transversal character makes it subsidiary to other specific components of the syllabus, namely the "sociocultural" and the "text interpretation and production" ones, as mentioned earlier, thus undermining its autonomy. Because of this, the potential of the literary text, and of extensive reading in general, as consistent working tools in class, gets somewhat overshadowed by the diverse requirements of the programme. Even so, understanding extensive texts, both literary and non-literary, is an explicit goal set up within the framework of competences that an English learner in Portuguese secondary education is expected to acquire, according to the syllabus (Moreira et al 10, 11).

Yet, using literary texts in the realm of study material of TEFL further poses the question of the relevance of literature as an essential element in the already mentioned and acknowledged combination of language and culture. Even if it is not the aim of this article to reflect on the social role of literature or, conversely, on the "art for art's sake" theory, it is important to mention that art, and literature in particular, may either reflect or provide insight into a given culture and, even if unintentionally, suggest its author's views. Hence, the aesthetic object (in this case, the literary text), as Madelénat contends in his study of literature and society, does not exist outside the real (104). Although the literary text may surpass

its space and time perimeters and be readable for a number of other reasons (its subject-matter, its polysemy, its universal character, or the aesthetic experience it allows, for example), it somehow, and to varying degrees, depending on the genre, anchors in the empirical, historical, chronological world, often reading as a testament to cultural reality.

In addition to its relation with culture, the literary text is (in)valuable as a language resource, due to its paramount potential of linguistic possibilities, strictly linked, as Isabel Fernandes mentions, to the diversity of experiences that it represents (31). Brumfit and Carter, in their study of the relation between language, literature and education, state the self-sufficiency of the literary text as a “language artefact” (3), a general premise for its use in language teaching.

The value of using the literary text in TEFL has been widely studied, especially from the nineteen eighties onwards. Among the advantages most often pointed out are those related with language improvement and accuracy, integrated development of the four skills, promotion of critical thought and deep insight, and cultural enrichment (Collie and Slater, 1987; Maley, 1989, Brumfit and Carter, 2000, Sumara, 2002, Hi mano lu, 2005). The relevance of using the literary text relies on its very nature, which Maley (1989) classifies according to the following items: universality (covering experience potentially applicable to all human beings); non-triviality (it is authentic and genuine); personal relevance (enabling the reader to connect it with his/her own experience); variety (diversity of subject-matter); interest (it is intrinsically interesting and hence able to engage the readers’ interest); economy and suggestive power (it fosters further ideas and discussion); and ambiguity (diversity of interpretations and promotion of exchange of ideas) (Hi mano lu, 56).

In order to argue in favour of the use of literature in the context of English learning as a second language, Khatib suggests a more comprehensive list, combining both the features of the literary text and its practical benefits in terms of language learning. Relying on a number of major studies of this issue, namely Widdowson (1986), Brumfit and Carter (1986), Van (2009), Ghosn (2002), McRay (2011), and also Maley, he puts forward the following: authenticity, motivation, cultural/intercultural awareness and globalization, intensive and extensive reading practice, sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge, grammar and vocabulary knowledge, language

skills, emotional intelligence and critical thinking (202-3).

This model is particularly relevant for the aims of this essay, because in addition to the specific aspects of language learning listed, it encompasses the sociocultural dimension and skills related to education for citizenship (critical thinking, for example), which are central to the rationale of the Portuguese Curriculum of English, as mentioned earlier. Hence, the relevance of using the literary text in the context of language learning relies globally on its particular nature, including aspects related to its sociocultural value, to its linguistic potential, and to its interpretative and aesthetic dimensions, as well as to the humanist and citizenship qualities that it may boost.

In terms of Anglo-American Studies, we come to the conclusion that the approach to the socio-cultural and linguistic components of the Portuguese syllabi of English, at secondary level, could be successfully based on a much more intensive and extensive use of the literary text, taken as an intersection field of all three components of the syllabus: text interpretation and production, sociocultural themes and the English language. Making the reading of a few literary texts compulsory, in each level, from the wide range of suggestions given in the programme, could add to the accomplishment of such goals.

A few drawbacks must be mentioned, though. In order to comply with all the components of the programme in a diversity of regional, social and cultural contexts, present-day teaching of English at secondary level has to continually manage the guidelines set up in that official document, guaranteeing that a common core, as extensive as possible, reaches all types of learners. The choice of course books is, to a great extent, determined by these different needs, and because most of them nowadays excel in diversity, materials and supplementary technological tools, teachers' range of options in terms of texts becomes, paradoxically, more limited, as they get more and more confined to the adopted course book. The high price of course books, in addition to secondary education in Portugal having become compulsory, thwarts the acquisition of other books by students. However, making the most of the short stories already included in course books themselves could pave the way to a more consistent use of literary texts, thus providing a larger, more comprehensive representation and discussion of issues of the Anglo-American world in class, as well as of language itself.

## 5. Conclusion

As stated above, the syllabus's thematic scope converges with and covers several aspects of Anglo-American Studies. In fact, we can even consider that the richness, diversity, complexity, the often paradoxical nature of the sociocultural history and identity of the Anglo-American world provide subject matter that fully fulfills the goals and objectives of the Portuguese syllabi, both in terms of language perspectives and of the relation to students' global education for citizenship. To a significant extent, the Anglo-American socio-cultural component of the programme becomes universal and the value of its learning and knowledge is restated through the many possibilities for reflection both on past and on contemporary time that they keep offering.

Using the literary text more systematically would contribute to learners' enrichment as regards all these aspects, as a primary source full of linguistic, sociocultural and aesthetic potential. Additionally, such an approach would also strengthen students' critical thinking (an aspect we mentioned above under Maley's headings "Economy and Suggestive Power" and "Ambiguity", and also formally assumed in the syllabus) and contribute to the creation of "deep"<sup>9</sup> learners, capable of thinking, rethinking, of questioning and of fully participating as citizens in a world of which formal syllabi provide them with an open, extensive, challenging, but necessarily incomplete view. Together with the vast array of resources available today, it would give them a key tool, a prime, authentic material (or artifact, in Brumfit's terminology), to access the Anglo-American experience in its multiple representations.

## Works Cited

Aase, Laila, et al, "Foreign languages - modern and classical". Council of Europe: Language Policy Division. [www.coe.int/lang](http://www.coe.int/lang). 28 April 2014.

---

<sup>9</sup> Deep learning, opposing surface learning, focuses mainly on "what is signified" and on the ability to relate previous knowledge to new knowledge (Marten and Säljö, 1976; Ramsden, 1992).

- British Council. "The English Language". <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm>. 10 April 2013.
- Brumfit, Christopher, and R. A. Carter, *Literature and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Brunel, Pierre, and Yves Chevrel. *Compêndio de Literatura Comparada*. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2004.
- Collie, J., & Slater, S. *Literature in the Language Classroom*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Fernandes, Isabel, "Literatura: A (In)disciplina na Intersecção das Artes e dos Saberes". *Cadernos de Anglística* 16. Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa, 2011.
- Graddol, D., Leith, D. and Swann, J. (eds) *English: History, Diversity and Change*. London, Routledge/Milton Keynes: The Open University, 1996.
- Hall, Joan Kelly, *Teaching and Researching: Language and Culture*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2002
- Hi mano lu, Murat. "Teaching English Through Literature". *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies* Vol.1, No.1 (April 2005). 53-66.
- Khatib, Mohammad. "Literature in EFL/ESL Classroom". *English Language Teaching* Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 2011). 201-208.
- Maley, A. "Down from the pedestal: Literature as resource". *Literature and the learner: methodological approaches*. Eds. R. Carter, R. Walker & C. Brumfit (pp. 1-9). Modern English Publications and the British Council, 1989. 1-9.
- Madelénat, Daniel. "Literatura e Sociedade". *Compêndio de Literatura Comparada*. Eds. Pierre Brunel and Yves Chevrel. Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 2004. 101-132.
- Marton, Ference F. and Säljö, Roger "On Qualitative Differences in Learning-2: Outcome as a function of the learner's conception of the task". *British Journal of Educational Psychology*. 46 (1976): 115-27.
- Moreira, António Augusto, et al. "Programa de Inglês. Nível de Continuação. 10.º, 11.º e 12.º anos". Ministério da Educação. Departamento do Ensino Secundário, 2003.
- Sumara, Dennis J. *Why Reading Literature in School still Matters*. Imagination, Interpretation, Insight. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002.
- Ramsden, Paul *Learning to Teach in Higher Education* London: Routledge, 1992.

### ABSTRACT

Anglo-American culture pervades the Portuguese national syllabus for the teaching of English as a foreign language throughout the seven or eight years of its obligatory school study, ranging from very simple references to common, accepted, often stereotyped behaviors or traditions, in the early years, to far more complex issues in the upper levels, such as, to name but two, the Civil Rights Movement in the US or multiculturalism as a trait of British society.

Primarily acknowledging the bond between language and culture, this essay aims to reflect on the role of Anglo-American culture and history in the broader context of the English syllabus at secondary level in Portuguese schools. Furthermore, it takes into account the current approaches that reinforce the contribution of Anglo-American studies to the achievement of the aims informing the rationale of the official programmes, in particular, those related to cross-cultural awareness, citizenship and tolerance. The contribution of the literary text to the teaching of English as a second language, namely as a tool for looking into Anglo-American culture and society, is also considered.

The discussion of such issues might hopefully contribute to the debate over the current impact of Anglo-American studies in Portugal and the possibilities and paths lying ahead.

### KEYWORDS

Anglo-American culture; language; literary text; curricula; TEFL

### RESUMO

A cultura anglo-americana permeia o programa nacional para o ensino do Inglês como língua estrangeira ao longo dos sete ou oito anos de estudo obrigatório, desde simples referências a comportamentos comuns, aceites e frequentemente estereotipados, nos anos de iniciação, a questões mais complexas nos níveis superiores, como, por exemplo, o movimento de direitos cívicos nos EUA ou o multiculturalismo como traço da sociedade britânica.

Assumindo a relação entre língua e cultura, este ensaio procura reflectir sobre o papel da cultura e história anglo-americanas no contexto alargado do programa de Inglês no ensino secundário português. Procura também tomar em consideração as abordagens que reforçam a contribuição dos Estudos Anglo-Americanos na concretização dos objectivos definidos pelos programas oficiais, em particular os referentes à consciência inter-cultural, à cidadania e à tolerância. O contributo do texto literário no ensino do Inglês como língua estrangeira, nomeadamente enquanto forma de olhar a cultura e sociedade anglo-americanas, é também tomada em consideração.

Espera-se que a discussão destas questões possa contribuir para o debate sobre o impacto dos Estudos Anglo-Americanos em Portugal, bem como as possibilidades e caminhos a tomar no futuro.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Cultura anglo-americana; Língua; Texto Literário; Currículo; TEFL

---





# Um Romantismo particular: John Keats e Fernando Pessoa

*Ana M. Ferraria*

Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa



# Um Romantismo particular: John Keats e Fernando Pessoa

## 1. Fernando Pessoa e John Keats

John Keats e Fernando Pessoa foram dois poetas maiores das literaturas inglesa e portuguesa, no início dos séculos XIX e XX, respectivamente, sendo que nenhum dos dois ficou especialmente conhecido pelos poemas épicos em que se centra este trabalho, a saber, *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion* e *Mensagem*, todas obras inacabadas ou problemáticas. Analisar conjuntamente as tentativas épicas destes poetas, principalmente assumindo o término das épicas clássicas com *Paradise Lost*, poderia parecer inusitado, não fora a referência do próprio Pessoa aos poemas de Keats.

## 2. John Keats e *Hyperion*

A falta de grandes temas épicos ou a falta de heroísmo na sociedade vigente são apontadas por Walter Bate como as causas para o declínio entre o Renascimento Inglês e a época imediatamente anterior ao Romantismo. Os poemas longos são associados à épica e aos textos clássicos, o que origina a diminuição da sua importância, ou mesmo o seu esquecimento, para os novos poetas. Pelo contrário, o jovem Keats, propõe-se a escrever um poema longo no estilo antigo que intitula de “teste de invenção”: *Endymion*. Para escrevê-lo, Keats viaja pelo reino na posse de obras de Shakespeare, e é precisamente num retrato que encontra do mesmo e em *King Lear* que irá repetidamente procurar consolo e inspiração. Cresce nele o gosto pelo drama, pelo diálogo, assim como o desejo de criar obras que permitam mostrar as personagens em acção e não apenas descrevê-las, porque “descriptions are bad in all times.” Como consequência da leitura de *An Essay on The Principles of Human Action* de Hazlitt, onde a teoria do

“amor-próprio” inato é contrariada, Keats começa a definir e a reflectir sobre os seguintes termos: “Negative Capability” (ego negativo que implica um uso de esforço reduzido na presença de incertezas, mistérios ou dúvidas), “Man of Achievement” (aquele que possui a “Negative Capability”) e “Man of Power” (o contrário de “Man of Achievement”, ou seja, o homem romântico que possui um grande sentimento de egotismo).

No início de 1818, Keats inicia *Hyperion*, num estilo mais “nu e grego”. Apollo é o herói dos deuses olímpicos previsto para derrotar Hyperion, título que dá ao poema. Perante a exposição da guerra entre os velhos e os novos deuses, Apollo e Hyperion manter-se-ão à parte e disputarão a sua própria batalha e um deus do sol seguir-se-á ao outro. Após um estudo meticoloso da obra de Milton, Keats apercebe-se de que uma poesia meramente “nua e Grega” é insuficiente para descrever a “vida interior da alma humana”, e isso obriga-o a afastar-se dos seus primeiros modelos, Shakespeare e Milton.

Para que o novo poema possa adquirir a profundidade e a “alma humana” que Keats procura, algo tem de ser adicionado à estrutura e às influências que o conduziram ao longo de *Endymion* e esse algo é Wordsworth e a consciência romântica que o poeta antes criticara. Chega à conclusão de que o mundo em que vive é mais complexo do que aquele em que vivera Shakespeare ou Milton e que, por isso, necessita de arte mais complexa, à qual se tem de adaptar. Ainda assim, o seu ideal estilístico era dramático e a solução encontrada seria escrever um poema que possuísse o drama de Shakespeare, a grandeza épica de Milton e a sublimidade da consciência de Wordsworth.

O tema do poema é a guerra e derrota dos velhos Titãs face aos mais novos e mais belos deuses olímpicos, seguindo a fórmula descrita no segundo livro do poema de que “... first in beauty should be first in might”. Aos Titãs, figuras mais antigas, seria concedida uma estatura épica mais delineada, o que os tornaria belos, fortes e estáticos, aproximando a sua descrição à de uma escultura.

Alguns críticos alegam que a incompletude de *Hyperion* se ficaria a dever ao facto de os Titãs serem aí descritos como mais plácidos e belos que aqueles que lhes deviam retirar o lugar (os olímpicos), contradizendo a ideia referida atrás sobre a beleza. Contudo, é dito logo no início que “How beautiful, if sorrow had not made/ Sorrow more beautiful than

Beauty's self", o que vem aprofundar o conceito de beleza do poema e colocar Apollo no centro da história.

O verdadeiro problema do poema é, ao mesmo tempo, a sua grande conquista. À semelhança de Endymion, Apollo deambula e reflecte sobre a beleza, atormentado por um sofrimento inexplicável. É nesse momento que Mnemosyne, que é simultaneamente uma Titã destronada e mãe das Musas vem torná-lo divino. Contudo, para ser deificado, Apollo necessita superar um teste: tem de sofrer e não saber porque o faz, ou seja, o sentimento precisa de ser imaginado e não real. Apollo arca sobre si o sofrimento de todos os seres humanos e por eles se lamenta, esquecendo o triunfo dos seus, esquecendo-se inclusive de Hyperion. Desta forma, Keats obriga o novo Deus a experimentar o extremo da miséria humana. Assim, Apollo torna-se Deus do Sol, da música e da poesia. Esta sacração permite-lhe fazer a passagem do "vale-of-tears" para o "vale-of-soul-making" e é este sofrimento imaginado que faz dele um ideal Romântico, o próprio ideal de Keats.

Pouco depois, Keats interrompe o poema. Durante o início de 1819 planeia, sem sucesso, o seu regresso, decidindo escrever uma segunda tentativa da história da guerra dos deuses, um poema épico dividido em Cantos, inovador e abstracto: *The Fall of Hyperion*.

A ideia seria retirar Mnemosyne da acção e fazê-la dialogar com o poeta, servindo ambos de interlocutores das tramas dos deuses. Contudo, o poema começa por se dedicar à relação do poeta com o seu lado onírico. Mnemosyne, capaz de conceder graças a deuses e a poetas, avisa o poeta, que se encontra no fundo das escadas divinas do antigo Templo de Saturno, de que só deuses e poetas as podem subir e que um sonhador não pode ser um poeta, porque um sonhador é apenas um diletante. Por isso, esta personificação de Keats terá de provar que merece o louvor que a deusa lhe pode oferecer ou perecer como um humano vulgar. Após um diálogo sobre poetas e sonhadores, a deusa salva o poeta. O teste é superado, o poeta sobrevive e depois a acção parece direccionar-se um pouco para os deuses, quando encontram o gigante Saturno derrotado. Mnemosyne descreve ao poeta Hyperion e a guerra ancestral dos deuses e, pouco depois, termina o segundo Canto e, assim, o poema. A própria estrutura abstracta escolhida, mais adequada para falar sobre poesia e poetas do que para descrever uma acção épica, parece ter sido a responsável por esta nova incompletude.

### 3. Fernando Pessoa e *Mensagem*

Apesar de a maior parte da crítica sobre *Mensagem* dar grande ênfase à vontade messiânica do próprio ou à importância de utilizar apenas elementos nacionais na construção deste poema, Pessoa escreveu, em 1920, um texto intitulado “Nota Sobre o Projecto de Mensagem”, onde revela a intenção de escrever um poema épico (à semelhança dos de Keats). Aí, representaria “as navegações e descobertas dos portugueses como provenientes da guerra entre os velhos e os novos deuses Hyperion e Apollo, etc”, onde os portugueses se identificariam com os velhos deuses contra os da raça de Jove: “Neptuno com as tempestades, Jove com os raios, Vénus com a corrupção, Marte, seduzido por Vénus, com as conquistas que derivam da Descoberta”. Pessoa afirma, na “Nota”, que a vitória dos deuses novos é conseguida precisamente por Marte, em Alcácer Quibir, ou seja, que o deus da guerra derrota Portugal em cada conquista (envenenada) que provém das suas descobertas. Isto leva a supor que toda a época gloriosa da nação é, para Pessoa, um revés tático e social que, ao fim e ao cabo, acaba por esgotar a potência e a energia sem antes se ver cumprido Portugal. Lê-se, em “O Infante”: “Cumpriu-se o Mar, e o Império se desfez./ Senhor, falta cumprir-se Portugal!” Os heróis portugueses não passam, por isso, de um juguete nas mãos dos deuses e das suas guerras.

A partir de outros textos pessoanos, foi possível perceber que a razão que leva ao esgotar da potência e da energia da pátria é aquilo a que o poeta chama “tragédia de Portugal”, que consiste na tendência para a acção e que nos ficou, “como uma maldição, da aventura das descobertas”. É frequente na sua prosa encontrar referências à inferioridade dos conceitos de acção e conquista em relação aos de arte e poder. Em “Entre os vários preconceitos que formam a única bagagem literária”, Pessoa entende que é a acção que destrói os homens inteligentes e cultos que poderiam reformular um novo Portugal, a acção que nos ficou “como uma maldição, da aventura das descobertas”. Pessoa prevê cuidadosamente, ao longo de vários textos teóricos escritos durante anos, a necessidade de inverter essa “doentia preocupação do útil” através da literatura (arte suprema), enquanto precursora de movimentos políticos. Para este, apenas uma grande nação criadora, liberta de todas as ambições colonialistas e liderada por um Super poeta poderá guiar a alma europeia durante a suposta Nova Renascença. Apenas os

homens cultos podem derivar em génios, e a tragédia de Portugal resulta precisamente na incapacidade de encontrar este género de homens. “O feitio enérgico, violento, pouco indolente do português” que gera precipitadamente a acção deve-se, então, à falta de homens cultos da nação, o que parece indicar que tanto os homens inteligentes como os eruditos têm tendência para professar a acção e o útil, que Pessoa condena.

Segundo todas as indicações dadas à época, o ressurgimento viria próximo e iniciar-se-ia, precisamente, com o poema que transformaria Pessoa no Supra-Camões, cuja vinda anunciava e cujo domínio já não seria o da acção, mas logo que a suplantava.

É neste contexto que surge *Mensagem*, obra na qual o poeta tenta superar *Os Lusíadas* de Camões, visto que apenas com um confronto através da épica seria possível, a Pessoa, ocupar o lugar de relevo na literatura portuguesa que pertencera ao outro até então. Deste modo, ao concretizar uma épica dividida informalmente em glorificação de ídolos, heróis e mártires distantes (“Brasão”), em hino ao advento do Supra-Camões (“O Encoberto”) e em texto épico propriamente dito (“Mar Português”), onde é narrada a história marítima, o poeta acaba por descrever não a glória, mas a destruição do Império (espiritual), sempre na esperança do seu ressurgimento.

#### 4. Um romantismo particular

Verifica-se em *Mensagem* que os deuses (de ambas as dinastias) festejam quando alcançam vitórias e se lamentam quando são derrotados. Parecem ser legítimos “Men of Power” (segundo a própria definição de poder), ao passo que os heróis portugueses, inferiorizando-se em relação aos deuses, parecem ser os “Men of Achievement” do poema (ou seja, os que realizam a acção).

Em “Mar Português”, “Os Deuses da tormenta e os gigantes da terra / Suspendem de repente o ódio da sua guerra / E pasmam” ou seja, lutam e observam a acção dos homens que, por sua vez, desenvolvem outra luta menos consciente e poderosa. Aqui, deuses e homens executam papéis semelhantes, como nos poemas homéricos, mas num patamar distinto de prestígio e poder.

Harold Bloom escreveu, em *Onde Está a Sabedoria?*, que “Os deuses de Homero são humanos — demasiado humanos — sobretudo na sua abominável capacidade de assistirem ao sofrimento quase como se se tratasse de uma espécie de desporto.” No meu ponto de vista, também os deuses de *Mensagem*, tanto os velhos como os novos, partilham desta característica, mesmo que nada de concreto seja dito sobre o assunto. Da mesma forma, nos poemas de Keats, os Titãs sofrem pela sua perda, sendo legítimo pensar que acontece o oposto com os da raça de Jove. A única excepção é Apollo.

Numa primeira análise, é dito que Apollo é deificado por Moneta, o que o faz aceder ao *vale of soul-making*, ou seja, adquirir uma identidade (como os outros deuses, que são “Men of Power”). Mas o que distingue Apollo é a incapacidade de ser indiferente ao sofrimento alheio. Pelo contrário, ele sofre mesmo sem o conhecer, sem o “sentir”: sofre com a “imaginação”. Neste caso, o acréscimo de imaginação e de “ego negativo” retira-lhe a sua identidade, transformando-o num “Man of Achievement”. Se considerarmos que a denominação de “Man of Power” está intimamente associada aos deuses, assim como “Man of Achievement” aos heróis, somos obrigados a concluir que Apollo sofre uma descida simbólica de estatuto para o dos homens (heróis). Por outro lado, Apollo parece demasiado estático para ser um herói. A partir da descrição do Satã de *Paradise Lost*, que Hazlitt faz em “On Shakespeare and Milton”, podemos retirar algumas características genéricas de um herói: ambição, desejo de conquista (se possível de um trono), força igual à capacidade de sofrimento, poder de acção e capacidade de suportar um castigo. Esta não é definitivamente a descrição de Apollo que, portanto, não parece perfazer as condições para ser considerado um herói típico. Então talvez o problema de Keats não tenha sido a humanização dos deuses, mas sim a humanização específica de Apollo, que não só desce a herói, como acaba por gerar um novo e complexo tipo de herói.

Este novo herói é o ideal Romântico da poesia, para a formação do qual três termos são de inevitável importância: imaginação, consciência e sonho. É a imaginação do sofrimento e a consciência do seu conhecimento, do seu poder e das suas obrigações que fazem Moneta transformá-lo no deus do sol, da música e da poesia. Contudo, como já vimos, segundo as definições de Keats, Apollo não possui identidade, logo, é um “Man of Achievement”. E Keats tinha uma opinião muito forte sobre aqueles que



não possuíssem identidade: “A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity — he is continually in for — and filling some other Body...” Portanto, neste caso, podemos supor que Apollo é um ser poético e que o corpo que ele vai “habitar” neste poema é um corpo humano. Por outro lado, a propósito de Lord Byron, escreveu Keats: “There is this great difference between us. He describes what he sees — I describe what I imagine — Mine is the hardest task.” Isto leva a crer que, ao divinizar o inerte Apollo, pouco herói de carácter, Keats estava no fundo a coroar a ideia do poeta enquanto criador de imagem e de consciência, ou seja, estava a coroar-se a si pela posse dessas características “divinas”. Como é dito por um crítico de Keats, “Apollo é de uma só vez deus e poeta (...) Ele consegue ver como um deus, como se fosse a mais alta e final conquista do poeta ver como Keats acreditava que Shakespeare conseguia ver. O poeta pode alcançar uma visão divina como a dos deuses. Se assim for, então *Hyperion* é sobre aquilo em que, nas suas maiores conquistas, a poesia consiste.”

No segundo *Hyperion*, a personagem que Moneta irá pôr à prova é o próprio poeta, que aparece como uma figura mista entre sonhador (mas não totalmente diletante) e divino (mas não completamente desumanizado). Ao contrário do que acontecera com Apollo, parece fundamental para subir as escadas divinas, até onde se encontra a deusa, que o poeta ganhe identidade e se transforme naquilo a que Keats chamaria um “Man of Power”. Assim, parece possível concluir que o novo poeta do romantismo, que Keats vê ser criado na sua obra, obedece à definição que este elaborara anteriormente sob a influência de Hazlitt.

Keats fora sempre preemptório em estabelecer Shakespeare como o ideal literário e em defini-lo como o exemplo perfeito de “Man of Achievement”. Apesar da dificuldade que esta visão evidenciava, um estudo mais elaborado dos dois *Hyperions*, assim como da transição que se deu na própria vida do poeta durante a sua escrita permitiu compreender que os próprios conceitos do poeta se haviam alterado neste período. Então, da mesma forma que o seu poeta tem de ganhar individualidade para satisfazer a deusa e ascender ao estatuto de criador, também Keats sofre uma transformação de “Man of Achievement” para “Man of Power”, ao ganhar consciência de que a sua época necessita de poesia mais complexa do que as de Shakespeare e Milton.

Por sua vez, também influenciado por Hazlitt, Pessoa escreveu: “É um homem demasiado grande para si próprio. Assim foi Shakespeare... São falhados [Shakespeare e Leonardo], não por terem podido fazer melhor, mas porque o fizeram de facto. Superaram-se a si próprios e falharam.” Ao mesmo tempo, considerava os românticos como “sobrevivências, encarnações perpétuas de próprios” por não se haverem realizado. Keats e Pessoa descrevem de uma forma análoga a diferença entre Shakespeare e os poetas românticos. Porém, é Pessoa quem disserta mais acerca das distinções entre génio, inteligência, astúcia e talento, tão caros ao Romantismo. No seu entender, os homens superiores podem ser de diversas ordens, sendo mais valeroso o de génio criador (o artista), que ganha mesmo ao herói. É aqui que a teoria volta a ser posta em prática, quando o poeta criador (“Man of Power”) volta a ser considerado como o único autor possível de poemas como *Mensagem* e os *Hyperions*, onde não ocorre nenhuma propaganda ou apologia do mundo real. Segundo Pessoa, “Toda a celebridade é, na realidade, literária, porque a literatura é a verdadeira memória da humanidade”. É importante reiterar que “achievement” não significa a completude de uma determinada obra, por oposição a “power”, visto que deuses, heróis e poetas completam obras, mas apenas os últimos merecerão a celebridade eterna, segundo esta concepção de Keats e de Pessoa.

### Works Cited

- Bate, W. Jackson, *John Keats*, London, The Hogarth Press (1992).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet*, The United States of America, Harvard University press (1999).
- Bloom, Harold, *Romanticism and Consciousness, Essays in Criticism*, Yale University, New York, W.W. Norton & Company (1970).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Onde Está a Sabedoria?*, Tradução de Miguel Serras Pereira, Lisboa, Relógio d'Água (2008).
- Camões, Luís de, *Os Lusíadas*, Lisboa, Livraria Figueirinhas, 2ªedição (1999).
- Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, Middlesex, The Echo Library (2007).
- Feijó, António M., “*Mensagem*, a imprecisão denotativa de ‘um drama em gente’, e o anti-cristianismo de Pessoa”, *Românica* 8 (1999).

- Hazlitt, Williams, *An Essay on The Principles of Human Action*, London, J. Johnson (1805).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Lectures on the English Poets*, (1825), [http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/pdf/27636\\_Roma\\_U11\\_Hazlitt.pdf](http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/noa/pdf/27636_Roma_U11_Hazlitt.pdf) (consultado em Julho de 2011).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Spirit of the Age*, (1825), <http://www3.shropshirecc.gov.uk/etexts/E000295.htm> (consultado em Julho de 2011).
- Keats, John, *Selected Letters*, New York, Oxford World's Classics (2002).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Signet Edition of John Keats*, The Signet Classic Poetry Series, Edited by Paul de Man, The United States of America (1966).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Complete Poems of John Keats*, London, Wordsworth Poetry Library (2001).
- Lourenço, Eduardo, *Pessoa Revisitado*, Lisboa, Gradiva (2003).
- O' Neill, Judith, *Critics on Keats*, Great Britain, George Allen and Unwin (1967).
- Pessoa, Fernando, *Mensagem / Poemas Esotéricos*, Edição Crítica de José Augusto Seabra, Espanha: Archivos, CSIC (1993).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Prosa Íntima e do Autoconhecimento, Obra Essencial de Fernando Pessoa 5*, Edição de Richard Zenith, Traduções de Manuela Rocha, Lisboa, Assírio e Alvim (2007).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Heróstrato e a Busca da Imortalidade*, Edição de Richard Zenith, Lisboa, Assírio e Alvim, (2000).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Sobre Portugal — Introdução ao Problema Nacional*, Org. de Joel Serrão, Lisboa, Ática (1977).
- Shelley, Percy B., *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays*, Dodo Press (2007).
- Silva, Agostinho da, *Um Fernando Pessoa*, Lisboa, Guimarães Editores (1996).

### ABSTRACT

John Keats was one of the main literary references for Fernando Pessoa. The English Romantic poet inspired the young Portuguese, and has given origin, among other works, to the motto of *Mensagem*, as it is described in “Nota Sobre o Projecto Mensagem” as the combat between the Titans and the Olympic Gods, leaving the Human Race with no more than an immaterial role.

The influence of Romanticism and of William Hazlitt in particular — in whose texts Keats had based many of his opinions about poetry — had followed Pessoa throughout all his creative time. Hence the point I want to make is twofold. Firstly, that the theoretical-philosophical texts from both Pessoa and Keats have often the same topic — they praise *power* and *art* against *conquest* and *action*. Secondly, I want to argue that despite the variation of their vocabulary, they both desire to create a new model for the Romantic hero — namely in *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion* and *Mensagem* — a “Man of Power” in possession of “Negative Capability”.

### KEYWORDS

Romanticism; Power; Achievement; Action; Hero

### RESUMO

John Keats foi uma das primeiras referências literárias de Fernando Pessoa. O romântico inglês inspirou o jovem poeta português, originando, entre outros, o mote para *Mensagem*, descrito em “Nota Sobre o Projecto Mensagem” como uma luta entre os Titãs e os Deuses Olímpicos, restando ao Homem um papel de autômato.

A ascendência do pensamento romântico, e notavelmente de William Hazlitt, em cujos textos Keats fundamentou muitas das suas opiniões sobre poesia, acompanharam Pessoa ao longo de todo o seu período criativo. Desta forma, pretendo defender, em primeiro lugar, que os textos teórico-filosóficos de Pessoa e Keats (em carta, no caso do último) têm, muitas vezes, o mesmo tema — fazem

um elogio do *poder* e da *arte*, em detrimento da *conquista* e da *acção*. Em segundo lugar, pretendo mostrar que, apesar de o vocabulário ser distinto, ambos os poetas desejaram criar um novo modelo de herói romântico — nomeadamente em *Hyperion*, *The Fall of Hyperion* e *Mensagem*— um “Man of Power” que possuía “Negative Capability”.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Romantismo; Poder; Conquista; Acção; Herói

---



**ESSAYS**  
**ESTUDOS**





A Fairy Godmother of her own  
in 17<sup>th</sup> Century France: Subversive  
Female Agency in Madame  
d'Aulnoy's "The White Cat"

*Alexandra Cheira*

ULICES – University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies



## A Fairy Godmother of her own in 17<sup>th</sup> Century France: Subversive Female Agency in Madame d'Aulnoy's "The White Cat"<sup>1</sup>

**M**agic and metamorphosis always go hand in hand in wonder tales: Cinderella's rags are changed into a marvellous ball gown complete with magic glass slippers courtesy of Fairy Godmother, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty plunge into a deep sleep intended to kill them through black magic, the Little Mermaid exchanges her tongue for a pair of shapely legs through a magic potion... The examples from well-known tales by Charles Perrault, the Brothers Grimm or Hans Christian Andersen are endless. However, when we come to consider less celebrated tales by the French women writers who were Perrault's contemporaries, it would be more accurate to say that magic and metamorphosis go paw in hand: these women writers favoured the mythological theme of animal metamorphosis in which a lover who had been turned into a beast would only become human again after long years of patient suffering. The literary motif of metamorphosis served a particular purpose, which can only be fully comprehended if the specific time and place of the writing, as well as the gender roles ascribed to that historically located context, are taken in due consideration. In other words, I will anchor my analysis of a wonder tale by Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy, the writer whose production far surpassed any other during the twenty-five-year height of the genre, in the

---

<sup>1</sup> This article is a much more expanded version of my paper "Change your princesses, change thyself: magic and metamorphosis in Madame d'Aulnoy's wonder tales and wondrous life in 17<sup>th</sup> century France". This was published as a position paper in the e-Book *(Re)Presenting Magic, (Un)Doing Evil: Of Human Inner Light and Darkness* (Ed. Alexandra Cheira, Oxford, Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2012, 3-10, <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/publishing/id-press/>), which collected papers from the 13<sup>th</sup> Global Conference Perspectives on Evil and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Global Conference Magic and the Supernatural, held in Prague in March 2012.

specific historical context it was written, as well as in its author's personal life, which was in itself a perpetual tale of wonder. D'Aulnoy's "The White Cat" will show how, in order to be happy, the eponymous female animal lover had to suffer first until she met the man who fell in love with her still in her animal form because she was beautiful, learned and pleasant: only after they proved themselves worthy of each other was the evil spell broken and human form restored to its victim.

Marie-Cathérine le Jumel de Barneville was born in 1650 or 1651 in Normandy.<sup>2</sup> The daughter of a noble family, she had been placed in a convent for her education when, according to her colourful *Memoirs of the Court of Spain*, she was abducted at the tender age of sixteen by François de la Motte, Baron d'Aulnoy, a Parisian nobleman thirty years her senior. She claimed this charming transaction, which stemmed from the arranged marriage that was to follow, was performed with the help, and to the financial profit, of her father. Three years and three children later, rumour had it that Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy was a flirtatious adulteress who was not exactly in love with Baron d'Aulnoy, an abusive husband by some accounts, to the point she became enmeshed in a juicy scandal: due to the testimony of two noblemen, her husband was accused of high treason against the king and thus incarcerated in the Bastille waiting to be executed. He was spared capital punishment when it was discovered, by the harsh persuasion of torture, that the two men had been lying — and that both Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy and her mother, the Marquise de Gadagne, were implicated as fellow conspirators. Because the men were believed to be their lovers, the whole episode was deemed a skilful, carefully planned arrangement to do away with Baron d'Aulnoy once and for all. A twenty-year separation — there was no possibility of divorce — from her husband and from Paris ensued and Madame d'Aulnoy was, not surprisingly under these circumstances, cut from her husband's will when

---

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of Madame d'Aulnoy's life and writing career, see Marina Warner, *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers* (London: Vintage, 1995, 161-170) and Introduction to *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment* (London: Vintage, 1996, 3-17); see also Patricia Hannon, *Fabulous Identities: Women's Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-Century France* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998, 78-121).

he died in 1700. Although recorded, these twenty years remain somewhat obscure: according to one account, mother and daughter fled Paris for Madrid, where they lived for some years; a more fanciful version has it that they were bestowed a royal pardon on condition they worked as spies for the French in England, but this voyage has yet to be confirmed. The established fact in her *Memoirs* is that, whereas her mother remained in Madrid, Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy returned alone to Paris around 1685. Five years later, aged forty, she would publish her two-volume *Memoirs of the Court of Spain*, a very popular, if arguably fictional, travel narrative which enjoyed a wide readership in France, England and Italy. Between 1690 and 1695, she also published her three-volume *Account of the Voyage to Spain*, her *Memories of the Court of England* and the historical novel *History of Jean de Bourbon, Prince of Carençy*. Although in her time history was not deemed a chronological record of significant events documented by textual evidence and her "historical" writings were valued for their enticing unfamiliarity rather than for their factual scrupulousness, they played a leading role in her writing career: they earned her a reputation as a historian and a story keeper of tales outside France, a membership at the Paduan Accademia dei Ricovatri and the nickname Clio, in honour of the Muse of History.

However, even before she was known for her writings, she had long been reputed a prominently fashionable and leading figure in the literary scene of Paris, a woman who could boast of congregating around her the élite of writers and thinkers of her time. Despite, or because of, her notoriety, she became a renowned *salonnière*, an aristocratic and highly educated woman who, much like her foremothers the *précieuses* in the first half of the seventeenth century, hosted gatherings where accomplished men and women wittily yet seriously discussed art, literature, morality, metaphysics or politics. George Eliot would praise the *salons* and, by extension, the *précieuses*, a century later when commenting on what she regarded as a sad state of affairs as far as some literature written by women in England was concerned:

Those famous *habitués* of the Hôtel de Rambouillet did not, apparently, first lay themselves out to entertain the ladies with grimacing "small-talk", and then take each other by the swordknot to discuss matters of real interest in a corner; they

rather sought to present their best ideas in the guise most acceptable to intelligent and accomplished women. And the conversation was not of literature only; war, politics, religion, the lightest details of daily news — everything was admissible, if only it were treated with refinement and intelligence. The Hôtel de Rambouillet was no mere literary *réunion*; it included *hommes d'affaires* and soldiers as well as authors, and in such a circle, women would not become *bas bleus* or dreamy moralizers, ignorant of the world and of human nature, but intelligent observers of character and events. (Eliot 13-14)

Far from being a gynoeceium enlivened only by topics close to the *salonnières'* own hearts, such as their cherished female freedom or love and marriage, the *salons* were the elected space where learned women matured a unique style of talking which celebrated the innate gifts that distinguished them from ordinary individuals. They did that so as to criticise and reform social customs but also because they reclaimed the right to be treated more consistently as intellectuals by their male peers, whose reaction was polarised into admiring and gallantly defending them or vehemently attacking and satirizing them as “the ridiculous *précieuses*” or “the sage women”. Thus had the *précieuses*, fifty years before the Enlightenment, fought long and hard for more independence for aristocratic women, only to be faced by ever-growing restrictions on women’s legal rights which, as Patricia Hannon points out in *Fabulous Identities: Women’s Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-Century France*, “accompanied absolutism’s strengthening of patriarchal authority”. (16)

Borrowing from the universe of the wonder tale, it could be said that the *conteuses*, the aristocratic women storytellers who gave birth to the literary fairy tale in the *salons* in late seventeenth-century France, refused the traditional but socially accepted status of the submissive Cinderella Perrault had created in his 1697 *Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals*. A passive object to another’s will who waited patiently for her release at the hands of Prince Charming, Cinderella did not fit in the *conteuses'* definition of femininity: they had nothing to do with sweet, lachrymose, domestic(ated) heroines, either in their life or in their tales, as Henriette-Julie de Murat made clear in the introduction to her 1699 *Sublime and Allegorical Stories*, explicitly dedicated to her fellow “modern fairies”:

The old fairies, your predecessors, were just gossips compared to you. Their occupations were low and childish, amusing only for servants and nurses. All they did was to sweep the house well, put the pot on the fire, do the washing, rock the children and put them to sleep, take care of the cows, churn the butter, and a thousand other little things of that kind... That is why all that remains today of their deeds and actions are only tales of Mother Goose. (Murat quoted by Harries 57)

Instead, they demanded for themselves the subversive role of Fairy Godmother, endowed with the agency of metamorphosis — both their own and their heroines', their fictional alter egos, in a changing society. "My fairy ladies", as they called themselves, forged new identities for themselves in the tales they told in the *salons* in which, as Patricia Hannon argues, "a more complex notion of aristocratic identity that involves both ambition and an interest in exploring the nature of the autonomous self" (14) can be found. Murat's words are, once again, unequivocal regarding her conception of the "modern fairies":

But you, my ladies, you have chosen another way: you occupy yourselves only with great things, the least of which are to give wit to the men and women who have none, beauty to the ugly, eloquence to the ignorant, riches to the poor, and luster to the most hidden things. You are all beautiful, young, well formed, nobly and richly dressed and housed, and you live only in the courts of kings, or in enchanted palaces. (Murat quoted by Harries 57)

The meaning of this deliberate construction of the *conteuses* as fairies is even furthered by looking closely at the etymology of the word as the Latin feminine of fate:

The word "fairy" in the Romance languages indicates a meaning of the wonder or fairy tale, for it goes back to a Latin feminine word, *fata*, a rare variant of *fatum* (fate) which refers to a goddess of destiny. The fairies resemble goddesses of this kind, for they too know the course of fate. *Fatum*, literally, that which is spoken, the past participle of the verb *fari*, to speak, gives French *fée*, Italian *fata*, Spanish *hada*, all meaning

“fairy”, and enclosing connotations of fate, fairies share with Sybils knowledge of the future and the past, and in the stories which feature them, both types of figure foretell events to come, and give warnings. (Warner, *From Beast to Blonde* 14-15)

Metamorphosis equalled magic, the ultimate power to shift the shape of the *conteuses*' lives by changing their heroines'; it was both a metaphor for their own lives and a textual strategy which empowered them, as Jack Zipes remarks in *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*:

[S]ince the majority of the writers and tellers of fairy tales were women, these tales displayed a certain resistance toward male rational precepts and patriarchal realms by conceiving pagan worlds in which the final “say” was determined by female fairies, extraordinarily majestic and powerful fairies. (34)

Thus did personal life become deeply embedded in the tales, with some of the *conteuses* at the end of the seventeenth century — Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve, Jeanne Marie Leprince de Beaumont, Marie-Jeanne L'Héritier de Villandon, Henriette-Julie de Murat and Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy — becoming notorious for both their subversive wonder tales and their unconventional lives. Their tales impart most tellingly their authors' search for magic in their own lives, marked by undisguised rebellion against the marriage mores of their time and further spiced up by the scandalous taints of adultery, political conspiracy against unwanted husbands, lesbianism or openly questioning Louis XIV's ruinous wars and blatant love affairs — all of which grievous transgressions against the state and religion were severely punished by the King himself.

Telling fairy tales to amuse and instruct the audience was thus a common practice in the *salons*. These intellectual games played orally as a symbolic means of rendering personal experience by favouring spontaneity and spur-of-the-moment inventive skills were, we know now, anything but unplanned: these apparent improvisations were actually sophisticated constructions which the *conteuses* carefully prepared long before they set foot in the *salon*. As Elizabeth Wanning Harries points out in *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and The History of the Fairy Tale*,



Their *contes*, in fact, are often self-referential, “fairy tales about fairy tales”... or mises-en-abyme. (...) [T]he *conteuses*' tales tend to make self-conscious commentaries on themselves and on the genre they are part of. In d'Aulnoy's “La Chatte Blanche”, for example, a prince lost in the woods finds a castle covered with scenes from her own earlier tales and from Perrault's. In another of d'Aulnoy's tales, “Le Pigeon et la Colombe”, the good fairy ... read the stars with the same ease that one now reads the many new tales that are being printed every day. In her 1698 story “Anguilette”, Murat gives her hero an ancestor who comes from one of d'Aulnoy's tales. (32)

The *conteuses* drew on literary sources such as Greek romances, medieval legends (namely Mélusine, Tristan and Iseult or Merlin), Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Straparola's *Le Piacevoli Notti*, Basile's *The Pentameron* and — Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy's own favourite — the classical love story of Eros and Psyche, liberally seasoning their tales with topsy-turvy, grotesque and overtly erotic elements. Taking into account the widespread oral circulation and popularity of the fairy tales in the *salon*, their written rendition was to be expected. It was thus in 1690 that the *salonnière* widely acclaimed as the Queen of Fairies — none other than Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy herself, who had also coined the term “fairy tales” to describe her narratives — pointed her magic wand-cum-quill at a blank sheet and hey presto, magic was done: amidst the black indistinct ocean of ink, the waves gained the shape of words in which rose “The Happy Isle”, the first literary fairy tale ever published in France as an embedded narrative in her novel *Hippolytus, Earl of Douglas*. In the seven years that followed, d'Aulnoy wrote novels, travel narratives and probably pseudo-autobiographical memoirs; highly successful in all these literary endeavours, it was the immediate success of this particular fairy tale, however, which would spur her on to publish in the genre she truly excelled at, and for which she is still best known nowadays. Fairy d'Aulnoy turned the magic wand at herself and liberally sprinkled the magic dust of enduring good fortune over her 1697 four-volume *Fairy Tales*: it earned her such a huge readership that it was swiftly followed the subsequent year by another four-tome volume, entitled *New Tales, or Fairies in Fashion*. These would firmly place her in the limelight until she died, in 1705, and carved out for her the same

niche where she could have power and express herself that she had granted her princesses.

Actually, d'Aulnoy was the most prolific writer in the group of *conteuses* who authored seventy-four of the one hundred and fourteen tales published between 1690 and 1715, not only on account of the twenty-five fairy tales she penned but especially by the sophisticated playfulness and self-reflexive penchant her wonder tales convey. Herself the victim of an unhappy arranged marriage, d'Aulnoy was highly critical of forced marriages, so much so that her tales seriously commented on love, courtship and marriage in a characteristic witty combination of social criticism of an oppressive present with a utopian dimension. D'Aulnoy's buoyant wonder tale "The White Cat", a retelling of the myth of Eros and Psyche, is a perfect example of this exquisite blending of fiction and personal experience: on the one hand, d'Aulnoy glorified female intellect by upholding her princess's reading and writing against her devotion to domestic chores; on the other, this tale portrayed unhappy lovers who were reunited only after they had proved their nobility and tender feelings for each other through great tribulations, not because their relationship had been arranged.

Published in 1697, "The White Cat" opens with a thinly veiled reproach to absolutism in the person of a king who lures his three sons out of the kingdom for fear they might dethrone him: he thus sends them on year-long quests, whose satisfactory resolution will grant the highest accomplisher the king's throne — although the king has no intention whatsoever of relinquishing the throne. Following the time-honoured tradition of favouring the youngest son over his brothers, the narrative focuses on his adventures: he is described as perfection itself in mind and body, with a strong emphasis on his noble character. Nobility is always twofold in d'Aulnoy's tales: on the one hand, it signals her characters' — and her own — social belonging to the aristocracy; on the other, it calls attention to a group of qualities such as gallantry, generosity and courage which her characters — and, by extension, herself and her fellow *salonnières* — are endowed with.

The Prince's first quest — bringing his father the most beautiful little dog alive — brings him to a glittering fairy tale castle which bears witness to both the world of fairies and to the genre by the use of self-reference and the allusion to a shared literary culture:

[T]he castle walls were of translucent porcelain in which various colours were mingled, and on which was depicted the history of all the fairies, from the creation of the world down to the present: the famous adventures of [Perrault's] Peau d'Ane, of Finessa [the main character in Marie-Jéanne d'Héritier Villandon's "The Subtle Princess"], of the Orange Tree [d'Aulnoy's "The Bee and the Orange Tree"], of Graciosa [d'Aulnoy's "Graciosa and Percinet"], of [Perrault's] the Sleeping Beauty, of [d'Aulnoy's] the Great Green Worm, and of a hundred others, were not omitted. (21)

D'Aulnoy uses the same describing techniques in her fairy tales which had made her famous for bringing a place to life in her travel narratives: close attention to minute detail is profusely evinced in this description of the palace by the striking emphasis given to the tasteful aristocratic surroundings conveyed in adjectives such as "splendid", "elegant", "magnificent", "superb" (21-23), as well as in the liberal mention to rich dressing and ornamental materials such as "porphyry and lapis", "cloth-of-gold", "gold studded with carbuncles", "diamonds", "mother-of-pearl" and "tiny emeralds" (21-23). Wonder at such sumptuous palace is enhanced by magic: "he saw naught but a dozen hands that floated in the air, each holding a torch" (22). These disembodied hands, which are the first visible evidence of magic in the tale, guide the youngest prince through sixty exquisitely decorated and preciously furnished rooms to "a large easy chair, which moved all by itself close to the hearth [and] at the same time the fire lit itself" (22); there they busy themselves undressing and clothing the Prince anew with more costly apparel, powdering, curling, perfuming, decking out, tidying up and generally rendering him "more handsome than Adonis" (23). Then the hands lead him to a salon decorated all around with the histories of famous cats, such as La Fontaine's Rodillardus from the fable "The Rats' Council" and Perrault's "Puss in Boots".

These references to the salon and to Puss in Boots are meaningful subtexts early on in the story: the gathering of the musical cats, the select supper, the after-dinner dancing entertainment and the fact that "the beautiful Cat would even compose verses and ditties in a style so passionate that one might have thought her in love" (28) all point out to the elegant gatherings in the *conteuses'* salons, with the difference this particular

one is presided by an animal female muse, a White Cat who had once been human. The outside glitter of the palace comes thus a metaphor for the White Cat's inner brilliance: her intellect is set off by her elegant surroundings, like a jewel in a case. Then again, d'Aulnoy cleverly inverts Perrault's story, so much so that what started to be a story about the prince's quest quickly twists into the story of the learned and beautiful White Cat — something Puss in Boots could not boast of, but then he was not a female cat. As Lewis Seifert has remarked, gender plays here a central role since “‘La Chatte Blanche’ is first and foremost about the power of female storytelling” (Seifert, “Female Empowerment” 24). Elizabeth Harries substantiates this thesis when she remarks that “the cat is a writer herself, although her works are unknown” (40), and suggests that the fact the Cat's poems are impossible to read is due to the fact they were written down by the imperfect paw of a feline male scribe. According to Harries, d'Aulnoy is here implying that female language, either written as the poems or oral as the female cats' orchestra, will only be understood by a male audience when they have learnt to interpret rather than judge it (40-41). If we accept this reading, d'Aulnoy strikingly anticipates by almost three centuries the feminist discussion on women's writing, which ever since the 1970s leading French theorists Hélène Cixous, Monique Wittig, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva have led towards the inscription of the female body and female difference in language and text.

The Prince is so charmed by his delightful companion that the White Cat has to remind him that the year his father had granted him to fulfil his quest is almost at an end. Such is the Prince's despair that he wishes to be turned into a cat, or she into a girl, because he loves her so dearly. This is the first intimation that the Prince is falling in love with the White Cat because she is beautiful, learned and pleasant — despite not being human. The first hint at metamorphosis is carried out when the White Cat offers to help the Prince successfully complete his enterprise: she hands him a tiny acorn which encapsulates an even tinier dog and gives him the use of a magic wooden horse which will cover five hundred leagues in less than twelve hours. Magic and metamorphosis have broken down the typological barriers between human beings and animals in the anthropomorphic White Cat, animals and plants in the acorn-cum-dog, biological life and inorganic matter in the wooden horse, and have also enhanced the

powerful allure of miniature: a normal-size dog, however beautiful it might be, could never surpass the fascination the diminutive dog holds for the Prince, his father (however much reluctantly) and the readers.

The youngest Prince is thus the undisputed winner of the quest but his father wishes to test his sons' cleverness a bit further before he keeps his word, an euphemism for the king's unwillingness to part with his crown: the task he now sets them to carry out is finding a piece of cloth so fine that it passes through the eye of a Venetian lace-maker's needle. This reference to Venetian lace in particular has a threefold purpose: it epitomizes the King's refinement because it was a very expensive kind of lace; it shows d'Aulnoy, who also belonged in the aristocracy, was aware that France was one of the major markets for Venetian lace ever since the sixteenth century; finally, it is also a narrative device in which a future event worms its way into the sequential flow of the story. In fact, after the Prince has returned to the White Cat's court and stayed there for a whole year in the same manner of amusements as before, he is sent home by the White Cat in resplendent glory, in a flame-coloured enamelled gold barouche escorted by a hundred eight-horse coaches filled with magnificently clad noblemen and a thousand foot soldiers "whose uniforms were so densely embroidered that the cloth could not be seen underneath" (34) — embroidery being one of the delicate types of handiwork carried out by Venetian lace-makers. Such splendour, which displays the White Cat's portrait everywhere "like a new order of merit that had just been bestowed" (34), is to make sure that, this time, the Prince's father will not be able to refuse him the crown he deserves, as the White Cat explains while she gives the Prince a walnut containing the piece of cloth the King had requested. As Elizabeth Harries points out,

D'Aulnoy again turns the details of her tale into an allegory of writing, justifying her own ways of telling a story. The structural complexities of the tale and its elaborate descriptions are not mere excess or self-indulgent play, but rather subtle guides for reading it. (43)

The Prince is almost overwhelmed with emotion by such tender interest in himself that he nobly tells the White Cat, "Adorable Blanchette (...) I confess I am so saturated with your kindness, that if you cared to consent,

I would prefer spending my life with you to all the grandeurs that I have reason to anticipate elsewhere” (34). Absolutism in general, and Louis XIV in particular as the ruling monarch at d’Aulnoy’s time, stand rebuked by the White Cat’s reply to this: “King’s son, I am persuaded of your goodness of heart, it is a rare piece of merchandise among princes, they want to be loved by everyone and to love nothing; but you are proof that the general rule has its exception” (34). The White Cat’s words, which can be applied to herself as well, thus stress the gendered difference between a court ruled by a King who loves no one and another one ruled by a Queen who is loved by her subjects. This gracious female monarch extends her leniency even to proven guilty parts — quite the opposite of Louis XIV, who is implicitly denounced as a tyrant who never forgives or forgets an offense (he banished Comtesse de Murat from Paris only because she had written a tale which exposed too clearly an illicit love affair of his). Moreover, these words deepen the gap between Louis XIV’s stifling ceremonial court and the pleasant *salons* ruled by the *conteuses*, mirrored in the reception the Prince has at his father’s court and at the White Cat’s: his father, ever the absolute king, is concerned with holding power as long as he can under the guise of testing his sons; less fond of his offspring than he is of his crown, he is really relieved when his sons depart, whereas the White Cat is described as positively dejected when the Prince first leaves her.

Magic and metamorphosis fuse in the next scene: in order to show his cloth, the Prince cracks the walnut which had been given him by the White Cat only to find inside it — much to his growing confusion and his father’s malicious excitement — a hazelnut, which contains a cherry stone, which has a solid kernel, inside which is a grain of wheat, which encloses a millet seed inside which is accommodated “a piece of linen four hundred ells long” (36) with magnificent embroideries of natural beauties and reigning sovereigns with all their entourage. Much against his will, the king only acknowledges the superiority of his youngest son’s cloth after it has been passed through the needle six times, to declare at last that he will set his sons a final task which will admit no further postponement of the promised crown: “whoever returns at the end of the year with the most beautiful maiden shall wed her and be crowned king on his marriage” (37). The Prince returns to the White Cat’s court, who receives him with flowers strewn on the road, a thousand blazing incense-burners and celebratory

festivities which include a lively naval battle between the White Cat's lieges and their enemies the rats. This scene emphasises both d'Aulnoy's unconventional sadistic humour and her belonging in a specific literary culture by having the rat general be devoured by Minagrobis, the cat admiral who echoes La Fontaine's almost eponymous feline hero Raminagrobis. At the same time, the White Cat's political expertise is praised in that she does not allow the total destruction of the rat fleet for fear "her subjects would lapse into a state of idleness which might be detrimental to their well-being" (38).

After a year has elapsed in similar amusements — added emphasis to the White Cat's skill as a chess player — the time is come for the Prince to return home with his crown-winning maiden. Now the White Cat, who has never said a word about how she became a cat despite the Prince's constant wonder at her condition, much to the Prince's dismay entreats him to cut off her head and tail and throw them to the fire directly — but offers no explanation for such bizarre request. The Prince evinces his nobility and tenderness of heart — always a must in the *conteuses'* tales — by having tears in his eyes at the mere thought of complying with the White Cat's request, loudly protesting he could never be such a barbarian as to slay his love and exclaiming such request is no doubt a test on his love and gratitude for the lovely Blanchette. She replies that she knows his worth but when he does as she bids him each of them will begin to know happiness: until then, they cannot control their destiny in this affair. In the end, because no matter how hard he tries to dissuade her she only replies she wishes to die at his hands, the Prince tremblingly draws his sword and with an unsteady hand cuts off her head and tail. And now, lo and behold, to the Prince's utter astonishment, the "most charming metamorphosis imaginable" takes place before his very eyes: "White Cat's body grew tall, and suddenly changed into a girl" (40). And, by all means, not just any ordinary girl either:

It would be impossible to describe how perfect she was in every detail, how superior to all other maidens. Her eyes delighted all hearts, and her sweetness gave them pause: her form was regal, her manner noble and modest, her nature affectionate, her manners engaging; in a word, she towered above all that was most lovable in the world. (40)

No wonder this hyperbolic description of instantly apprehended perfection leaves the poor Prince stunned and speechless, even more so when before his very eyes all the cats in the kingdom parade in their human form with their cat's fur thrust over their shoulders and, kneeling before their Queen, voice their delight at seeing her again in her natural state. And now, after the Queen has received all the rapturous manifestations of her subjects "with tokens of kindness which bore ample witness to the goodness of her heart" (40), it is time for her own story to unravel like the piece of cloth she had given the Prince. As Elizabeth Harries remarks,

The White Cat's story is embedded in the story of the prince, just as her gifts to the prince's father are all embedded in something tiny (...) The tale-within-a-tale is mirrored in the fantastic forms of the tiny encapsulated objects. (42)

And here are, indeed, hints of at least two other wonder tales within the White Cat's story: Charlotte-Rose de Caumont de La Force's 1698 "Persinette" (adapted in 1812 as "Rapunzel" by the Brothers Grimm) and Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve's "Beauty and the Beast". The fact that de La Force's tale was published the very same year "The White Cat" made its appearance in d'Aulnoy's collection *New Tales, or Fairies in Fashion*, testifies to the *conteuses'* shared literary culture as well as to their hearing one another's tales in the *salons*: in fact, the first literary traces of these tales come from Giambattista Basile's 1637 *The Pentamerone* and, more specifically, from the tale "Petrosinella". Basile's heroine's name is derived from "petrosine" for parsley, just as de la Force's Persinette is also named for parsley and the Grimms' Rapunzel is named for a vegetable delicacy. As Jack Zipes points out in his analysis of Basile's tale in *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*,

Basile's tale about a pregnant woman who is desperate for a certain vegetable delicacy (parsley, cabbage, rapunzel) was one of the most popular tales in the oral and literary tradition. (474)

Zipes links both de la Force's and d'Aulnoy's tales directly to Basile's "Petrosinella" and considers them important retellings which prove the *conteuses* were well acquainted with Basile's tale. As for Villeneuve's



"Beauty and the Beast", it was only published in 1740, thirty-five years after Marie-Cathérine d'Aulnoy had died. This leads us to speculate whether d'Aulnoy, whose influence Villeneuve acknowledged, was the first *conteuse* ever to conceive of an unfortunate person who, being the victim of an evil spell which metamorphosed her into an animal along with her entire court, would only become human again after a worthy lover returned her love — only the heartless male Beast is metamorphosed, in d'Aulnoy's rendition, into a tender female White Cat. This could well be the case, especially if we take into due account d'Aulnoy's gendered explorations of women's political and artistic power, so much so that, as Harries points out, "D'Aulnoy has transformed a tale about a wandering prince into a tale about a powerful princess, whose storytelling, both written and oral, is part of her power" (43).

This is quite apparent in the White Cat's mother's story: a Queen who loved travelling (clearly a wink at d'Aulnoy's own personal experience), during one of her many journeys through foreign lands she once contemplated from afar the tastiest fairy fruits ever conceivable which were quite out of her urgent wish to savour though. The Queen, who was pregnant, fell dangerously ill until she promised "a little old woman, ugly and decrepit" (41) — a fairy in disguise — her baby in return for the fruit she so desperately craved; her child would be endowed with all the virtues, charms and sciences imaginable but she, the mother, would not see her daughter again until the girl's wedding day. According to Zipes,

The motif of a pregnant woman who has a strong craving for an extravagant dish or extraordinary food is very important. In many peasant societies, people believed that it was necessary to fulfil the longings of a pregnant woman; otherwise, something evil like a miscarriage or bad luck might occur. Therefore, it was incumbent on the husband and other friends and relatives to use spells or charms or other means to fulfil the cravings. (Zipes, *Great Fairy Tale Tradition* 474)

However, in d'Aulnoy's tale it is the pregnant woman herself who fulfils her craving unbeknownst to her husband: when the Queen returned to her palace, laden with all the fruit she could carry, she only told the King the bargain she had struck with the fairy after many contradictions and just before her child was due. The King, appalled at what he deemed a lack

of love for him because he so wanted the baby, locked his wife up in a tower guarded on all sides and refused to see her even after their daughter was born. When he declined to hand the child to the fairies' ambassadors on account of their hideousness, the fairies grew furious to the point of showering all the King's six kingdoms with devastating ills before they unleashed a dragon whose venomous breath destroyed all fauna and whose appetite was only appeased by human flesh. At last, the King decided to follow his old fairy advisor's counsel and gave the fairies his daughter because his fairy godmother made it quite clear that it was his own fault the situation had turned up so badly. She also stressed the fact that her powers were only as great as her sisters' and it was but very rarely they acted against each other. The Queen, released from her high tower, reproached herself for this sad outcome and beseeched the King, to no avail, not to deliver their daughter into the hands of the fairies.

History — or, more to the purpose, her-story — repeats itself when the baby is taken away by the fairies: the daughter of a Queen who had been tricked by the fairies into exchanging her unborn baby for some magical fruit she craved, she lives in magnificent splendour inside a tower built expressly for her, where she is clad in regal clothes, taught everything suitable to her age and rank and cherished by the fairies until the day she disobeys them. However, she has unknowingly traded her personal freedom for a golden cage: there is no door to the tower and the windows are so high up that her only visitors, the fairies, always enter astride the furious dragon which had devastated her father's kingdom. Her freedom is even more impaired when the fairies decide for her whom she will be married to. Nevertheless, unbeknownst to the fairies, she has fallen in love with, and was secretly married to, the first man she has set eyes upon, a young knight who discovered the tower by chance. The fairies were not informed because on top of hating mortal men they already have wedding plans for her. These include their chosen bridegroom, a frightful-looking scarecrow of a dwarf king as he is described by one of the White Cat's talking animal companions, Sinbad the parrot. However much this name brings to mind the celebrated sailor in *The One Thousand and One Nights*, it is a fact that the first Western translation of *The One Thousand and One Nights* was carried out by French Orientalist Antoine Galland between 1704 and 1717, so it could not have been the source for this reference in a tale which

had been published seven years before. It is possible, then, that d'Aulnoy might have been acquainted with La Fontaine's 1679 *The Fables of Bidpai*, a version of the much older Sanskrit collection of tales *Panchatantra* in which this particular name might have appeared, since these tales have had a major influence on the shaping of *The One Thousand and One Nights*.

To return to the description of the White Cat's intended bridegroom and especially of the abduction of the unwilling bride with the connivance of the fairies, this is a well-aimed satire at d'Aulnoy's own husband and her own abduction so long ago, aided and abetted by her father. Herself the victim of an unhappy arranged marriage, d'Aulnoy was highly critical of forced matrimonies and seriously commented on love, courtship and marriage in a characteristic witty combination of social criticism of an oppressive present with a utopian dimension. Absolute power, be it male or female like the fairies' of this tale, is to be chastised by rebellion, even if the outcome is not always happy: the price that the White Cat has to pay for adamantly refusing her arranged bridegroom is to witness her loved husband be devoured by the fierce dragon and herself be turned into a white cat along with all her retinue so as to be made to suffer more lingering torments for daring to disobey the fairies' supreme power. It is curious that the animal which the princess metamorphosed into should be a cat, given this animal ambivalent symbolism which "varies widely from beast of good to beast of evil omen, explicable simply in the terms of the combination of the gentle and the sinister in the creature's appearance." (*Dictionary of Symbols* 162) Thus, whereas the Kabbalah and Buddhism regard the cat as an emblem of sin and the misuse of the good things in this world,

In Ancient Egypt the cat-goddess, Bastet, was worshipped as the guardian and benefactress of mankind (...) In this respect cats are symbols of their own natural strength and agility, which a tutelary deity places at the service of mankind to enable it to overcome its hidden enemies. (*Dictionary of Symbols* 163)

The fact that this particular cat is white lends credence to this latter interpretation, moreover if the detailed description of the White Cat's first appearance is taken into account: "[The prince] perceived the most beautiful White Cat that ever was or ever will be. She appeared to be very

young and very sad; she began to miaow so gently and sweetly that it went straight to his heart” (d’Aulnoy 24). This introduction leads the reader to conclude that this could not be a ghoulish character as the spectral symbolism of white might otherwise suggest: white is here “the colour of ‘passage’ in the sense in which the word is used in ‘rites of passage’ and it is rightly the preferred colour for those rites through which changes in existence take place on the classic pattern of all initiation, through death and rebirth.” (*Dictionary of Symbols* 1105) In fact, that is precisely what the Princess’s metamorphosis into a white cat entailed for her, a rite of passage between the death of her first husband and a new life as the wife of the only man who could ever break this spell. Thus, she is told that this evil spell will only be broken by a prince who perfectly resembles in person and character the one who died to defend her from the combined charge of the fairies, the dragon and the dwarf king.

In the end, however, being true to one’s heart weighs far more than bowing one’s head in the face of injustice: the spell is broken and the White Cat earns the youngest Prince’s father’s crown for him. Her nobility is once more emphasised when she refuses to deprive the King of his throne and grants him one of the six kingdoms she inherited from her late parents, while at the same time she bequeaths the youngest Prince’s brothers a kingdom each. She asks for the King’s friendship and states that having the Prince as her husband is the sole reward she wishes, and is “immortalised as much for her kindness and generosity as for her rare merit and her beauty” (62).

D’Aulnoy’s “The White Cat” shows how, in order to be happy, an animal lover had to suffer first until she met the one who fell in love with her still in her animal form because she was beautiful, learned and pleasant. And then, only after they had proved themselves worthy of each other, would the evil spell be broken and human form restored to its victims. For d’Aulnoy, magic is indeed the creative power to change both her and her heroines’ life by overcoming great odds, as well as the Circean power of metamorphosis bestowed on some of her unfortunate lovers as a metaphor for social criticism; it is both a coping mechanism and a powerful tool of change.

## Works Cited

- Cheira, Alexandra. "Change your princesses, change thyself: magic and metamorphosis in Madame d'Aulnoy's wonder tales and wondrous life in 17th century France". *(Re)Presenting Magic, (Un)Doing Evil: Of Human Inner Light and Darkness*. Ed. Alexandra Cheira. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2012. 3-10. <http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/publishing/id-press/>. eBook.
- Chevalier, Jean and Alain Gheerbrant. *Dictionary of Symbols*. Trans. John Buchanan-Brown. London: Penguin Books, 1994.
- D'Aulnoy, Marie-Cathérine. "The White Cat". *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment*. Ed. Marina Warner. Transl. John Ashbery. London: Vintage, 1996. 19-63.
- Duggan, Anne E. *Salonnières, Furies and Fairies: The Politics of Gender in Absolutist France*. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 2005.
- Eliot, George. "Woman in France: Madame de Sablé". *George Eliot: Selected Essays, Poems and Other Writings*. Ed. A.S.Byatt and Nicholas Warren. London: Penguin Classics, 1990. 8-37.
- Hannon, Patricia. *Fabulous Identities: Women's Fairy Tales in Seventeenth-Century France*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998.
- Harries, Elizabeth W. *Twice Upon a Time: Women Writers and the History of the Fairy Tale*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001. Print.
- Seifert, Lewis. "Female Empowerment and Its Limits: The *Conteuses*' Active Heroines". *Cahiers du Dix-Septième* 4 (1990): 17-34.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Marvelous in Context: the Place of the *Contes de Fées* in Late Seventeenth-Century France." *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. Ed. Jack Zipes. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001. 902-933.
- Warner, Marina. *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and their Tellers*. London: Vintage, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Introduction to *Wonder Tales: Six Stories of Enchantment*. London: Vintage, 1996. 3-17.
- Zipes, Jack (ed.). *The Great Fairy Tale Tradition: From Straparola and Basile to the Brothers Grimm*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Setting Standards for Civilization through Fairy Tales: Charles Perrault and the Subversive Role of Women Writers". *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 29-57.

**ABSTRACT**

Magic and metamorphosis always go hand in hand in wonder tales. I argue that in Marie Cathérine d'Aulnoy's wonder tales, however, it would be more accurate to say that magic and metamorphosis go paw in hand: I will analyse d' Aulnoy's wonder tale "The White Cat" in order to illustrate the way she favours the mythological theme of animal metamorphosis. Herself the victim of an unhappy arranged marriage in seventeenth-century France, Madame d'Aulnoy was highly critical of forced marriages, so much so that her tales seriously commented on love, courtship and marriage. D'Aulnoy's buoyant tales tell their author's search for magic in her own life, marked by scandal and rebellion against the marriage mores of her time from a very early age on. She is Fairy Godmother to her heroines, granting them happiness after sore trials and tribulations, and to herself, by refusing to be a passive object submitted to another's will and reclaiming instead the agency of changing her life.

**KEYWORDS**

Magic; Metamorphosis; Wonder Tales; *Conteuses*; Social Criticism

**RESUMO**

Magia e metamorfose andam sempre de mãos dadas nos contos de encantar. Defendo, contudo, que, nos contos de Marie Cathérine d' Aulnoy, seria mais correcto dizer que magia e metamorfose andam de patas dadas: irei analisar o conto "The White Cat" para ilustrar o modo como d'Aulnoy favorece o tema mitológico da metamorfose animal. Ela própria vítima de um infeliz casamento por conveniência na França do século XVII, Madame d' Aulnoy tinha uma posição extremamente crítica relativamente a casamentos forçados, de tal modo que os contos faziam um comentário crítico ao amor, à corte amorosa e ao casamento. Os vivazes contos de d'Aulnoy contam a história da sua busca de magia na sua própria vida, marcada pelo escândalo e pela rebelião contra os códigos maritais do seu tempo desde tenra idade. D'Aulnoy é a Fada Madrinha das suas heroínas,

concedendo-lhes um final feliz depois de duras provas e tribulações; é também a sua própria Fada Madrinha, ao recusar ser um objecto passivo submetido à vontade de outrem e reclamando, em vez disso, o direito a ser o agente da sua própria vida.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Magia; Metamorfose; Contos de Encantar; *Conteuses*; Crítica Social

---



“Don’t you understand?  
I was PROCURING for him”:  
Estigmatização do Desejo  
Homossexual em  
*Suddenly Last Summer* de Tennessee  
Williams

*Francisco Costa*  
University of East Anglia



“Don’t you understand? I was PROCURING for him”:  
Estigmatização do Desejo Homossexual  
em *Suddenly Last Summer* de Tennessee Williams

**N**a peça *Suddenly Last Summer*, Tennessee Williams reconstrói a personagem homossexual da peça sob o exclusivo ponto de vista de personagens femininas.<sup>1</sup> A obra foi publicada juntamente com outra peça intitulada *Something Unspoken* sob o título conjunto *Garden District*, estreando ambas as peças em 1958 na Broadway. O espaço de acção de *Suddenly* é o elegante Garden District de Nova Orleães, na mansão de uma viúva abastada. Esta, Violet Venable, contrata o jovem psiquiatra Dr. Cukrowics para proceder à realização de uma lobotomia experimental na sua sobrinha, Catherine Holly. Violet quer que a sobrinha seja lobotomizada para erradicar da memória desta o episódio em que o seu primo Sebastian Venable, filho de Violet, é devorado vivo por rapazes famintos, no indefinido e misterioso território hispânico de Cabeza de Lobo. A mãe e o irmão de Catherine surgem também na peça como possíveis herdeiros do espólio de Sebastian, caso Catherine esqueça ou desdiga a sua história.

*Suddenly* é tradicionalmente considerada um conto de moralidade moderno, examinando um mundo indizível e cruel. Esse mundo é explorado e aproveitado pelo diletante Sebastian, um homossexual de temperamento predatório, com poderosa ascendência sobre as pessoas em seu redor (família, amigos e estranhos). Muitos críticos americanos contemporâneos do texto analisaram a peça condicionados pelos tabus da homossexualidade e do canibalismo, ainda que considerados do ponto de vista figurativo. Em 1961, Signi Falk comentou *Suddenly*, numa edição de S. Allan Chesler nos seguintes termos: “[...] another private and very sick view of the world [...] Williams has carried his private symbolism to incredible extremes when he would make a decadent artist and aging homosexual, a sybarite

---

<sup>1</sup> A peça será doravante citada como *Suddenly*.

who never took a stand for right or wrong [...] a symbol to represent all men of our time” (870). O crítico S. Allan Chesler nota que a indignação literária de Falk é desajustada, pois Williams nunca aponta, nem pretende apontar, Sebastian como representante de todos os homens da sua época.

Este tipo de agitação crítica em volta das peças de Williams com temáticas homossexuais é comum. Em 1966 Paul J. Hurley referia-se a *Suddenly* do seguinte modo:

[i]n that play Williams dealt with homosexuality and cannibalism — disturbing subjects — but they do more than shock; they act as metaphors [...] The point I am suggesting is an important one, and the failure to recognize it has led to considerable misunderstanding of Williams themes and his methods as an artist. Concentrating on the literal events of the plays, critics have ignored the symbolic function of those events. They have committed the fundamental error of confusing dramatic methods and have treated as realistic theater plays which should be seen as poetic and symbolic. (393)

Hurley estava certo ao considerar que muitos críticos antes dele cometeram “erros fundamentais” em relação às peças de Williams, induzidos principalmente pelo desconforto social causado pela expressão sexual despadronizada. Hurley acrescenta posteriormente: “[...] a fairly Victorian vigilance has prevented us from recognizing sexual corruption as an acceptable equivalent for moral degeneracy. For most of us, let’s admit it, sex is shock, not symbol” (393).

Mais recentemente, a resposta crítica a *Suddenly* reconhece ser a substância da peça menos sobre canibalismo e mais sobre a representação da homossexualidade através da reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian Venable.

Com a representação da disputa entre Violet e Catherine sobre quem reclamará a memória do falecido poeta Sebastian, a peça representa o mais laborioso exercício de Williams na construção de uma personagem fisicamente ausente, e representada apenas através da memória. *Suddenly* é uma peça quase literalmente sobre a memória, ao ponto de Violet exigir que o reduto físico da memória seja removido do cérebro de Catherine, como, aliás, refere Van Laan: “Contrary to much that has been written, it is not a study

of Sebastian Venable, sensationalistic or otherwise; rather, it dramatizes a conflict between opposing versions (or visions) of Sebastian, and especially a conflict for supremacy between the two who hold them” (257).

Ao escrever uma peça em que todas as restantes dinâmicas resultam da intervenção da memória, Williams cria igualmente uma personagem que ora é relembrada como um filho adorado e artisticamente dotado, ora como pedófilo calculista e predatório, que terminará devorado pela sua própria presa. Os paradigmas de masculinidade estão presentes em *Suddenly* num plano problemático e teoricamente denso, imerso em rituais e tabus sexuais.

Através de Sebastian Venable, com todas as suas afeições e pretensões, é representada uma personagem, que pelas suas características, não seria susceptível de se ver envolvida em tais esferas da homosociabilidade. Ao descrever o filho a Doutor Cukrowics, Violet afirma: “An attitude toward life that’s hardly been known in the world since the Great Renaissance princes were crowded out of their places and gardens by successful shopkeepers.”<sup>2</sup> Ambas as imagens do falecido Sebastian evocam um pajem do Renascimento. As referências de Williams ao Renascimento e à Europa parecem não ser acidentais. Inicialmente, ele delimita o espaço da acção de *Suddenly* a Nova Orleães e refere-se a ela como a mais europeia e exótica das cidades americanas. Também, ao descrever o estilo de vida sumptuoso que mantinha com Sebastian, Violet menciona o nome de diversas capitais mundiais e de diversos continentes enquanto palco das suas explorações. Por fim, Sebastian encontra o seu destino final em Cabeza de Lobo, um país que nunca é geograficamente definido por Williams; no entanto, podemos presumir pela sua descrição, que se trata de um qualquer território situado no chamado terceiro mundo.

Williams abre a peça descrevendo detalhadamente, numa indicação cénica, o seu conceito para o cenário:

*[t]he set must be as unrealistic as the décor of a dramatic ballet. It represents part of a mansion of Victorian Gothic style*

---

<sup>2</sup> Todas as citações subsequentes desta obra referem-se à seguinte edição: Tennessee Williams, *Tennessee Williams Four Plays (Summer and Smoke, Orpheus Descending, Suddenly Last Summer, Period of Adjustment)* (Londres: Penguin Classics, 1976), 26.

*in the Garden District of New Orleans on a late afternoon, between late summer and early fall. The interior is blended with a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. (9)*

Este cenário é geralmente interpretado como pano de fundo para a peça enquanto estudo literal e figurativo do evolucionismo, representado também, posteriormente, pela viagem de Violet e Sebastian às Encantadas, mais conhecidas como Galápagos. Nesta viagem, uma das numerosas viagens de Sebastian em busca de uma prova da existência de Deus concebido à sua imagem, Violet e Sebastian assistem à saída de milhares de tartarugas dos seus ovos e à sua tortuosa caminhada para o mar, sendo a maioria das tartarugas comida por gaivotas antes de alcançarem o seu destino. No entanto, considerando as indicações cénicas de Williams, o crítico Leonard Quirino nota: “Williams suggests that the mode of the play is to be abstract and ceremonial rather than merely literal” (77). Na verdade, o cenário de *Suddenly* oferece-se a várias outras leituras. De um ponto de vista freudiano, o cenário desta peça está estruturado para reflectir o subconsciente humano, a fundação da memória: a parte do cérebro de Catherine que Violet pretende que seja removida e destruída. Williams é explícito e específico quando escreve: “[...] there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and trashing sounds in the garden, as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents, and birds, all of savage nature...” (9). Nenhum outro interior doméstico poderia representar melhor a rígida ordem da consciência como um quarto de estilo gótico vitoriano, da mesma forma que nenhum outro cenário poderia representar com mais precisão as selvagens, escuras, caóticas e terríveis profundezas do subconsciente humano como uma selva pré-histórica; e Williams refere que ambos os cenários estão misturados. A tensão criada pelo dramaturgo Williams entre o consciente e o subconsciente não permanece fechada dentro da mansão gótica vitoriana, extravasando para a cidade de Nova Orleães e para o mundo.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Com base na terminologia freudiana, pretende-se desconstruir as duplicidades de *Suddenly Last Summer*, nomeadamente no que toca aos cenários evocados na peça, como também à própria reconstrução da sexualidade de Sebastian. Esta terminologia

A própria cidade de Nova Orleães torna-se também cenário da reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian em termos de consciente e subconsciente, como, aliás, afirma Thomas J. Richardson: “Williams was influenced significantly by the exotic unreality of New Orleans, so much, in fact, that the city became an informing image of his art” (633-35). O argumento de Richardson para o papel de Nova Orleães nas peças de Williams é de ordem temporal, dividindo-a entre a “cidade de noite” e a “cidade de dia”. Nas suas considerações sobre o papel de Nova Orleães no teatro de Williams, Richardson prossegue:

[...] a city defined as undercurrent of sin, release, depravity, particularly violence and sex. [...] The city of night and release was a place where one could attempt escape from restrictions, inhibitions, the burdens of responsibility and time, and live only for the fulfillment of the moment. However, the city of night is always followed by the city of day, and the world history and time can never be escaped. (635)

A Nova Orleães de *Suddenly* durante a noite representa, pois, um tipo de esfera subconsciente e de uma incorporação física do *Id* freudiano. A situação que originalmente provoca a neurose de Catherine e o convite de Sebastian para o acompanhar na sua viagem é a violação desta, numa noite no French Quarter. Quando Catherine sai de um baile num hotel, na baixa de Nova Orleães, depois de o seu par desmaiar alcoolizado, é-lhe oferecida boleia por um jovem casado que a leva para o French Quarter e ali a viola. Williams enfatiza a escuridão da cena literal e figurativamente, quando Catherine afirma: “We stopped near the Duelling Oaks at the end of Esplanade Street.... Stopped! — I said, “What for?” — He didn’t answer, just struck a match in the car to light a cigarette in the car and I looked at him in the car and I knew “what for!” (65). Apenas a fraca iluminação do fósforo permite a Catherine ter uma noção da realidade daquela situação

---

aplicada por Freud nos seus estudos da psique humana revela igualmente diferentes níveis que se adequam aos binómios explorados neste estudo da obra. O *Id* remete para o subconsciente formado por instintos, desejos e pelo princípio do prazer, enquanto que o *Superego*, constituinte do *Ego*, representa a censura das pulsões do *Id*. Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*. Nova Iorque e Londres: W. W. Norton & Company, 1960.

na escuridão física. Quando Catherine conta a história na estabilidade da luz do dia, Violet já a tinha anteriormente desacreditado ao afirmar a todos os presentes: “Because she’d lost her head over a young married man, made a scandalous scene at a Mardi Gras Ball, in the middle of the ballroom” (57). Posteriormente, quando Catherine relata a canibalesca morte de Sebastian, Williams descreve a cena envolta em claridade, levando-nos a considerar que a reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian varia entre a escuridão e a luz, enquanto limites externos da consciência, como, aliás, refere Richardson: “Williams turned in his art to the exotic unreality of the city of night, the fringe of consciousness, and made it his reality” (636-7).

Posteriormente, Williams direccionou a peça para a própria geografia de Nova Orleães. Na Quarta Cena de *Suddenly*, o Dr. Cukrowics questiona Catherine sob a influência de um soro da verdade que ele lhe administrara, e é sob o efeito deste soro que Catherine afirma: “I knew what I was doing. I came out in the French Quarter years before I came out in the Garden District....” (81), sendo em relação a estes locais que Richardson refere:

[t]he time-honored dividing line between the French Quarter and the American commercial and residential sectors, including the famous Garden District, is Canal Street. [...] Traditionally, Canal Street defines the contrasts of the American-French city which include past vs. present, Protestant vs. Catholic, age vs. youth, wealth vs. poverty, inhibitions vs. a *joie de vivre*, and a clearly bilingual society. (636-37)

Em relação a *Suddenly*, poderemos adicionar facilmente a estes pares consciente *versus* subconsciente e o *Superego versus Id*. O diletante “poeta” Sebastian é também um frequentador habitual do French Quarter. Violet diz ao médico que Sebastian apenas escrevia um poema por ano, e acrescenta: “[...] which he printed himself on a eighteenth-century hand-press at his — atelier in the — French Quarter — so no one else but he could see it....” (14). As hesitações de Violet, indicadas pelos travessões, sugerem o cuidado e a minúcia com que Violet escolhe os seus termos. O leitor poderá, sem dificuldade, presumir que outras actividades, porventura associadas à “joie de vivre” a que Richardson se refere na citação anterior, comuns no French Quarter em oposição ao Garden District, poderiam ter lugar no atelier de Sebastian, longe de olhares indiscretos. Steve Bruhm interpreta estes elementos geográficos como limites que permitem com



mais facilidade definir a homossexualidade de Sebastian, quando afirma: “[...] the topography here is interesting [...] it separates the workings of the libidinal economy from the political economy” (529-30). Seguidamente, Bruhm remete para o conceito da homossexualidade enquanto “open secret”:

But while the French Quarter may well represent sexual freedom, that freedom is [...] shadowed by the adjacent city of puritan ethics and economic commercialism. The libidinal economy is constantly being surveyed by the political economy, so that the two worlds are not divided as much as they are defined by each other, by the overwhelming sense of difference that each represents to the other. (530)

A topografia parece ter em *Suddenly* um papel importante, na medida em que ela ajuda à compreensão das dinâmicas sexuais, da mesma forma que a teoria dos limites públicos e privados do “open secret” de Alan Sinfield: “[i]t helps to constitute the public/private boundary — the binary that seems to demarcate our subjectivities from a public realm, while actually producing those subjectivities — and thus facilitates the policing of the boundary” (47). Desta forma, Bruhm nota perspicazmente: “Williams is exploring how, in the field of homosexual desire, the commercial sensibility of the American city surrounds the erotic topography of Sebastian Venable’s sexual behavior, and becomes complicit in what it seeks to condemn” (530). Nova Orleães, com as suas diversas vertentes dúplices, representa a fundação da psique humana. Em *Suddenly*, para enfatizar este conceito, Williams torna-as globais, muito provavelmente com o objectivo de enfatizar este mesmo conceito.

Na primeira cena, Violet refere: “[...] he had a perfect little court of young and beautiful people around him always, wherever he was, here in New Orleans, or New York or on the Riviera or in Paris and Venice, he always had a little entourage of the beautiful and the talented and the young!” (22). Apenas quando Sebastian sente necessidade de realização pessoal, mãe e filho se aventuram a sair dos lugares limpos e organizados, como se essa realização não fosse possível de encontrar ou alcançar na consciência racional representada pelo espaço urbano dito civilizado. Violet relata ao médico uma das primeiras viagens espirituais às ilhas Galápagos, citando a descrição que Herman Melville fizera das ilhas:

Quote — take five and twenty heaps of cinder dumped here and there in an outside city lot. Imagine some of them magnified into mountains, and the vacant lot, the sea. And you'll have the fit idea of the general aspect of the Encantadas, the Enchanted Isles — extinct volcanos, looking much as the world at large might look — after a last conflagration — end quote. (15)

Longe das bem estruturadas e planeadas avenidas parisienses ou dos canais venezianos, as primitivas Encantadas evocam a existência remota e misteriosa do subconsciente humano, de tão difícil acesso. O que Sebastian e Violet ali testemunham, a carnificina das tartarugas bebés, totalmente vulneráveis, à mercê dos pássaros predadores, sugere a desordem e a fúria do *Id*, e não, na minha opinião, a manifestação de uma divindade ou o reflexo da natureza “maldosa” homossexual de Sebastian. Muitos críticos consideram a viagem de Violet e Sebastian às Encantadas como uma peregrinação em busca de Deus, e consideram-na o ponto essencial para a compreensão do verdadeiro significado da peça, desvalorizando o estilo de vida caprichoso e diletante de ambos.

Na segunda viagem espiritual, Violet e Sebastian deslocam-se aos Himalaias para que Sebastian possa entrar num mosteiro budista. A este respeito, Violet refere: “In the Himalayas he almost entered a Buddhist monastery, had gone so far as to shave his head and eat just rice out of a wood bowl on a grass mat” (20). Quando Sebastian decide renunciar a todos os seus bens de valor e dar a sua fortuna aos monges, é Violet quem o impede e salva do que ela chama “those sly Buddhist monks” (20). Ainda sobre esta viagem, Violet acrescenta:

I got him through that crisis too. In less than a month he got up off the filthy grass mat and threw the rice bowl away — and booked us into Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo and the Ritz in Paris —. And from then on, oh, we — still lived in a — world of light and shadow.... But the shadow was almost as luminous as the light. (21)

Violet e Sebastian voam assim rapidamente do obscuro subconsciente, representado pelos remotos e místicos Himalaias, e regressam à luminosa consciência e racionalidade da cidade estruturada segundo as normas de

uma sociedade dita civilizada. A expressão “world of light and shadow” aponta para o uso de binómios recorrentes na peça (consciente *versus* subconsciente, civilizado *versus* incivilizado), mas parece também demonstrar que estes opostos se podem diluir ao afirmar: “But the shadow was almost as luminous as the light” (21).

A última topografia híbrida do consciente e do subconsciente tem lugar na reconstrução da morte de Sebastian que nos chega através da memória de Catherine. Este binómio é agora representado em Cabeza de Lobo, um mundo bifurcado em termos de economia e espaço. Na quarta cena, sob o efeito do soro da verdade, Catherine afirma: “In Cabeza de Lobo there is a beach that’s named for Sebastian’s name saint, it’s known as La Playa San Sebastian, and that’s where we started spending all afternoon, every day” (78). Quando Catherine diz ao médico que esta praia era pública, Violet rapidamente a contradiz: “That Sebastian would go every day to some dirty free public beach near a harbor? A man that had to go out a mile in a boat to find water to swim in?” (79). Catherine apressa-se a explicar: “No, it wasn’t the free one, the free one was right next to it, there was a fence between the free beach and the one that we went to that charged a small charge of admission” (79). Mais tarde na peça, tomamos conhecimento de que a divisão é uma cerca ineficaz para manter os habitantes de Cabeza de Lobo afastados dos turistas. É quando estes jovens famintos pulam esta “cerca de classe”, de ordem e desordem, de consciência e subconsciência, que Sebastian e Catherine mergulham numa espiral de medo, que se transforma num autêntico pesadelo.

Quando Catherine diz ao médico que pessoas começaram a seguir Sebastian, ele pergunta-lhe quem, ao que ela responde: “The homeless, hungry young people that had climbed over the fence from the free beach that they lived on” (82). Quando vêem estes seres famintos caminhar na sua direcção, Sebastian e Catherine fogem para um restaurante, mas novamente uma pequena cerca os separa do restaurante e da praia. Catherine descreve a situação nos seguintes termos:

[...] it was between the city and the sea, and there were naked children along the beach which was fenced off with barbed wire from the restaurant and we had our tables less than a yard from the barbed wire fence that held the beggars at bay....

There were naked children along the beach, a band of frightfully thin and dark naked children that looked like a flock of plucked birds. (83-4)

Este momento em Cabeza de Lobo é a primeira reverberação da chacina das tartarugas bebês, anteriormente referida. Williams estabelece assim uma analogia clara entre as crianças, descritas aqui como um bando de pássaros famintos, e os pássaros das Encantadas que devoram as tartarugas bebês quando estas empreendem a sua dolorosa caminhada para o mar. No entanto, é também neste momento na história de Catherine que a experiência em Cabeza de Lobo representa o conflito entre a consciência e a subconsciência, a memória e a fantasia, e a verdade e a ilusão. Para ilustrar o medo de enfrentar os seus próprios demónios, o seu obscuro *Id*, Sebastian diz a Catherine: “Don’t look at those little monsters. Beggars are a social disease in this country. If you look at them, you get sick of the country, it spoils the whole country for you...” (84). A história de Catherine, a reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian e dos acontecimentos que conduziram à sua morte, torna-se assim numa forma de chamar a atenção para as crianças famintas, de as tornar visíveis, dando significado às coisas que são esquecidas, reprimidas e negadas. Na terceira cena, o irmão de Catherine, George, receando que a história de Catherine o possa vir a excluir da herança de Sebastian, afirma: “You got to drop it, Sister, you can’t tell such a story to civilized people in a civilized up-to-date country!” (47). Em *Suddenly*, Tennessee Williams cria dois territórios distintos, a terra da consciência e a terra da subconsciência, o *Id* e o *Ego*, o escuro e o luminoso, o real e o ilusório. Todas as personagens, aqui, parecem ter aquilo que certamente se pode considerar como uma dupla cidadania, que, em última análise, pode ser comum a todas as pessoas.

Na terceira cena, quando George acusa a irmã de contar uma história “incivilizada” num lugar “civilizado”, a sua mãe pergunta por que inventara ela tal história. Catherine responde-lhes: “But, Mother, I DIDN’T invent it. I know it’s a hideous story but it’s a true story of our time and the world we live in and what did truly happen to Cousin Sebastian in Cabeza de Lobo...” (47). Esta afirmação de Catherine, mais do que qualquer outra na peça, teria levado a crítica, de meados do século passado, a considerar *Suddenly* como uma peça de moralidade. Tendo sido escrita em 1958, seria absurdo considerar a peça de um ponto de vista literal, denotando que

turistas ricos americanos, independentemente da sua orientação sexual ou valores morais, estariam em risco de serem comidos vivos por crianças famintas num país de terceiro mundo. Obviamente, o texto apenas ganha sentido em paradigmas figurativos de leitura. A história torna-se numa visão das atitudes sociais vigentes em meados do século XX quanto à homossexualidade.

Na Quarta Cena, quando Catherine diz ao médico que tentara salvar Sebastian, o médico pergunta-lhe do quê e ela responde:

*Catherine*: Completing — a sort of! — *image!* — he had of himself as a sort of! — *sacrifice* to a! — *terrible* sort of a —

*Doctor*: — God?

*Catherine*: Yes, a — *cruel* one, Doctor! (64)

Sebastian representa um sacrifício da sua felicidade pessoal por e através da livre expressão da sua identidade homossexual. Se considerarmos as viagens de Sebastian como sendo verdadeiras buscas de significado e iluminação, o “deus” que preside à chacina das tartarugas bebés, que ele testemunha, é um “deus” cruel, como, aliás, refere Judith J. Thompson: “Sebastian is on a self-consuming quest to sacrifice his own corrupt flesh to the rapacious life force he had envisioned in the Encantadas” (100). Certamente que também no subtexto religioso da peça, a morte de Sebastian representa a corrupção do ritual cristão da transubstanciação da Eucaristia, patente quando Catherine diz ao médico que as famintas crianças antes de devorarem Sebastian diziam: “Pan, pan, pan! [...] The word for bread, and they made gobbling noises with their little black mouths [...]” (84).

A leitura que Paul J. Hurley faz de *Suddenly*, enquanto peça de moralidade, remete para a representação da homossexualidade apenas como metáfora:

[...] not only because it is the most common of sexual aberrations but because it also suggests vividly and emphatically the tendency of many men and women to retreat altogether from their society and to surrender all attempts to remain related to their fellow man. [...] Turning in upon oneself and away from the concerns of one’s fellow man represents a sort of self cannibalism; man may be consumed by his own inversion. (393-96)

Do ponto de vista de Hurley, e tendo em consideração a época em que o texto foi escrito, a homossexualidade de Sebastian representa assim amor-próprio destituído de qualquer altruísmo social. Significativamente, Hurley negligencia o facto de que todas as personagens heterossexuais em *Suddenly* (Violet, Dr. Cuckrowicz, George, e a mãe de Catherine) sofrem da mesma exclusão social apontada pelo autor.

Steven Bruhm chega a uma conclusão diferente quanto à representação da homossexualidade, da masculinidade, do canibalismo e do sacrifício na peça, quando formula o seguinte comentário: “This system uses cannibalism as a trope for the social anxiety surrounding homosexuality. It exaggerates the anxiety of one male’s relationship with another, of a mutually consumptive bond between men, and then turns the trope against itself” (533).

Violet reconstrói a imagem idealizada do seu filho quase como se este fosse uma entidade mitológica. Na primeira cena, numa conversa com o médico, Violet reclama o controlo pela memória do falecido Sebastian, um dever que lhe terá sido atribuído por Sebastian quando este ficou doente: “Violet? Mother? You’re going to live longer than me, and then, when I’m gone, it will be yours, in your hands, to do whatever you please with!” (13). Mais à frente, Violet explica: “— Meaning, of course, his future recognition! — That he did want, he wanted it after his death when it couldn’t disturb him” (13). A reconstrução da memória de Sebastian por Violet envolve igualmente um esforço para tornar o seu filho assexuado. Violet diz ao médico: “My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it, too, we had to be very fleet-footed I can tell you, with his looks and his charm, to keep ahead of pursuers, every kind of pursuer! — I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e! — Chaste...” (24). Certamente que sem a sua mãe ao seu lado em Cabeza de Lobo, Sebastian não se consegue proteger a si próprio dos seus perseguidores. Williams indica subliminarmente que Violet deverá sobrepor a sua imagem de Sebastian à de Catherine, vencê-la pela memória do seu filho enquanto homem casto. Violet diz ao médico que a sua reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian deve ser validada pela sua forte ligação com ele em vida, quando afirma: “This sounds like vanity, Doctor, but really I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people” (25).

Após a morte de Sebastian, Violet reconstrói a imagem do filho

enquanto poeta e artista, e o foco da sua reconstrução torna-se o volume de poesia de Sebastian, mais uma relíquia religiosa do que um mero livro. Nas indicações cénicas, Williams descreve como Violet mostra o livro de poesia ao médico: “*She lifts a thin git-edged volume from the patio as if elevating the Host before the altar. Its gold leaf and lettering catch the afternoon Sun. It says Poem of Summer. Her face suddenly has a different look, the look of a visionary, an exalted religieuse*” (13). É com esta mesma religiosidade que Violet ataca a reconstrução que Catherine faz do seu filho, rejeitando-a ao ponto de a querer biologicamente retirada por lobotomia, para que não exista sequer como possibilidade. No entanto, o Dr. Cuckrowics decide primeiro examinar cuidadosamente Catherine, antes de remover cirurgicamente a memória que Catherine mantém de Sebastian.

Esta última reconstrução da imagem de Sebastian pouco tem a ver com castidade ou arte. Apesar de brutal, o Sebastian de Catherine é mais terreno, e com as qualidades e imperfeições inerentes a qualquer ser humano. Na quarta cena, durante a entrevista com o médico, Catherine fala sobre a experiência literária anual de Sebastian. Conta ao médico que no verão que ela passara com ele encontrara o livro onde Sebastian normalmente fazia as suas anotações para posteriormente escrever o poema, e seguidamente afirma: “Yes, you see, I failed him! And so, last summer, we went to Cabeza de Lobo, we flew down there from where he gave up writing his poem last summer...” (77). Catherine compreende que a poesia de Sebastian, jamais lida por alguém, é tão vã como o próprio poeta. Catherine compreende também que a poesia é um estratagema manipulativo de Violet, através do qual ela pretende manter a relação de proximidade, nitidamente incestuosa, que a liga ao filho. Quando Violet acusa Catherine de ter destruído, de alguma forma, a confiança de Sebastian na sua criatividade poética, Catherine afirma: “Yes! Yes, something had broken that string of pearls that old mothers hold their sons by like a — sort of a — sort of — *umbilical cord, long-after...*” (77). Para Catherine, a poesia de Sebastian apenas representa mais uma forma de controlo de Violet sobre ele, ao passo que esta a entende como clara manifestação da sua identidade. Para além do mais, os exercícios poéticos de Sebastian funcionam como uma extensão da sua própria existência, e são-lhe desesperadamente necessários para continuar a viver.

Ironicamente, a violação de Catherine e a sua subsequente desilusão, faz com que a sua definição de amor se adegue perfeitamente à relação de Violet e Sebastian. Catherine diz ao Dr. Cuckrowics: “Yes, we all use each other and that’s what we think of as love, and not being able to use each other is what’s — hate....” (63). Ao verbalizar o seu conceito de amor, Catherine apercebe-se de que a sua única ligação com Sebastian era enquanto figura de mãe substituta. Quando o médico lhe pergunta quais eram os seus sentimentos em relação a Sebastian, Catherine afirma: “The only way he’d accept: — a sort of motherly way. I tried to save him, Doctor.” (63). Assim, ao contrário de Violet — a verdadeira mãe de Sebastian — a mãe substituta, Catherine, compreende, reconhece e encara com naturalidade as fraquezas, a humanidade, a homossexualidade e os gostos libertinos de Sebastian. Quando as polaridades de Sebastian colidem (o casto ser espiritual *versus* o homossexual *bon vivant* e hedonista), Williams cria as condições para uma contenda que nenhum dos lados vencerá. A verdadeira essência da identidade de Sebastian perde-se então no combate, resultado da viva disputa entre as duas mulheres pela apropriação da memória da sua pessoa.

A luta entre Violet e Catherine é uma forma de inversão, uma vez que ambas tentam, de certo modo levemente, usar a memória de Sebastian da mesma forma que este as utilizou — o que não parece estranho, na medida em que este tipo de procedimento se enquadra perfeitamente na concepção que todos eles aparentam ter do amor ao qual Catherine se refere, na conversa com o Dr. Cuckrowics, e ao que adicionalmente se refere David Bruhm ao afirmar:

[...] women are the material in a hierarchical system of exchange that allows an interdependent relationship between men, so that, in essence, Sebastian’s homosexual liaisons operated on a principle of commercialism in which one object was exchanged for another of equal value. In this case, Violet and Catherine were exchanged momentarily for Sebastian only because that kind of exchange would facilitate homosexual liaisons in a hegemonically heterosexual world. (533)

Tanto Violet como Catherine pretendem usar a memória de Sebastian como uma forma de auto-preservação: Violet, para manter intacto o estatuto do amado filho, e assim, continuar viva, e Catherine para se salvar



a si mesma de ser lobotomizada. A ironia reside no facto de que o sistema de troca homosocial resulta apenas até certo ponto. Sebastian utilizou a mãe e a prima como companhia, nas suas viagens, porque elas lhe eram necessárias quase como forma de legitimação das suas práticas homossexuais, na medida em que nenhuma delas se opunha a tais práticas. As personagens femininas, no entanto, ao deixarem-se utilizar, também não saíram ilesas deste sistema de troca.

A peça termina com a frase enigmática do Dr. Cuckrowics: “I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl’s story could be true. ...” (93). Acredito que “girl” seja a forma que ele utilizou para se referir a Catherine, embora seja esta a única ocasião em que o médico se refere a ela deste modo, pois até ali, esta havia sido referida por ele como Miss Catherine. Partilho, deste modo, a opinião dos críticos ao considerar esta hipótese como válida. A primeira paciente lobotomizada do Dr. Cuckrowics é também referida na peça como “the girl”, mas não me parece o facto susceptível de levantar confusões de qualquer tipo no sentido em que ele fala de “the girl’s story”, numa alusão, que me parece clara, à história de Sebastian contada por Catherine. A presunção de inocência, que é uma figura jurídica, pode ser adequada a esta mesma situação. À semelhança de um julgamento, o facto de ser considerada a possibilidade da existência de uma dúvida razoável deverá pôr em evidência os princípios éticos do Dr. Cuckrowics, que perante essa dúvida, deverá optar pela não realização da intervenção. A questão fica em aberto. As duas mulheres abandonam o palco, cada uma para seu lado, deixando ao espectador a liberdade de procurar um fim.

Independentemente do indeterminado final de Catherine, o final de *Suddenly* aponta para uma única verdade: a verdade da história de Sebastian é também a verdade do isolamento, que em última análise é um terreno conhecido por todos nós.

Enquanto estudo sobre a construção de uma personagem fisicamente ausente, e representada apenas através da memória, a peça é, na minha opinião, o texto de Williams mais bem conseguido, sendo este um mecanismo literário que lhe interessara desde a sua primeira obra dramática. Enquanto estudo da masculinidade, *Suddenly* coloca algumas dificuldades, sustentando questões de ordem vária; entre elas, sobressai o facto de Williams excluir a possibilidade de o espectador sequer vislumbrar a noção

de prazer no atribulado percurso de Sebastian enquanto protagonista homossexual.

A problemática da introdução de uma personagem homossexual fisicamente ausente como propulsor da acção parece residir na própria estrutura da peça, nos duplos níveis de consciência e subconsciência, do *Superego* e do *Id*. As crianças famintas na praia em Cabeza de Lobo, que Sebastian não conseguia encarar, são símbolos do que atormentava o seu subconsciente e, ao deixar o seu subconsciente *ganhar dentes*, Sebastian acaba devorado por ele. Porém, a leitura não é aqui a de que Sebastian seja devorado para se eliminar o elemento homossexual da peça, pois é a narrativa da sua violenta morte que mantém a ideia da sua sexualidade viva ao longo de todo o texto.

### Works Cited

- Bruhm, Steven. "Blackmailed by Sex: Tennessee Williams and the Economics of Desire." *Modern American Drama* 3, (1991): 528-537.
- Chesler, S. Alan. "Tennessee Williams: Reassessment and Assessment." *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*. Ed. Jac Tharpe. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977. 848-880.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1960.
- Hurley, Paul J. "Suddenly Last Summer as Morality Play." *Modern Drama* 8, (1996): 392-402.
- Quirino, Leonard. "The Card Indicate a Voyage on *A Streetcar Named Desire*." *Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 61-77.
- Richardson, Thomas J. "The City of Day and the City of Night: New Orleans and the Exotic Unreality of Tennessee Williams." *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*. Ed. Jac Tharpe. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977. 631-646.
- Sinfield, Alan. *Cultural Politics — Queer Readings*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania: 1994.
- Thompson, Judith J. *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol*. New York: Peter Lang, 2002.

Van Laan, Thomas F. "‘Shut Up!’ ‘Be Quiet’ ‘Hush!’: Talk and Its Suppression in Three Plays by Tennessee Williams." *Comparative Drama* 22 (1988): 244-265.

Williams, Tennessee. *Tennessee Williams Four Plays (Summer and Smoke, Orpheus Descending, Suddenly Last Summer, Period of Adjustment)*. London: Penguin Classics, 1976.

### ABSTRACT

In Tennessee Williams's *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), with the representation of Violet and Catherine's dispute over who will reclaim the memory of the deceased poet Sebastian, the play represents Williams's most arduous exercise in the representation of a physically absent character through memory. *Suddenly* is almost literally a play about memory, to the extent that Violet orders for Catherine's memory to be physically removed from her brain. By writing a play where all the other dynamics result from the intervention of memory, Williams creates equally a character that is simultaneously remembered as a loved and artistically gifted child and a manipulative and predatory paedophile, that ends being eaten by his own prey. From a Freudian point of view, *Suddenly's* set is inclusively structured to reflect the human subconscious: Catherine's part of the brain that Violet orders to be removed.

### KEYWORDS

American theatre; Tennessee Williams; homosexuality; heteronormativity; socio-sexual dynamics

### RESUMO

No texto dramático *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) de Tennessee Williams, com a representação da disputa entre Violet e Catherine sobre quem reclamará a memória do falecido poeta Sebastian, a peça representa o mais laborioso exercício de Williams na representação de uma personagem fisicamente ausente através da memória. *Suddenly* é uma peça quase literalmente sobre a memória, ao ponto de Violet exigir que o reduto físico da memória seja removido do cérebro de Catherine. Ao escrever uma peça em que todas as restantes dinâmicas resultam da intervenção da memória, Williams cria igualmente uma personagem que ora é lembrada como um filho adorado e artisticamente dotado, ora como pedófilo calculista e predatório, que terminará devorado pela sua própria presa. De um ponto de vista freudiano, o cenário de *Suddenly* está inclusivamente estruturado

para reflectir o subconsciente humano: a parte do cérebro de Catherine que Violet pretende que seja removida e destruída.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Teatro Americano; Tennessee Williams; homossexualidade; heteronormatividade; dinâmicas sociosexuais

---



Verdadeira grandeza e degradações  
do poder: temáticas complementares  
e convergentes em Fielding, com  
especial referência às suas  
*Miscellanies*

*João Manuel Sousa Nunes*

Professor aposentado da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa





## Verdadeira grandeza e degradações do poder: temáticas complementares e convergentes em Fielding, com especial referência às suas *Miscellanies*

**E**m certa medida, o princípio e o fim do século XVIII na Europa desafiaram o calendário e pautaram-se, ‘prematuramente’, por revoluções cujas repercussões ultrapassaram em muito as fronteiras das nações que as produziram: a Revolução Inglesa, de 1688 (ou *Whig*, ou ‘Gloriosa’, porque sem derramamento de sangue), e a Francesa (ou Liberal), quase exactamente um século depois, em 1789, ou seja, poucos anos após a Americana, que acabou por trazer o reconhecimento inglês da independência às treze colónias leste do Novo Mundo, em 1783. Não admira que entre tais pontos de viragem e para além deles se tenha prolongado o debate sobre o regime das soberanias, o exercício do poder e dos poderes, as dimensões da grandeza humana. Na União Britânica e fora dela, muitos foram os autores setecentistas que publicaram ‘reflexões’ ou ficções sobre estes temas, aqueles acontecimentos e as circunstâncias subseqüentes. Fielding, por exemplo, adopta uma referenciação mais especificamente histórica em *Tom Jones* do que noutras obras ficcionais suas. O *background* desta narrativa maior prende-se com as rebeliões Jacobitas (na segunda das quais o protagonista ficcionalmente se envolve) que efectivamente conduzem a confrontos militares em 1715 e 1745, dos quais os rebeldes, neste último ano, quase chegam a sair vitoriosos. Mas o mesmo tipo de referenciação se encontra, dominante, no *Jacobite’s Journal* (1747-48), o terceiro periódico que o autor dirige e em que regularmente escreve, numa porfiada campanha contra os pretendentes Stuarts. O antepassado destes, que iniciara em Inglaterra a respectiva dinastia (já rei na Escócia), fora Jaime I (Jacob/us) Stuart. Do seu nome próprio deriva a designação dos futuros adeptos dos seus descendentes afastados do poder após a deposição, em 1688, do absolutista e último monarca Stuart, Jaime II, contemporâneo de Luís XIV de França, cujo absolutismo o escritor ocasionalmente também verbera,

associando-o na ‘grandeza’ ao rei inglês e aos seus herdeiros directos, exilados e protegidos em França. Aquela é uma campanha ‘alegre’ e irónica, porque irónicos são o título do jornal e os seus artigos, ao adoptarem pose ou máscara de jacobitismo para melhor o refutarem — esconjurando um detestado mas possível regresso do absolutismo.

Os textos de Fielding que agora mais nos ocupam não surgem, então, completamente isolados do referido debate ou dessas reflexões, embora o seu âmbito explícito seja menos histórico do que filosófico, porque centrado em características e tendências genéricas da natureza humana, e não só em experiências particulares de uma personagem individualizada, um tempo, um país ou um conjunto de países. Isto é assim, sobretudo, no caso das composições de *Miscellanies*. Por outro lado, nessa sua ficção ‘filosófica’, comum a uma parte da poesia inglesa setecentista, confluem também uma tradição ensaística (eventualmente em verso, sobre múltiplos temas, entre os quais o heróico, o sublime e a grandeza humana) e uma tradição satírica. Esta pressupunha e explicitava um *adversarius* positivo do anti-heróico e do *in-famous* como já sucedia na *satura* latina — ou um *adversarius* negativo do heróico e do sublime. A voga da sátira na Europa dos séculos XVII e XVIII contribuiria, sem dúvida, para enraizar nos géneros literários e pictóricos (veja-se o caso de Hogarth, na Grã-Bretanha) toda uma temática e uma caracterização anti-heróica que em muito favoreceu o aparecimento e a expansão do romance moderno (*novel*), por exemplo, a partir desses séculos. A narrativa satírica, *mock-heroic* e *mock-historic*, de *Jonathan Wild, The Great* (1743), de Fielding, exemplar e sintomática na sua transição para a *novel* (de que o autor é justamente tido por um dos pioneiros, com Defoe, Richardson e Sterne) apresenta, como a *satura* clássica, a expressão bi-polar da natureza humana, embora com relevo para a falsa grandeza do protagonista titular. E se é aqui destacada essa narrativa, isso deve-se também ao facto de o autor a ter querido incluir nas suas *Miscellanies* (do referido ano), em complemento e convergência com os poemas-ensaios *Of True Greatness* e *Of Good Nature*. Em contraposição à verdadeira grandeza exposta mais abstracta e directamente no primeiro volume e no primeiro desses poemas-ensaios, apresentar-se-á a falsa grandeza de Wild, de modo mais concreto e personalizado, *sub specie ironiae*, no terceiro volume. Oposição recíproca também se verifica entre o poema *Of Good Nature* ou a personagem de Heartfree e Wild, um *adversarius* negativo.

Noutras ocasiões pudemos abordar a questão controversa do relacionamento de Fielding com o Primeiro-Ministro Walpole, não sem incidências no tratamento do tema da grandeza pelo autor. Em *Jonathan Wild* e já antes, em algumas peças de teatro ou em *The Vernoniad* (surgida no início de 1741), por exemplo, os repetidos epítetos ‘great’ e afins parecem apostados em satirizar o político, que contra-atacou em 1737, instituindo a censura prévia nos teatros, pondo assim termo à carreira do autor como dramaturgo. Os poemas àquele dedicados no primeiro volume de *Miscellanies*, ‘To the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole, (Now Earl of Orford), Written in the Year 1730’ e ‘To the same. Anno 1731’, não são ostensivamente satíricos. Talvez possa haver alguma deliberada ambiguidade nos termos ‘great man’ e outros, usados na comparação estabelecida, do princípio ao fim dos poemas, entre o poeta e o político (por vários observadores e críticos acusado de embolsar uma fortuna considerável através da fuga aos impostos e visto como um usurpador de lugar proeminente no *Cabinet* que, tradicionalmente, funcionava sem um ‘Primeiro’ ministro). Mas a ironia de tal comparação parece globalmente benévola, como relativamente leves são as farpas irónicas por Fielding dirigidas a Walpole em peças de teatro da mesma época — *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or The Life and Death of Tom Thumb, the Great* (1730), *Grub-Street Opera* (1731) e outras. Mais difícil será explicar categoricamente o elogio, não irónico, ao político, em *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1754). Como noto noutro texto, tal elogio parece-me reflectir uma idealização de um homem público já falecido e não de todo isento de qualidades, como J. H. Plumb e outros historiadores hoje defendem, apesar dos flagrantes abusos de poder<sup>1</sup>. Idealização iniciada já numa fase da vida pública em que se dera a sua substituição por políticos da Oposição em quem o escritor e o seu círculo de amigos depositaram esperanças que, entretanto, saíram

---

<sup>1</sup> Ver, de J. H. Plumb (autor de uma biografia de Robert Walpole aclamada como das mais notáveis biografias do século XX sobre uma personalidade inglesa), os caps. 7 e 8 (sobre o político setecentista) em Parte I, ‘The Age of Walpole’, *The Pelican History of England*, nº 7, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1950, reimp. 1979.

defraudadas<sup>2</sup>. O panfleto *The Opposition: A Vision* (de final de 1741), a Dedicatória na comédia *The Modern Husband* (escrita em 1730 e representada em 1731-32), e passagens refundidas em *Joseph Andrews* (1742, data do afastamento do poder do primeiro Primeiro-Ministro inglês), confirmam o elogio do *Diário*. O facto de *Vernoniad* e *The Opposition: a Vision* terem vindo a lume no mesmo ano (embora com cerca de onze meses de intervalo) e com apreciações contraditórias sobre o político há muitos anos no poder, não deixa, porém, de causar perplexidade. De passagem, dir-se-á ainda que na peça burlesca *TomThumb, The Great* (a mais famosa do autor), Fielding propõe a sua versão irónica de uma ‘comédia heróica’ (mais propriamente de uma farsa sublime — ridicularizante satirizando figuras heróico-bombásticas ou batéticas em tragédias de Dryden e de Lee, por exemplo) na esteira de sátira análoga, *The Rehearsal* (1672). Escrita esta e produzida com grande êxito pelo segundo duque de Buckingham, provavelmente em colaboração com outros escritores. A grandeza do protagonista contrasta com a sua dimensão física liliputiana e radica numa tradição folclórica não de todo estranha ao paradigma bíblico do confronto entre David e Golias, em que um protagonista inesperado leva de vencida um representante de falsa grandeza. O que, durante cerca de dois séculos, suscitou o riso e o aplauso de uma plateia cada vez mais precavida contra máscaras de heroísmo. Ao contrário da grandeza desmedida de um Almanzor em *The Conquest of Granada I e II* e de outras personagens congêneres em ‘tragédias heróicas’ de Dryden e de outros seiscentistas, ou da ‘grandeza’ sinistra de Wild, a verdadeira grandeza, exposta por Fielding no seu primeiro poema-ensaio do volume inicial de *Miscellanies*, não é auto-destrutiva nem se alimenta de uma mítica ou real irracionalidade egófica.

---

<sup>2</sup> Ver poemas a Walpole em *Miscellanies*, vol. primeiro, ed. de Henry Knight Miller na série Wesleyan, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1972, reimp. 1979, pp. 56-9, aqui utilizada, e notas do editor; as minhas traduções de *Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (especialmente p. 81 e nota 100), Ática, Lisboa, 1992, e de *Jonathan Wild, The Great* (minha Introdução), Centro de Estudos Anglísticos da Universidade de Lisboa, 2003. Ver ainda o ensaio ‘Síntese crítica sobre Jonathan Wild’, primeiro publ. no meu livro *Fielding: da Sátira ao Romance*, Instituto de Cultura Inglesa, Faculdades de Letras de Lisboa, 1987, pp. 19-47 e notas.

De facto, a literatura inglesa já havia produzido, pela mão de dois dos seus mais influentes autores seiscentistas, obras cimeiras em que, algo paradoxalmente, o heróico e o anti-heróico se encontram associados. Em *Paradise Lost* (1667), Milton elabora um poema épico ou heróico em que o protagonista, Adão, é expulso do paraíso e faz, afinal, a experiência da derrota e o percurso de um anti-herói. Se se toma Satã como protagonista central, segundo uma perspectiva ‘romântica’, ele que assume plenamente o papel e a designação tradicional de *Adversarius*, não menos aparente é o paradoxo de um espírito maligno e egofílico como figura principal e determinante do destino adâmico. Em qualquer dos casos, teríamos o paradoxal exemplo de um poema épico ou heróico sem um verdadeiro herói. Em *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681), Dryden propõe-nos uma ‘sátira heróica’, termo que só se torna mais compreensível tendo em conta as aludidas faces opostas, negativa e positiva, da tradição clássica da *satura*, mas em que a palavra *sátira* parece cobrir apenas, como é usual modernamente, a face negativa. E em *The Conquest of Granada I-II* compõe a já referida personagem excêntrica (do ponto de vista psicológico e de enquadramento social no elenco ficcional em que se move), na qual a ânsia de heroísmo, expressa através de *ranting* ou tiradas bombásticas-batéticas, se confunde com húbriis (na personagem, não no autor ao criá-la, ao contrário do que muitos têm interpretado). Ânsia de heroísmo comprometida, pois, por um carácter defectivo (um *flawed character*, na habitual expressão inglesa)<sup>3</sup>. Por outro lado ainda, a progressiva dificuldade de os autores seiscentistas e setecentistas escreverem epopeias *straight*, em moldes clássicos, isto é, de conciliarem cultura e sensibilidade individuais mas em parte comuns à elite intelectual a que pertencem e forjadas no tradicional apreço pelas origens (ou seja: pela originalidade dos inventores dos géneros) com a cultura e sensibilidades predominantes num meio mais vasto acaba por fornecer também o gosto pela, e a prática do *mock-heroic*. Este torna-se, com efeito, numa simulação algo compensatória da grandeza e do heróico tradicional em declínio, através do irónico elogio da falsa grandeza e da

---

<sup>3</sup> Sobre o teatro heróico no séc. XVII, ver Eugene M. Waith, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England*, Londres, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971; e expressando opiniões por vezes diferenciadas das deste, Derek Hughes, *Dryden's Heroic Plays*, Londres, The MacMillan Press, 1981.

infâmia, recriadas em *Jonathan Wild*. Cerceados no desejo de escreverem epopeias, ‘limitam-se’ a traduzir os épicos antigos (como fizeram Dryden, Pope e Cowper, por exemplo) e aplicam muito do seu engenho, verve e *gusto* àquela simulação derivativa, mais propícia à recepção dos modernos tempos. *MacFlecknoe* (1682), do primeiro, deliberada inflação do talento espúrio, ou *dullness*, atribuído ao dramaturgo Shadwell; os versos ‘ecomiásticos’ de Swift ao ‘grande’ homem do Período Augustano, o já referido Primeiro-Ministro (‘The Character of Sir Robert Walpole’, 1731) também visado por Gay em *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728), e por Fielding não apenas em *Jonathan Wild*, como se viu; a mesma ‘Opera’, equiparando os ‘grandes’ das esferas política e criminal, ao mesmo tempo parodiando os destemperos da moda europeia da ópera italiana; *The Rape of the Lock* (1712) e *The Dunciad* (1728-43), de Pope, mais extensivas do que aquele *mock-heroic* de Dryden, que em certa medida serviu de modelo à segunda, sobretudo no tema e no idioma; e o já mencionado *Jonathan Wild, the Great*: estas são das obras mais significativas, na literatura inglesa, quer histórica quer esteticamente, da evolução das fortunas do heróico, desde a Restauração monárquica de 1660 até finais do século seguinte. Sensível, especialmente já na segunda metade do século de Milton e Dryden (inclusive em obras destes), mas acentuada na época setecentista, tal evolução não deixa de ser uma indicação da instabilidade quer do conceito de heroísmo quer dos ideais Augustanos de encaminhamento para uma época áurea e de verdadeira grandeza, como a Revolução ‘Gloriosa’ parecia ter augurado. Por alguma razão muitos Augustanos prezavam o burlesco; entre eles Fielding, que no Prefácio de *Joseph Andrews* (1742) aponta os motivos para incluir passagens burlescas mesmo em romances — como ele próprio faria nos seus, apesar de realistas para a época. O que não obstou a que tivesse retirado de *Jonathan Wild*, na segunda edição, de 1754, o único capítulo burlesco presente na edição original, talvez porque ele atenuasse, precisamente, o perfil relativamente realista que queria imprimir à personagem de Mrs. Heartfree. Certamente por critério análogo terá evitado todo e qualquer burlesco em *Amelia* (1751)<sup>4</sup>. De 1743 a 1754, já perto de um final de vida ensombrado

---

<sup>4</sup> Consideramos aqui o *mock-heroic* ou simulação heróica (linguagem elevada para assunto trivial) uma das duas variedades de burlesco. A segunda (travesti) faz o inverso

pela sua doença e pela doença de familiares, o autor não deixou, pois, de evoluir na sua arte e não apenas em alguns dos seus comentários políticos.

Dentro do enquadramento histórico-literário que acaba de se apresentar e que serve de introdução ao estudo proposto, os dois poemas de Fielding destacados no início, *Of True Greatness* e *Of Good Nature*, têm fortes afinidades de forma com outros exemplos setecentistas do ensaio-debate em verso (em Mandeville, Pope e outros autores). O primeiro é composto por 282 pentâmetros jâmbicos em dísticos (heróicos) rimando numa articulação monológica; o segundo, por 117 com idênticas características. Quarenta anos depois, já em finais do século XVIII, Cowper, por exemplo, ainda mantém a tradição, nomeadamente em *Table Talk* (1782), que apresenta 771 versos em medida, acento, rima e configuração estrófica idênticos e identicamente regulares, se bem que numa articulação dialógica de tonalidade satírica (como outros escritores haviam feito). Tematicamente, tem este outro poema-ensaio alguns aspectos complementares e convergentes, nomeadamente na discussão do poder e suas derivas, o que atesta a vitalidade e pertinência da forma e do tema, pelo menos na época, não se tratando tão pouco, neste caso, de mera adopção passiva ou imitativa de uma tradição experimentada.

*Of True Greatness, An Epistle to George Dodington, Esq.*; dedicado a este patrono e amigo de Fielding e de outros escritores (mas que nem

---

(linguagem não dignificada para assunto solene). Entre os antecedentes do burlesco contam-se as peças gregas dos sátiros (Eurípedes, *Os Ciclopes*, c. 412 a.C.); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), de Shakespeare, que na encenação de Pyramus e Thisbe troça da tradição dos interlúdios; 'On the Famous Voyage' (1616), composição pouco divulgada de Ben Jonson; *Le Lutrin* (1674-83) de Boileau, muito apreciado em Inglaterra, aqui aplicando a sua mestria no tratamento de assunto menor; e *The Battle of the Books* (1704), em que Swift apresenta um confronto entre Antigos e Modernos. Tradição prosseguida, por exemplo, por Byron em *Don Juan* (1819-24), intermitentemente *mock-heroic*. *Mock-epic* (de que aquela obra de Boileau é exemplo) será uma variante de *mock-heroic*, mas usando, além do estilo elevado, as convenções tradicionais das epopeias. Nos U. S. A. 'burlesco' tem significado distinto; aplica-se a um tipo não recomendável de entretenimento cómico. Cf. Chris Baldick, *Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Oxford (Univ. Press), 1990, reimp. 1996. Note-se ainda que na admiração de Fielding por *Don Quixote* se incluiria, provavelmente, as batalhas burlescas do Cavaleiro e do seu aio contra fantasiados inimigos.

por isso deixou de ser incluído por Pope no rol dos *dunces*), foi primeiro publicado em 1741, com um prefácio em que se diz ter sido ‘escrito alguns anos antes e agora muito ligeiramente alterado e ampliado’. Dois anos depois, sem o prefácio, abria o conjunto de composições (entre as quais poemas curtos e outros ensaios em prosa ou verso) que constituem o primeiro dos três volumes de *Miscellanies*, publicados por subscrição prévia, como era então frequente. Não por acaso, o segundo poema-ensaio do conjunto, *Of Good Nature*, está para o *adversarius* subjacente no anterior, tal como Heartfree está para Jonathan Wild na respectiva narrativa.

A tónica afirmativa dos poemas-ensaios de Fielding desmente, desde logo, uma possível interpretação superficial sobre a sua obra, que a considere isenta de dimensão moral e social. O mesmo, de resto, sucede com a coexistência entre comédia e tal dimensão noutros autores, de Aristófanes a Swift. Reconhecendo embora ser menos óbvia essa coexistência nas suas narrativas ficcionais posteriores (desde sempre as suas obras mais conhecidas e apreciadas), tal verificação é importante até por sinalizar nelas um sentido global mais profundo do que talvez se pudesse julgar, e directa ou indirectamente identificável, sobretudo, com a herança filosófico-moral de Cícero (especialmente *De officiis*), de S. Paulo, de escritores cristãos coetâneos (alguns deles citados com forte apreço pelo autor nos seus romances), e com outras fontes.<sup>5</sup> Fielding está longe de confirmar, entretanto, um alegado ideal Augustano de vida retirada ou de *retirement*. Pela sua natureza expansiva própria e por convicção cultural, defende antes, decididamente, como outros setecentistas, o ideal da *polite conversation*, isto é, do bom convívio e da sociabilidade (cunhado por aquele autor latino com o termo-chave de *bona civitas*) esse de facto mais encarecido por proeminentes

---

<sup>5</sup> Henry Knight Miller, o excelente *editor* do *Volume One* de *Miscellanies* (cf. nota 2), chama a atenção, a propósito, para outra sua edição, *Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies: A Commentary on Volume One* (Princeton U. Press, 1961) onde judiciosamente se equilibra a dimensão moral-intelectual do escritor com a sua dimensão celebratória, festiva e humorística. Cf. comentário e bibliografia breves de Miller na nota 2, p. XVII, da ‘General Introduction’ no *Volume One* acima referido e, ainda, as observações relevantes para este ensaio, no nº 2, ‘Contents’, pp. XVII-XLII, da mesma ‘Introdução’.



Augustanos. No mesmo âmbito, é também ilustrativo o texto (em prosa) de *An Essay on Conversation*, igualmente inserido no conjunto do volume inicial de *Miscellanies*, que retoma o interesse de Swift (sempre um escritor admirado por Fielding) pelo mesmo tópico, bem manifesto em *Hints toward an Essay on Conversation*, de 1709, e mais elaboradamente em *A compleat Collection of Genteel and Ingenious Conversation*, de 1738, ambos em prosa. Particularmente empenhadas e esclarecedoras são as linhas iniciais no *Essay* do autor de *Tom Jones*, em que o ensaísta, citando Cícero e rejeitando as posições de Hobbes e Mandeville sobre a natureza egocêntrica dos humanos, explica as suas razões para considerar estes como *animais sociais*<sup>6</sup>.

A generalizada confusão entre honra e orgulho é outro dos cavalos de batalha de Fielding em *Jonathan Wild*, nos seus poemas-ensaios e outros textos. Provavelmente ainda inspirado em *De officiis II*, ele ventila ironicamente tal confusão por exemplo nos seus ‘glossários’, por constituir um dos motivos da indiscriminada atribuição de valor a acções e personagens supostamente *grandes* ou heróicas e para o não reconhecimento de valor a acções e personagens meritórias mas não incensadas ou avessas à lisonja. Análoga atitude informa já as *Epistles* de Pope e de outros autores ou autoras setecentistas, a qual corresponde à enraizada noção de que ela incumbe tanto a políticos como a escritores.

Assim pondera Fielding, nos seus poemas-ensaios, que a virtude, não sendo o único princípio activo no homem, poderá superar, neste, uma natureza mista e inconsistente como a que caracteriza os dois protagonistas masculinos de *Tom Jones* e *Amelia*. Ou, como diz o romancista na ‘Dedicatória’ da primeira destas narrativas, ‘[I believe] it is much easier to make good Men wise, than to make bad Men good’. O que poderia ter sido admitido pelo jurista e filósofo romano — apesar dos seus contributos para o reavivar do estoicismo e do cepticismo na Grã-Bretanha e noutros países europeus, a partir de finais do século XVI, e para a afirmação da dúvida metódica, por exemplo em Hume. Se o homem não é natural e integral-

---

<sup>6</sup> *Op. Cit.*, p. 119 e notas 1-5. Para o *editor*, dificilmente se encontraria um tópico, no primeiro volume de *Miscellanies*, não presente em *De officiis* (*loc. cit.*, p. XVIII).

mente bom, tão-pouco seria inescapavelmente mau. Nem o mito do bom selvagem, já presente em obras britânicas do século XVII, nem o pessimismo radical de alguns filósofos, são aceites por Fielding, cujo postulado antes enunciado é reforçado, amiúde, com incisivas referências a imperativos bíblicos de honestidade, dever e fraternidade — temática também não estranha a Cícero.

*Of True Greatness*, como *Jonathan Wild, the Great* e outros textos setecentistas, assume a distinção entre o *vir bonus* (caracterizado em *Of Good Nature* tal como em *Heartfree*) e o *vir fortis et magnanimus* ou, noutra expressão do autor inglês, ‘verdadeiro sublime’ da natureza humana. Este está, infelizmente, sujeito a corrupções ou degradações porque propenso à ambição desmedida de poder e de riqueza que ameaça a liberdade de pessoas e nações e faz o infortúnio do próprio ao torná-lo insaciável e insociável. A insistência na máscara de gravidade, compunção, sinceridade e virtude (que esconde a fraude, a cobiça, a tirania e a falsa grandeza em geral), vai a par e justifica a necessidade de perscrutar os sintomas respectivos e evitar a sua acção predadora. Ao escritor caberia a tarefa de guiar o leitor na percepção desses sintomas. Na base do conceito mesmo de comédia perfilhado por Fielding está a (preferencialmente súbita, inesperada ou ‘involuntária’) revelação de hipocrisia e afectação, assim como a frustração dos inconfessados desejos do ‘grande’ homem, como no primeiro poema-ensaio se sugere e na personagem de Wild se concretiza. Ainda aqui, o autor assume o papel moral do escritor ou ‘prático’ tutor dos seus leitores, não se contentando apenas com um enunciado teórico e dando expressão corrente a anseios de justiça. A verdadeira grandeza, resistindo à corrupção e à degradação, cultiva tais anseios e outras cardiais virtudes já distinguidas pelos Antigos (entre elas a fortaleza, a temperança e a prudência). A falsa grandeza, à maneira de Jonathan Wild, ou as ignora ou as aparenta para melhor lograr os seus fins. O reconhecimento teórico e prático dessas virtudes ou da verdadeira grandeza faria parte das exigências decorrentes de uma natureza benigna, benévola e benfazeja, ao mesmo tempo que adviria da necessidade de evitar uma auto-gratificação sentimentalista e uma vulgar indistinção entre sabedoria e (maliciosa) esperteza. Fortaleza, por exemplo, pressuporia não apenas energia, mas também elevação ou largueza de alma, que Wild não tem, embora tenha força física e psicológica. Como pressuporia ainda a coragem e a dignidade de resistir ao infortúnio e à morte,

mantendo valores e convicções. O que tão pouco é apanágio do ‘grande’ homem, que poderá possuir convicções e não possuir valores; mas que caracteriza Heartfree, sugerindo que, em casos reais ou concretos, a boa natureza não tem de ser estanque e excluir emoções ou paixões nem traços de verdadeira grandeza. Impassibilidade real ou ostentada, frequentemente confundida com estoicismo, poderá ser atributo do mesmo ‘grande’ homem ou de certas personagens ‘heróicas’ de Dryden, por exemplo; mas é certamente um sintoma mais negativo do que positivo e muito menos valorizado por Fielding do que por Cícero. A temperança não deixa de ser celebrada pelo primeiro, apesar de todo o seu franco apreço por prazeres positivos que a vida proporciona — e poderá estar ausente em casos de falsa grandeza teorizados ou recriados ficcionalmente pelo autor. Quanto à prudência, ela distinguir-se-ia por andar associada a, mas subvertida por, maliciosa esperteza em Wild ou também em Blifil, que nesse e noutros aspectos, em *Tom Jones*, se contrapõe à personagem que figura no título. Esta seguramente condiz com o tipo da boa natureza não sensata nem prudente, em árdua aprendizagem da sabedoria, como o citado postulado da ‘Dedicatória’ do romance sugere. Aprendizagem amiúde comprometida por paixões difíceis de dominar (em Inglês habitualmente designadas por ‘*unruly passions*’), como igualmente acontece com o Capitão Booth, protagonista de *Amelia*, último romance do autor. E a necessidade de controlar as paixões insensatas seria substituída, no ‘grande’ homem, pela necessidade de controlar o rosto, as emoções ou as palavras que poderão traír a respectiva ‘grandeza’, nomeadamente se há ‘público’ a testemunhar o espectáculo das suas acções e reacções. Neste sentido, o *self-control* valorizado por Fielding não coincide com o auto-domínio quer do estóico quer do ‘grande’ homem tipificado por Wild. De modo análogo, a consideração pelos outros e o *decorum* (que acompanham tradicionalmente todas as virtudes no homem bom, tornando-o capaz de adequar apropriada, consistente e agradavelmente o discurso e o comportamento à sensibilidade ou bem estar alheios) não seriam meras regras formais de interesse próprio ou de expediência. Distinguiriam uma exigência íntima de coerência nos seres verdadeiramente humanos, que os afasta dos seres brutos ou embrutecidos. Na sua verdadeira acepção, as ‘boas’ maneiras justificar-se-iam precisamente na medida em que radicam naquelas duas características e não como verniz decorativo ou conveniente cartão de visita. Estas conve-

niências, insinua o narrador, é que levam o pai de Jonathan a mandá-lo para a Universidade e que levam também o Conde La Ruse, seu 'avisado' tutor nas artes do furto e do singrar em sociedade, entre outras prendas, a propor-lhe lucrativa aliança. *Self-control*, consideração pelos outros e *decorum* estariam, assim, fortemente ligados entre si, enquanto requisitos do homem bom ou do herói, garantindo não apenas a satisfação do gosto, da graça, da formosura, mas também a harmonia ínsita na coerência de carácter capaz de superar a inconstância e as fraquezas ilustradas por aqueles protagonistas da ficção de Fielding. Coerência de carácter tanto mais solicitada quanto mais parecia capaz de realizar ou satisfazer a identidade pessoal e individual e superar a reiterada verificação de que 'cada homem é tão diferente dos outros como de si mesmo'. Arvorada em jeito aforístico por diversos autores da época e abundantemente patenteada tanto em ensaios morais como em romances, essa verificação de uma experiência comum contrastaria com a ficção predominante em épocas anteriores, mais dependente da fixa compartimentação da tipologia caracterológica. Lugar saliente tem também tal verificação na ficção principal de Fielding, embora se reconheça o respectivo débito à tipologia humana tradicional. O que se compagina, aliás, com o seu duplo papel de pioneiro na ficção britânica moderna e de autor atento quer à tradição narrativa antiga quer à mais recente (veja-se o seu apego a aspectos do modelo cervantino de *Don Quixote*, com a deambulação pelas estradas da Grã-Bretanha da parelha Joseph-Adams, no primeiro romance, e da parelha Jones-Partridge, no segundo). Já em *Jonathan Wild*, a sátira narrativa é precursora da ficção moderna, designadamente na intriga de desfecho oscilatório e incerto, mas assenta mais, como sátira que é, tanto na caracterização das personagens como na estrutura, sobre a fixidez dos tipos humanos tradicionais e do dualismo correspondente, que vem, em primeira instância, da *satura* latina. Os nomes Heartfree e Wild (este aproveitado da personagem da vida real), assim como Slipslop, Peter Pounce, Lady Booby, Allworthy, Tom Jones (este, pelo seu sentido genérico e atribuição frequente), por exemplo, apontam na mesma direcção, de um conjunto de narrativas em que o humor de comédia satírica ainda começa em típica simbologia alegorizante. Esta não é tão visível em *Amelia*, que neste e noutros aspectos marca uma mudança na ficção de Fielding, em direcção a um maior realismo de sentimento e a uma maior individuação das personagens principais.

Os nomes destas, Capitão Booth, Amelia, e Miss Andrews, já não correspondem a alegorizantes tipificações. Em *Joseph Andrews* e *Tom Jones*, os elementos satíricos persistem, coerentes, mas não sistematizados nem sempre submetidos a uma simetria especular ou estrutural. Todavia, no primeiro desses romances (1742, ou seja: publicado um ano antes de *Miscellanies*), o protagonista, a forma epistolar e a própria concepção da história começam ainda como parte de um desígnio satírico visando *Pamela*, primeiro romance do contemporâneo Samuel Richardson. De facto, Joseph Andrews é apresentado como ‘irmão’ de Pamela Andrews, a quem compulsivamente escreve cartas sucessivas acicatado pela pressão do momento, como ela; e o mesmo romance inicia-se como uma espécie de *Shamela* (primeira sátira do autor a *Pamela*), mas no masculino. No entanto, é já em *Joseph Andrews* que o autor faz afinal a sua descoberta da *novel*, traduzida sobretudo na progressiva autonomia ficcional do protagonista e de outra personagem central, Parson Adams, também gradualmente individualizada ou desprendida de ligações tipológicas condicionantes. Autonomia traduzida na imprevisibilidade da itinerância de ambos e na incerteza da sequência das respectivas acções. Subjacente aos elementos satíricos dos romances e ao realismo do último deles, mantém-se um tonus ético que não é, em si mesmo, dissociável da mensagem intelectual-moral dos ensaios de *Miscellanies*. A verificação aforística atrás enunciada e transcrita da ‘Dedicatória’ de *Tom Jones* tem uma variante no princípio do *Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men* (em prosa): ‘Man differs more from Man, than Man from Beast’.<sup>7</sup> Tal variante introduz várias observações convergentes que conduzem a crítica acerada à chamada ‘Art of Thriving’ (‘A arte de vencer na vida’). Esse o título de numerosos compêndios muito em voga na primeira metade do século XVIII, que se diria, irónica

---

<sup>7</sup> Volume primeiro da citada ed. de *Miscellanies*. Cf. p. 153, nota 6, em que se esclarece ter esse verso sido transcrito (de Rochester, ‘Satyr against Mankind’, *Poems on Several Occasions*, 1680), também em jornais de Fielding. Derivado, em primeira instância, de Plutarco, ter-se-ia tornado corrente a partir de Montaigne. Cf. referências mais específicas em *loc. cit.*, nota indicada. Sobre o conceito de Rochester, ver o meu estudo ‘Imagens animais na tradição da sátira inglesa, com especial referência ao Período Augustano’, *Revista da Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa*, nº 24, 5ª série, 1998, pp. 95-128.

ou literalmente, terem podido servir de manuais ou guias apropriados à instrução de Wild promovida por La Ruse, e subentendidas na referência à aliança entre ambos com vista a singrarem na sociedade. Subentendimento hoje mais difícil de detectar por desconhecimento de tais compêndios, como mais difícil de perceber pelo leitor estrangeiro comum é o pressuposto de que o respectivo desiderato poderia alegadamente motivar ‘o progresso do patife’. Espécie de título-legenda, seria susceptível este título, usando o idioma satírico de Fielding, de tradução como ‘great man’s progress’. Ou, repetindo a inscrição de Hogarth na sua sátira pictórica, por ‘The Rake’s progress’. Em ambos os casos teríamos uma réplica inversa de um real peregrinar, como o do famoso livro de John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), com a sua mensagem ético-religiosa sobre a necessidade de sabedoria e de verdadeiros valores. O que está, em boa medida, no cerne de toda a obra de Fielding e, muito explicitamente, nas suas (hoje pouco divulgadas) *Miscellanies*.

### Works Cited

- Baldick, Chris, *Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Oxford (Univ. Press), 1990, reimp. 1996.
- Fielding, Henry, *Miscellanies, Volume One*, ed. Henry Knight Miller. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972, reimp. 1979.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Miscellanies, Volume Three*, com Introdução e Comentário de Bertrand A. Goldgar e texto ed. por Hugh Amory. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.
- Hughes, Derek, *Dryden’s Heroic Plays*, London: MacMillan Press, 1981.
- Miller, Henry Knight, *Essays on Fielding’s ‘Miscellanies’: A Commentary on Volume One*, Princeton (Univ. Press), 1961.
- Nunes, João Manuel de Sousa, *Fielding: da Sátira ao Romance*, Instituto de Cultura Inglesa, Faculdade de Letras de Lisboa, 1987.
- Plumb, J. H., ‘The Age of Walpole’, no seu livro *England in the Eighteenth Century*, nº 7 de *The Pelican History of England*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1950, reimp. 1979.
- Waith, Eugene, *Ideas of Greatness: Heroic Drama in England*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

**ABSTRACT**

The present essay begins with the realization that important historical events in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries favoured a long-standing debate in Britain and elsewhere on human greatness and the fortunes of the heroic. Taking *Jonathan Wild* and other texts, particularly in Fielding's *Miscellanies*, as reflecting such concern, it proceeds with a brief reference to the relationship between the author and Walpole and an interpretation of the prevalence of the burlesque during those two centuries. In this context, it is argued that there is a complementarity and a convergence between the binary latin *satura* and the binary burlesque. At the same time, it stresses a similar complementarity and convergence between *Jonathan Wild* and Fielding's essay-poems *Of True Greatness* and *Of Good Nature*. The essay ends up with some related reflexions on *An Essay on Conversation* (in prose) and on some contrasting characters in the author's fiction.

**KEYWORDS**

The debate on greatness; true and false greatness; good nature; the fortunes of the heroic; the poems-essays and *Jonathan Wild*

**RESUMO**

O presente ensaio começa com a verificação da existência, nos séculos XVII e XVIII, de um prolongado debate sobre as dimensões da grandeza humana e do heróico, estimulado por acontecimentos históricos que afectaram o regime do poder. Como reflexo deste debate, foca-se textos de Fielding, com especial referência a *Jonathan Wild* e a poemas-ensaios das suas *Miscellanies*, abordando de passagem o relacionamento do autor com Walpole. Avança-se depois para uma interpretação histórico-literária do burlesco naqueles séculos, no âmbito da qual se considera a complementaridade e convergência entre a *satura* latina (com os seus pólos positivo e negativo) e o burlesco (com a sua bi-polaridade entre

linguagem e assunto). Em paralelo, aponta-se complementaridade e convergência análogas entre *Jonathan Wild* e os ensaio-poemas *Of True Greatness* e *Of Good Nature*. A propósito e a terminar, apresenta-se ainda algumas reflexões sobre o texto em prosa *An Essay on Conversation* e sobre personagens contrastantes na ficção de Fielding.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Debate sobre a grandeza; verdadeira e falsa grandeza; boa natureza; fortunas do heróico; ensaios-poemas e *Jonathan Wild*

---



**NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS**  
**NOTAS SOBRE OS COLABORADORES**



RITA AMORIM is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Social and Political Sciences, University of Lisbon, where she teaches English for Specific Purposes. She is a fellow at CAPP (Centre for Administration and Public Policies). She holds a Degree in Modern Languages and Literatures, a MSc Degree in TESOL and a PhD in International Relations. Her research interests include written and spoken code-switching, English-Language Teaching (ELT), English as a Global language and English as International Language (EIL).

TERESA F. A. ALVES is professor emeritus and researcher in RG 3 in American Studies at CEAUL/ULICES. Her published work reflects her interests in contemporary fiction and poetry, autobiography, visual culture and translation. She is presently engaged in researching Portuguese American literature and culture, having published essays on autobiography, fiction and poetry. She authored *Cânone e Diversidade* (2003), and co-authored *Feminine Identities* (2002) and *Literatura Norte-Americana* (1999). Among others, she co-edited *Portugal Pelo Mundo Disperso* (2013), *Narrating the Portuguese Diaspora: Piecing Things Together* (2011), *From the Edge: Portuguese Short Stories* (2006) and *Ceremonies and Spectacles: Performing American Culture* (2000).

ALEXANDRA CHEIRA is a researcher at ULICES (University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies). She received her MA on English Literature at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon, Portugal, with a thesis on A.S.Byatt's fiction, subtitled "Things are (not) what they seem: ambivalence, androgyny, symbiosis and metamorphosis in the representations of female identity in A.S.Byatt's *Possession*, *Morpho Eugenia* and "Cold". She is now a PhD candidate at the same Faculty and she is currently writing

her dissertation on the wonder tales of A.S. Byatt. Her publications include essays on Byatt's fiction in specialised journals and critical volumes.

FRANCISCO COSTA is currently an associate tutor at the School of American Studies, University of East Anglia, where he has been teaching since 2010. Francisco Costa current research project focuses on the representation of queer identities, and explores the multiple relationships between American drama, theatre and performance, and the American society and culture in the production of a male identity, particularly a gay male identity by a gay male author. Francisco Costa has presented papers at national and international conferences and was awarded a full scholarship to complete his current project. Francisco Costa has also written articles on his field, forthcoming in prominent journals.

MARIA LUÍSA FENEJA holds a PhD in American Literature (2007), a Master's degree in American Studies (2000) and a degree in Modern Languages and Literatures, English and German Studies (1986). She is a teacher of English and German in a Portuguese secondary school. Her research interests focus mainly on twentieth-century American Literature (narrative fiction, science-fiction and fantasy narrative), literary theory, and American culture. She has presented papers and published essays in these areas.

ANA M. FERRARIA had her Masters viva in 2011 with the thesis "As Épicas Breves de Keats e Pessoa" under the supervision of Professor António M. Feijó. She is currently writing her PhD dissertation in the Program in Literary Theory from the Faculty of Letters at the University of Lisbon (FL-UL). She is a member of ELAB and Estranhar Pessoa and often writes about literature and cinema.

HEINZ ICKSTADT Professor of American Literature at the Kennedy Institute of North American Studies, Free University Berlin, emeritus since 2003. Publications: *Dichterische Erfahrung und Metaphernstruktur: Die Bildersprache Hart Cranes*; a history of the American novel in the twentieth century (*Transformations of the Mimetic*, 1996); plus essays on late nineteenth-century American literature and culture within a context of rapid social transformation (especially on the work of William Dean

Howells and Henry James), on the fiction and poetry of American modernism and postmodernism, also on the history and theory of American Studies. Some of these were collected in *Faces of Fiction: Essays on American Literature and Culture from the Jacksonian Age to Postmodernity* (2001). He also edited and co-edited several books on American literature and culture, among them a bi-lingual anthology of American poetry and the first English/German edition of Pound's *The Cantos* (2012). He was president of the German Association of American Studies from 1990 until 1993, and president of the European Association of American Studies from 1996-2000.

ANTÓNIO LOPES PhD in English Culture, MA in Anglo-Portuguese Studies and BA in Modern Languages and Literatures (English and German), is Senior Lecturer in English Studies at the University of Algarve, where he teaches English language, literature and culture, literary analysis and supervises ELT postgraduate projects. He has also been the director of studies of postgraduate programmes in ELT and translation. He is a researcher at the CETAPS – Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies, working with several research groups. He has participated in several European-funded projects.

MARGARIDA MARTINS has a BA in Social Anthropology and Ancient History from University College London (1993-96) and an MA in American Literature and Culture from Keele University, UK (1998-99). She is currently doing her PhD on Indian literature at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon. Her areas of research interests focus on postcolonial literature and theory, language studies, culture and cultural diversity, anthropology and multiculturalism. She did her TESOL course at Columbia University, New York and has been teaching English as a foreign language ever since. She is currently a full time online lecturer at the Portuguese Open University.

JOÃO MANUEL DE SOUSA NUNES taught Portuguese in the University of Manchester (1967-72), got an M.A. degree in Portuguese Literature (University of Manchester, 1971), and a Ph. D. degree in English Literature (University of Warwick, 1981). He is a retired Professor of English from the Faculty of Arts of Lisbon University (1972-2002), where he taught

English Language, Literature and Culture. He coordinated the teaching of English and English Culture, in his Department, and was also in charge of a research group on intellectual history of the University of Lisbon Centre for English Studies (ULJCES).

MARIA JOSÉ PIRES obtained her PhD degree in English Studies by the University of Lisbon (2013) with a dissertation entitled “Dealing with Appetites. Angela Carter’s Fiction”. She is a researcher in ULICES and her interests are English Literature and Culture. She currently teaches English to the courses of Hotel Management and Cookery and Food Production at Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril.

JORGE BASTOS DA SILVA teaches in the Department of Anglo-American Studies, the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Porto. His main fields of research are English Literature and Culture, Intellectual History, Utopian Studies, and Translation and Reception Studies. He is the author and editor of a number of works, among which: *Tradução e Cultura Literária. Ensaio sobre a Presença de Autores Estrangeiros em Portugal* (2014); *The Epistemology of Utopia: Rhetoric, Theory and Imagination* (2013); *A Instituição da Literatura. Horizonte Teórico e Filosófico da Cultura Literária no Limiar da Modernidade* (2010); *Vasco José de Aguiar, Utopista Português do Século XIX* (2010); *Shakespeare no Romantismo Português. Factos, Problemas, Interpretações* (2005); *Utopias de Cordel e Textos Afins. Uma Antologia* (2004); *O Véu do Templo. Contributo para uma Topologia Romântica* (1999).

FÁTIMA VIEIRA is Associate Professor (with “Agregação”) at Faculdade de Letras of the Universidade do Porto, where she has been teaching since 1986. Her main fields of research are Utopian Studies, British Political History, Translation Studies and Shakespearean Studies. She is currently the Chairperson of the Utopian Studies Society/Europe, the co-ordinator of a research project on utopianism funded by FCT, and the director of the collection “Nova Biblioteca das Utopias” (Afrontamento), as well as of the electronic journals *E-topia* and *Spaces of Utopia*. She also is Book Review Editor for the North-American Journal *Utopian Studies*.



