

ANGLO SAXONICA

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

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ESSAYS
ESTUDOS

The “Sublime” Aesthetic
in American Independent Cinema:
Incomprehensibility, Violence,
Awe and Paradox

Karin Badt

Université de Paris 8

The “Sublime” Aesthetic in American Independent Cinema: Incomprehensibility, Violence, Awe and Paradox

A paradox in contemporary cinema viewing is that a spectator may watch a violent, nihilistic, apocalyptic or otherwise “dark” story, and still leave the theater feeling uplifted, excited and in awe. A case in point is Terrence Malick’s *Badlands* (1973). Movie critics have used the word “sublime” to describe this bleak tale of a modern Bonnie and Clyde duo who kill randomly, without affect, and finish broken apart by a couple of blasé cops, their romance reduced to a desultory nod goodbye. Were the same story read in print it would most likely not have the same transcendent effect on its audience: a curious difference between literature and cinema that has yet to be addressed in film studies.

In this paper, I propose that the category of aesthetic appreciation that best accounts for the paradoxical *sui generis* quality of a great number of film viewing experiences is “the sublime”, a term first explored in philosophy as a psychological experience by Edmund Burke (1757) and then expanded upon by Immanuel Kant (1790). One of the benchmarks of a successful art-house film is, most film critics would agree, the achievement of a “sublime” effect on the audience: mid-twentieth century landmark masterpieces, such as Ingmar Bergman’s *Persona* (1966), John Frankenheimer’s *Seconds* (1966) and Kenji Mizoguchi’s *Ugetsu* (1953) share with recent festival winners such as Lynn Ramsay’s *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2011), Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010) and Naomi Kawase’s *Still the Water* (2014) one trademark in common: the establishment of a relationship of puzzlement between viewer and screen, that which is necessary, according to Kant, to provoke the movement into the sublime.

1. Kant's Sublime

Kant presents his full argument on the Sublime in the second book of his *Critique of Judgement*. He begins his argument by assuming that two mental processes are essential to the human being's apprehension of his or her world: 1) the process of the "imagination" which means, for Kant, the use of the senses to intuit ("imagine") the objects around us and 2) reason, which allows us to make sense of what it is we see. Kant then goes on to compare the mental experiences of Beauty and the Sublime, a taxonomy established by his predecessor Burke in his seminal text *Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the text that initiated the "psychology" based approach to aesthetics that would influence the next 250 years of sublime theory. Kant, like Burke, posits that while the contemplation of beauty is a "restful" experience, the sublime causes unrest in the mind: a state of perturbation. A beautiful object, for both philosophers, conforms to the standards of taste that we inherently know to be "true": harmony, proportion, etc. Hence we feel "at rest": our reason is appeased. A sublime object, in contrast, challenges our reason; it is beyond our rational understanding. We can intuit (through our "imagination") the existence of "infinity", but if we try to understand what infinity actually "means", we fall into an abyss. Similarly, if we see a turbulent ocean, we can detect, through our senses, the violent waters, the immensity of the natural phenomenon, but in a second movement, our mind cannot grasp the immensity, power and danger of what we see. Hence we experience a vertiginous and painful feeling of awe. This "pain" is essential, in both Burke and Kant's reading, to the experience of the sublime. Without it, one would remain at rest.

Yet there is a third essential step beyond pain in this dynamic process, for Kant. In this third step, the rational mind perceives its own inability to make sense. It is this ability to perceive the limits of reason—and reflect on it—that subsequently leads to a godlike sensation of wonder: wonder at one's own capacity to wonder. It is in this space of reflecting on the limits of understanding that we are privy to what for Kant is the highest aesthetic (and moral) experience: the sense of awe at *our own nature*—our understanding of our understanding, a sensation that an animal, for example, can never attain.

Kant's tackling of the "sublime" endures as one of the most critical

offerings to the field of aesthetics, taken up by thinkers as notable as Jean-Francois Lyotard (giving a Marxist reading of Kant in *Lessons of the Analytic of the Sublime*) and Slavoj Zizek (offering a Lacanian reading in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*). Its appeal lies partially in the fact that, in its psychological complexity, it accounts for why art viewers take pleasure in works that offer neither pleasing sensations nor comprehensibility: a trademark of many contemporary artworks. Art historian Robert Rosenblum has used Kant to understand the transcendent appeal of American modernist works, such as the enigmatic colored shapes of Mark Rothko and the random strokes of Jackson Pollock. Artists George Quasha and Charles Stein have used Kant's sublime to address the liminal effect of fellow artist Gary Hill's video installations. British philosopher John Onians has assumed Kant's aesthetic to assess the relative power of a classical music concert. Indeed, in an unusual move, Onians has even gone so far as to argue that contemporary neuroscience proves the validity of Kant's dynamic sublime: our vision processing, for example, works like Kant's sublime. Our photoreceptors apprehend objects through light, which becomes information transmitted through neurons to the cerebral cortex, which tries to interpret what it is we have seen. When the object corresponds with our already existing precepts (i.e. "that is a table"), we are "restful"; when our brain cannot comprehend the object, or deliberates with multiple interpretations ("is that a black puddle? Or a child's face?"), our biochemistry is agitated, according to Onians. The "sublime" is that agitated state of the brain trying to make sense of our world, as is its wont—or to use Kant's term, its "purpose".

2. Cinema and the Sublime

This distinction between two contrary psychological states—established by Burke, expanded upon by Kant and given a neuroscientific reading by Onians—is central, I argue, for understanding the experience of watching an auteur film. An art-house film militates against spectator "restfulness"; indeed it is most successful if it can produce the bafflement and perturbation dictated by Kant's sublime. In film, it is obvious that nothing grasps the viewer's attention as much as an image or sound—or even plot element—that the viewer cannot make sense of. A case in point is the first sequence of Bergman's *Persona*, where seemingly random images—an erect penis,

a crucifix, a tarantula spider—appear one after another on the screen: images that prime the viewer to aim to interpret their significance. It is also a standard film technique to begin a film with a close-up on an image—a red splotch, a shadow—and then pan away from the object to gain a “wide-angle” shot so the viewer can perceive what it is. Our attention is drawn precisely by our bafflement, and then we are recompensed, in the next shot, by cognitive identification: a dynamic that plays itself out continually, in a Jack and Jill game of hide-and-seek, throughout many a film, creating that familiar feeling of spectator suspense (even if the film is not *per se* a suspense film).

However, clearly certain avant-garde auteur filmmakers engage more deeply with this aesthetic than others. Going beyond the “awe” element, these directors purposefully aim to make bafflement just the first step towards a movement to what I am terming the “contemporary sublime”, to produce a transcendent effect on the audience. We are all familiar with the masters of this aesthetic: Bergman, Wenders, Tarkofsky, Fellini. What distinguishes their works is that there is no peaceful, final message in their artworks; no comprehensible “happy ending”, or even obvious summation of the story that the spectator has experienced. These films create an ambiguous experience of “transcendence”, which—as with Kant’s sublime—cannot be grasped by our cognition. Take the final image of *Stalker* (1980), where the Stalker’s mutant daughter is sitting before a table when a glass suddenly moves towards her while a train roars past. What is happening? What does it mean? Or take the final scene of Bergman’s *The Seventh Seal* (1957), where the questing knight and his mates walk along the beach, led on a rope by the dark figure of Death: surely this morbid coastal promenade is not a happy ending—indeed, if anything, it points to Bergman’s problematic relationship with “faith”. Yet this celebrated finale creates a (painful) feeling of awe, wonder, transcendence. The contemporary sublime.

3. The Sublime and American Independent Cinema

Of sociological interest is the fact that the “sublime aesthetic” has found a particular niche in independent American cinema, a trend that began in the 1960s with “New Hollywood” landmark art films such as John

Frankenheimer's *Seconds* (1966) and Dennis Hopper's *Easy Rider* (1969). The American twist is to combine the sublime with an alienating effect, pointing to the individual's lone existential status before the universe, and the spectator's complicity with this alienated stance. American filmmakers such as Jim Jarmusch, Francis Ford Coppola, Todd Haynes, Todd Solondz, the Coen Brothers, Tim Burton, Terrence Malick, Sophia Coppola, Quentin Tarantino and David Lynch have all participated in this aesthetic of this "alienating" sublime. Their films shock viewers with violence, stun with incomprehensible scenes of death and murder; inspire with image-sound-track combinations that ultimately cannot be grasped rationally. The result is an uncanny sense of hopelessness and awe: a particularly American trademark.

What is interesting is that the alienating films of the auteurs noted above predictably produce in the spectator an uncanny sense of wonder, a revived aliveness, an experience that could almost be termed religious—and this, curiously enough, in an audience that tends to perceive itself as post-modern, fractured, alienated and anti-religious. I would dare to surmise that the popularity of this contemporary sublime aesthetic that refuses to inspire, that refuses "beauty", that refuses "reasonable" understanding may lie in the fact that this aesthetic may be the one that best responds today to what anthropologist Roy Rappaport has identified as the universal human need to experience religious awe. As film director Bruno Dumont, master of the contemporary sublime aesthetic in France (one of the few in France—as he agreed himself—making "sublime" films), remarked to me: "I am an atheist. I do not believe in God. But I believe in transcendence: in creating the transcendent experience for audiences, precisely by refusing clear narrative, and allowing the spectator to wonder at the image on his or her own".¹

Dumont's comment intersects with Kant's sublime—and the American sublime—in its emphasis on incomprehensibility as the first step to the experience of awe. To cite the German philosopher: "The feeling

¹ Similarly, Kant speaks against religion as encouraging passivity before a fearsome godhead, whereas "activity" of the brain is in order: the human must feel him or herself an equal to what he or she sees in order to experience the Sublime.

of the Sublime is therefore a feeling of pain, arising from the want of accordance between the aesthetical magnitude formed by the Imagination [the senses] and the estimation of the same formed by Reason” (Kant, section 25). This paean to the “pain” of the inchoate is echoed remarkably in the aesthetics of many American independent artists, such as Jim Jarmusch, from his early film, *Strangers in Paradise* (1984) to his more recent *Only Lovers Left Alive* (2013), Sophia Coppola in her debut film *Virgin Suicides* (1999) and David Lynch who has claimed that he wishes to have his spectators experience in his films the incomprehensible quality of his dreams, a state that he compares, in his book *Catching the Big Fish*, to the transcendent realm which he personally reaches through meditation. What is similar to these American practitioners of the postmodern sublime is a film aesthetic characterized by contradictions, unexpected violence, vertiginously incomprehensible images (from a cut ear in the grass to a paper flower falling from a window), dream-cut editing and a hauntingly surreal sound-track, all of which leads to a final inconclusive scene, which once more, baffles the audience.

4. *Dead Man*: A Sublime Journey

Jarmusch’s *Dead Man* (1995), considered by critics as his greatest achievement, exemplifies this trend in the contemporary sublime in American independent cinema. It is the story of a young man (Johnny Depp) from Cleveland (like Jarmusch himself) who travels West to make his career in the unholy city of Machine. The first shots portend the young man’s journey into a universe of bafflement, where his preconceptions will be turned upside down, and he will have no choice but to embrace a state of wonder. The young man—named William Blake (a poetic nomenclature he does not himself comprehend)—sits on a train, nervously, hands prim on his lap, elegant in his bowler hat, bow-tie and wire-rim glasses, gazing with amazement at his fellow travelers, one of whom arbitrarily shares with him the paradox that “when one is on a boat and sees the sky, why does the landscape move and not the boat?” The camera cuts to images of train movement: the smoke coming up the wheels, the fire from the engines, and then suddenly the sound of a rampage of buffalos, which the passengers jump up to shoot. William Blake adjusts his glasses.

The train journey of our protagonist finishes at "the end of the line" in the hostile town of Machine: it is here that the naïve man's descent into an awful universe begins. Blake's first walk through town is a walk past macabre skulls and coffins, and a woman performing fellatio in an alley. His meeting with his future employer is a violent confrontation with a rifle-toting Robert Mitchum character, in an office with animal skulls on the wall and a stuffed gaping bear. His subsequent one-night love affair with a beautiful flower-girl concludes abruptly when her angry lover comes and shoots her in bed, at which point Blake shoots in turn, marking his destiny as a hunted murderer, i.e. as "a dead man". The climatic image: a sea of white paper flower petals strewn on the ground in a darkened night, while our protagonist escapes and a comet shoots.

It is images like the enigmatic sea of flower petals that characterizes the aesthetics of Jarmusch's oeuvre. Haunting and beautiful at the same time, such images disallow aesthetic consumption—the easeful category of "beauty". The bulk of this road movie is Blake's journey as a hunted man (for killing his boss's son) through wintry forests, coming upon more and more random acts of violence and death. Accompanying him on his journey is a Native American savior named "Nobody", who responds in enigmas to his questions and initiates him to that which cannot be understood: the realm of William Blake's poetry. Every scene climaxes with a strange image: a cannibal eating an arm in the woods, an appearance of an elk, two bears making love noisily behind a tree, who turn out to be people. We are in a world of constant violent surprise.

Significantly, William Blake loses his glasses. He can no longer see. Close-ups on his face—of which there are hundreds—emphasize repeatedly his bewildered eyes. It is this state of "not being able to see" that starts his spiritual education. In a pivotal scene, Blake lies flat on the ground, with a wounded fawn, the two geometrically positioned in the frame as the camera pans vertiginously in the trees and Blake notes his missing glasses. The disorientation is dizzying, incomprehensible and intoxicating, underscored by the eerie chords of Neil Young's original soundtrack. Blake—his senses turned dizzy—has begun the ascent to the Sublime. His pose throughout the film remains one of bewilderment, one that is maintained to the last close-up on his dazed pupils.

In effect, the film is a narrative allegory of Kant's argument.

One consistency among viewer responses to *Dead Man* is that they tend to remark on the film's inchoate meaning, privileging this inchoate reading to other more "sense"-driven interpretations. The consensus is that the overt sociological reading of the film—as a critique of "machine" capitalism and its suppression of Native American culture (which is accurately represented)—fails to account for the powerfully mystifying effect of this film, or for its enigmatic poetics of violence and transformation: The transformation between one version of the "real" and another. For by the film's conclusion, William Blake has transformed. Instead of a bowler hat, he wears a fur head-dress; his glasses have long disappeared; his face is now painted in streaks. From an upright man from Cleveland, sitting primly on a train, destined for a career, he has become a dying man prone on a canoe, staring at the sky, which seems to move as he does not (as predicted by the early parable on the train). He is going where "the sea meets the sky". Nobody tells him. A paradox which is nothing less than sublime.

However, the ultimate sublime journey is the viewer's. For Kant, the "sublime" happens in the mind. It does not lie in the object itself. Here, let us not forget, the object is the film. The mind is the spectator's: not that of this fictive character on screen. Without the spectator, there is no sublimity to the film. Moreover, note that the position of a film spectator is the perfect one to experience the sublime. For Kant and Burke, a human being, to experience the sublime, must be faced with a tremendous experience that he or she cannot grasp the immensity of, one that induces a sensation of danger and fear. "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger...or operates in a manner analogous to terror", states Burke famously. "Is a source of the sublime" (Burke 58-59). However, for Burke as well as Kant, it is essential that the human be in a position of safety to be able to embrace the next crucial movement, which is to go from "pain" to wonder and awe. Otherwise, he or she would just be consumed by fear for his or her survival.

The spectator of Jarmusch's film has the privilege, unlike Blake, of watching the awful world of cannibalistic ritual and arbitrary murder from a safe position of non-involvement. Yet this experience of watching is not passive. The spectator must strain to understand what the random images amount to, where the journey is going; a challenge that Jarmusch creates deliberately through highly original film techniques that work to produce

obscurity: the use of black-outs, unexpected violent images, awe-inspiring camera pans on the American West (the woods, the mountains, the pristine lake), a mix of foreign native American languages (Blackfoot, Cree and Makah) that are left untranslated and an anachronistic postmodern collage of rock music and native American war songs, all thematically underscored by a constant threat of violence.

What the spectator is left with is nothing short of baffling. At the film's conclusion, is the Johnny Depp character on his way to a transcendent death as he lies bleeding in his canoe? Is his journey to a greater spiritual world? And yet, this peaceful "meaningful" message is disturbed at once in a cut-away to Nobody and his unsavory opponent "Cole Wilson" shooting each other dead: a decidedly meaningless finish, making death far from meaningful and less than poetic. We are left with just the moving boat, where the water meets the sky, to Neil Young's evocative chords. William Blake's eyes remain perplexed. No way to make sense of this. American alienation meets the Sublime.

What more can a contemporary audience want? Jarmusch has transported us to a state of awe.

But Kant's sublime does not finish with awe. What is central to his theory is the moral reflection that such an experience ultimately provokes. For Kant, it is the mind's relationship to itself—the mind reflecting on its own capacity to experience the sublime—that leads, much like Platonic's ascent to the ideal forms—to transcendence, to the contemplation of the wondrous human capacity to think rationally, which for Kant is equivalent to the Moral Law: "that might which it exercises in us over all mental motives that *precede it*" (83). The sublime falls flat if it does not invite speculation.

The plethora of stunningly baffling films in independent American cinema—from Lynch's *Lost Highway* (1997) to Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), by disallowing easy consumption and opening the gate to awe, are a powerful invitation to thought about that which cannot be understood. Indeed I would argue that these independent films are rare opportunities in mass American culture for those who crave a cutaway from easy truths, a chance to experience sublime contemplation. Take the last scene of Malick's *Badlands* is Sissy Spacek sitting on a plane alone, after her lover has been taken to execution. The camera pauses on her expression-barren

face, its hint of a smile. Then it shoots to a final shot of the sky, the clouds parting in the blue. What is that shot about? What does this image signify? It is here—in the lacunae between sensation and reason—that thought begins.

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, the author proposes using the aesthetic category of "the sublime", as derived from Kant and Burke, to understand the particular aesthetics of independent American cinema. She identifies the dynamic process of the sublime, which involves a contradiction between sense and reason, and argues that the same dynamic is replicated in film viewing experiences of films by American auteurs such as David Lynch, Sophia Coppola, the Coen Brothers and Terrence Malick. Her essay concludes with a Kantian reading of Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man*.

KEYWORDS

Sublime; American independent cinema; *Dead Man*; Immanuel Kant; spectatorship theory

RESUMO

Neste ensaio, a autora propõe utilizar a categoria estética do "sublime", tal como derivado de Kant e Burke, para compreender a estética particular do cinema americano independente. Ela identifica o processo dinâmico do sublime, que envolve uma contradição entre o sentido e a razão, e argumenta que a mesma dinâmica é replicada em experiências de visualização de filmes de autores americanos, como David Lynch, Sophia Coppola, os irmãos Coen e Terrence Malick. O seu ensaio conclui com uma leitura kantiana de *Dead Man* de Jim Jarmusch.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Sublime; cinema independente americano; *Dead Man*; Immanuel Kant; teoria de recepção

*Ceci n'est pas (seulement)
une galerie d'art.*

The Tate: Branding, marketing and communicating an art business

Célia Baixa

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Ceci n'est pas (seulement) une galerie d'art.
**The Tate: Branding, marketing and communicating
an art business**

Museums are no longer seen as mausoleums of art treasures, pillars of scientific authority (Bennett 1995) or spaces of ritualized behaviour (Duncan 1995). We are in the era of the post-museum, a space where a whole range of identities and social variations must be represented (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, 2000). Museums work and are marketed as places where there are distinct areas to be used for different motivations and by people from various backgrounds, whether for aesthetic contemplation, learning, socialization or for consumer purposes.

Current arts management perspectives (Chong 2007 [2002]) reflect the impact of economic pressures on culture, especially the changes in the dominance of public funding and a new visitor-centred perspective based on the laws of market surveys and audiences' research. Museums and art galleries operate within a frame of changing lifestyles and the "aestheticization of everyday life" (Featherstone 1991), globalized consumerism, market-driven forces and mass-mediatised forms of entertainment (Appadurai 2001, 2003 [1996]; Lash and Urry 1994; Jameson 1993 [1984]). They have reshaped their spaces, services and promotion strategies conceptualizing the public as consumers, viewers or even as fans (Mastai 2007) with whom they have to communicate in clear messages in order to make them return.

The widening of the concept of culture as "a way of life" (Williams 1958) has also contributed to new perceptions of art and, brought a more eclectic and inclusive offer of cultural events whose actors/agents coexist in the same space and are represented by the different media. Hesmondhalgh (2002) includes in the definition of art a wide range of activities such as sculpture, music, painting, video, advertising, software development, web designing, publishing, television and radio. Nowadays a reality show,

a cooking programme, an art exhibition or a rock concert are all cultural products ready to be consumed by people of various backgrounds and tastes.

With their long association with popular culture, the mass media, namely the press, radio, television and more recently the internet, have been pivotal in providing new forms of creating narratives about people and events along with the technical capacity for making those pieces of information readily available and easily reproducible. Working in a competitive market, the media have specialized and industrialized their modes of production packaging, cultivating and supplying different forms of information and entertainment, with a visible impact in many social and cultural practices. The media always played a role in the production and the direction of modern culture, affecting the way people perceive time, space, ideas or images and reorganizing the way everyday life is experienced (Stevenson 2002) with wide globalizing effects (Curran 2002; Curran and Gurevitch 2005; Lull 2008). McRobbie (1999) reflects about a new “tabloid loving generation” formed and formatted by new contents produced by reality TV and tabloids, all responsible for the incorporation of new language forms from television and the press within the field of culture.

Museum audiences have also become quite different reflecting the changes in the structure of social classes in the last decades. Urry (82) observes that emerging classes coming from the service sector are formed by more affluent people with the need to increase their “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1984) and this has brought transformations in the experience of culture. These “new” middle classes, very much influenced by television, the internet and glossy magazines show a particular taste for staged high profile events from fashion shows to rock festivals, from cinema to design, and the way they consume culture and entertainment serve the dynamics of the celebrity world as well as the consumer flows of the capitalist system.

Operating in a very competitive market of cultural and entertainment offer, museums and art galleries have not only to create close links with the media but also to engage in branding and communication strategies to reach more audiences, sometimes “selling” their exhibitions and displays like shows. Nowadays an art gallery is not marketed as a place just to see artworks; it is also used to socialize, to attend a conference, to have a meal or to do some shopping, with its image and events being promoted with the same strategies that promote a film premiere or a clothing line.

Persisting contexts of public underfunding for the arts provide the frame to justify an economic and commercial approach to arts management (Throsby 2001; Heilbrun and Gray 2003) putting cultural activities under the forces of the free market. Adorno and Horkheimer (1999 [1947]) described this trend as early as in the late 1940s regretting the way the aesthetic production was being aligned with the economic circuits of other consumer goods.

The need to engage in a more entrepreneurial, mediatized and commercial management of culture has led museums and art galleries to put into practice strategies to boost their image making the arts a field approachable for branding, marketing and communication practices (McLean 1997; Rentschler and Hede 2007, Kotler *et al.* 2008).

The concept of brand assumes particular relevance when considering the relation of an institution/service/product with the public/consumer and it involves the building of identity and the ways to communicate it to the consumers/audiences. Brand development in museums and art galleries is a process of creating symbols and values that bring loyalty to the identity of the brand: heritage, quality, dynamism, tradition and modernity, enjoyment, learning, prestige, positive experiences and emotions:

A brand is a promise of satisfaction. It is a sign, a metaphor operating as an unwritten contract between a manufacturer and a consumer, a seller and a buyer, a performer and an audience, an environment and those who inhabit it, an event and those who experience it. (...) Branding is the process of continuous struggle between producers and customers to define that promise and meaning. (Healey 6)

Although a tool long known in the field of business, branding has only recently been acknowledged by the world of culture and entertainment (Scott 1). Nowadays branding has become one of the most important strategies to inform the publics about the mission of a museum or art gallery. Margot Wallace provides a summary of what is involved in a process of museum branding:

Branding consists of creating and maintaining a body of programs and attitudes that convey a clear promise, encourage familiarity, and generate ongoing support. Branding includes

a logo and a theme, and then goes far beyond those items to encompass every activity that touches the museum's constituency. (1)

This process is related to the creation of an image that can be easily identified and can operate in a way that makes that museum worth a visit or a donation. Fundraising being one of the most important activities in contemporary museum management (Chong 114-118), strategies of branding are essential to attract sponsors, a task made easier if the museum has built a consolidated vision and a consistent set of practices that are able to convey a distinct personality which makes the investment worthy.

Cultural branding also consists in creating loyalty among the museum's visitors and all its choices must reflect its mission and must be perfected in order to work as touch points with the public: the way of displaying the objects, the merchandise items sold in the shop, the themes and artists of the exhibitions, the website, the membership and volunteer materials, leaflets, the cafés and restaurants, the publications and the building (Wallace 2-3).

Marketing involves a set of strategies to place the museum and its services in the market (Rentschler and Hede 2007) and it is a customer-focused activity, very dependent on visitor profile and market research studies. Marketing the museums implies close communication with the media and advertising industries as well as the development of an online presence in the global panorama of culture and entertainment.

At this point I would like to explore many of the aspects examined above in the context of the development of Tate Gallery, enabling it to be in the public's eye and mind for more than one hundred years.

Tate owes much of its development, identity and visibility to processes of cultural corporate identity-building operating in a context of intersecting practices from advertising, branding, media and the celebrity culture. The marketization of Tate's services and image reflect the contemporary trend to sell culture both as spectacle and as a commodity. From as early as the 1950s the position of its Trustees was favourable to the investment in image and brand identity to attract audiences, press interest and sponsors. The fact that in less than ten years its recently opened branch in Bankside, London, Tate Modern, became the most visited art gallery in the UK and in the world can be read as a sign that its Board has fully understood what

it meant, from the end of the 1970s onwards, to make museums and art galleries more visible, accessible and “communicative”, as it had been advocated by the New Museology (Vergo 1989).

When the Tate Gallery opened in Millbank, London in 1897 (with the name of National Gallery of British Art) it was created as an annex of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square with the purpose of showing national art. Although with a building especially conceived to house the collection of sixty-seven works of British art donated by Henry Tate, it suffered from the effects of its peripheral geographic location, from a permanent shortage of funds for acquisitions and from the domineering arm of its Board of Trustees in Trafalgar Square. This context determined the need for emancipation and the creation of an identity directed to different and more independent, sometimes unconventional ways of engaging people in art.

Apart from collecting British art, the Tate was given the responsibility to create a British collection of international art in 1917 (as a result of the conclusions drawn in the *Curzon Report*, 1915) and it needed to prove that it had aesthetic and management competence to build a path to have its own Board of Trustees, which happened in 1917 and to be totally independent from the National Gallery, as eventually happened in 1954 by Act of Parliament (*The National Gallery and Tate Gallery Act*, 1954).

The collection has always been the centre of Tate’s activities and of all its branding and marketing operations. Its image is strongly built around its identity as collector of British art from 1500 to the present and of international modern and contemporary art from 1900 to the present.

Since its creation, even without an independent Board of Trustees, it became very clear that effort had to be put in the consolidation of the collection in order to make it more comprehensive and representative. The notion that it was necessary to enlarge and upgrade the modern international collection challenged Tate’s Trustees to defy traditional and conservative ideas about art defended by the Director of the National Gallery (responsible for the Tate Gallery’s finances until 1954), members of the Royal Academy (who were also part of the Board and exerted strong influence in many decisions) and British audiences, who showed preference for figurative art, especially landscape. From the 1930s to the 1950s great effort was put in the purchase of artworks by Manet, Monet, Cézanne,

Bonnard, Renoir, Picasso, Degas and Utrillo. Showing Impressionists, Cubists and Surrealists in the first decades of the twentieth century in times when these were not in the canon of preferences of the British public proved to be a risky venture worth both the effort and the criticism it received and bringing large numbers of visitors to the Gallery. Facing the competition of American museums, namely the MoMA, one of the biggest collectors of international modern and contemporary art, Tate tried to improve its programme, especially in terms of temporary exhibitions in order to attract more audiences.

The American purchase power and a competitive international art market made Tate's Board face difficulties in the acquisition of important works of British painting to the collection due to the limited governmental aid. Still, the British collection kept growing both through purchase and to donations and gifts and it is possible to show great masters of British painting and sculpture like Hogarth, Turner, Constable, Gainsborough, Stanley Spencer, Paul Nash, Henry Moore, Ben Nicholson and Barbara Hepworth.

The collection provides a wide range of activities that are used to communicate the Gallery's identity such as films, lectures, conferences, workshops, gallery tours, talks and courses. *Tate Guide* is published to enhance all these activities and *TATE ETC* is the Gallery's magazine featuring overviews of exhibitions and displays, interviews with artists and articles about art movements or about works of the collection.

Nowadays, housing one of the biggest art collections of the world allows Tate to build high quality programmes essential to brand an image of diversity and dynamism balancing thematic with monographic exhibitions that attract thousands of visitors. With the help of corporate sponsorship, Tate has invested in blockbuster exhibitions that receive considerable media coverage and bring large audiences. The blockbuster exhibition is one of the most powerful formats to brand a museum. It is packaged, sold and understood in large scales with easy texts and attractive visual practices with a distinct link with an enormous quantity of objects available in the shop (Barker 1999).

Other events, like installations or displays, are very often packaged and marketed in a way to make the visitors feel that they will have a unique aesthetic experience, whether it was Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei's seeds

installation at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall (2009) or the Vorticists exhibition at Millbank (2011).

Architecture has also assumed a growing importance in museum image. Museums are essential in the new cultures of cities (Zukin 1996) building cityscapes and operating as magnets to attract tourists in large numbers (Kirshenblat-Gimblet 1998) and to regenerate run-down quarters (Dicks 2003).

The improvement of museum building in its various forms through refurbishments, extensions and additions reflect a contemporary trend to build the organic museum, always growing, evolving and transforming its space. This shows the importance given to space in the marketing of the museum as a work of art, balancing its double function as container and content (Pevsner 1976; Giebelhausen 2011) and promoting its building as another asset to visit.

These developments have become a priority to Tate's Board and the building and its surrounding landscape are promoted as places worth visiting. Many refurbishment works were made to attract more audiences to the Gallery at Millbank. To improve spaces of socialization, artist Rex Whistler was asked to paint a mural on the walls of the restaurant, which was completed in 1927; new rooms were built to exhibit sculpture which opened in 1937; the Clore Gallery was opened in 1987 to show Turner's masterpieces; in 1997 the Gallery launched the Centenary Development programme which led to improvements that were opened to the public in 2001. In 2014 a new phase of development was completed to improve the quality of the exhibition spaces.

Tate Modern, attracting about 5 million visitors a year, presents its architectonic project as a major branding tool to involve more audiences in the experience of consuming contemporary art. Born from the reconstruction of Bankside power station, Tate Modern emerges in the cityscape thanks to the monolithic building and its imposing high chimney. Its seventh floor offers magnificent panorama views of London with the river Thames at its feet, the Millennium Bridge just a few metres away, and, opposite, St Paul's Cathedral. The choice of the place was not an innocent one. It was a carefully studied location to attract the great numbers of tourists that flock to the cathedral and then move south to visit the gallery and the cultural quarter of South Bank, now becoming a more vibrant area

of the city with regenerated residential areas and a string of cultural venues from the Shakespeare Globe to the London Eye. The Tanks, a major stage of development, were opened at Tate Modern in 2012, the Olympic Year in London, providing a new space in the Gallery for the millions of tourists visiting London that summer.

The development of Public Relations in the Gallery's management practices has also been addressed in several occasions. Social events can be very helpful to consolidate a cultural brand and preview tours of an exhibition or parties hosting media, local businesses, artists or sponsors reinforce the museum's mission and image.

Norman Reid, the Tate's director from 1964 to 1979, was very effective in promoting PR strategies to consolidate good relations with artists like Giacometti or with generous philanthropists like Peggy Guggenheim, who he knew could bring funds and artworks to the Gallery. He organised dinners with artists to celebrate the opening of an exhibition and made a garden party to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Tate, to which he invited artists and patrons.

It was in his time that the gallery's outside stairs were the stage of some events that gave the Gallery more visibility: artist John Lathan burned books there and Queen Elizabeth II received the Saudi King in his state visit in 1976, both leaving without seeing a single painting. In the 90th anniversary of Picasso, director Norman Reid and 89 children flew 90 doves from the stairs. In the following days, dozens of dead doves appeared in the same place as a protest from young British artists complaining about the lack of support to contemporary British art (Spalding 1997). Although different in the messages they conveyed to the public, these events made clear that it was not only the collection that was going to attract more visitors and build the identity of the Gallery. The enhancement of other features could be a channel to communicate with the public in order to make the Gallery more visible. In many other ways the Tate also branded an image associated with controversy and eccentricity, be it in many of its events or in its acquisition choices. Especially from the end of the 1970s onwards, great attention was given to public relations and the relationship with the media:

A key element in creating a distinct and dynamic image lies in the field of public relations. The role of the Tate Gallery is to provide the maximum service to the general public, key

figures in the art world, the younger generation and the media. (*The Tate Gallery Illustrated Report*, 1984-86)

Television and press coverage could bring wider and better educated publics that felt attracted to new lifestyles associated with mediatized forms of consumption of culture and entertainment, and in the 1980-82 *Report*, in which the activity of the Department of Information was reviewed, we can read how important it was to foster a growing interest from the media:

... has helped the Tate to inform potential visitors of the wide variety and sometimes controversial nature of its activities.
(*The Tate Gallery Illustrated Biennial Report*, 1980-82: 75)

It was in the end of the 1980s and through the 1990s that the Tate started to develop collaboration with marketing companies engaged in the continual enhancement of its image to keep it in the spotlight. Relations with the press were carefully studied so as to increase the visibility of the Gallery through a selected press list that would enable a more efficient targeting (Spalding 270).

The 1988-90 *Report* shows that Tate was investing in a more sophisticated approach in all aspects of its management and the way it communicated had to be improved. Audiences were becoming increasingly volatile and the Gallery had to compete with other forms of entertainment like theme parks and shopping centres. New cultural venues were opening in London like the Barbican Centre in 1982 and the Saatchi Gallery, established in 1985 to show contemporary British art. The National Gallery in Trafalgar was to open an extension, the Sainsbury Wing, in 1991. Abroad, the Musée d'Orsay opened in Paris in 1986, showing a comprehensive collection of French Impressionism in the refurbished Gare d'Orsay and the Centre Georges Pompidou started its activity in 1977 bringing a more democratic and commercial approach to art and culture and attracting large audiences.

For the Tate these were quite challenging times because it was necessary to make new interventions to attract new sectors of the society whether they were visitors or sponsors. In the end of 1993, two more Tate galleries had already opened (Tate Liverpool in 1988 and Tate St Ives in Cornwall in 1993) and a new corporate identity was created in order to promote a more sophisticated image. A similar process of rebranding took

place in 2000 with the opening of Tate Modern in Bankside and the removal of “the” from its logo, giving way to “Tate” as the new corporate name, unifying a family of four galleries in their mission to deepen the understanding of art to larger audiences, but each with its distinctive identity and visitor profile.

The Turner Prize, one of Tate’s brand images, was created in 1984 to promote the newest developments in British contemporary art and is awarded to a British artist under fifty years old.

The Prize has contributed to draw public attention to the Gallery as no other event or exhibition has done, although a significant part of its life has been filled with controversy (Button 2003; Bracewell 2007). Especially in its first decade its critics speculated about many aspects of its format and the way it was organized: the artistic choices, the credibility and the biased views of the jury, the sensationalist basis on which future artistic careers started to be built (Tracey Emin’s and Damien Hirst’s artistic paths connected with Tate and the Turner Prize, both being controversial celebrity artists), the amount of money of the prize, the role of the Patrons of New Art, art turned into business, the event broadcast by Channel Four with celebrities invited to present the shortlisted artists and the winner (Brian Eno presented the prize in 1995, Madonna in 2001 and Yoko Ono in 2006). Referring to the mastering of Hirst’s and Emin’s eccentricity and radical views about modern art, Phillips and O’Reilly (190) highlight the importance of the cult of the celebrity artist in the process of Tate’s branding.

Another important area of intervention for branding is retail. The investment in merchandising assumes a particular relevance to museum managers because it represents a good source of revenue. Tate’s shops and bookstores sell a great variety of art-related objects and books where Tate brand is enhanced through the reproduction of its artworks or by inviting artists to collaborate in the design of new objects. Tate Publishing is responsible for the production of high profile books featuring many aspects of the collections and guides related to every exhibition. Detached from their original contexts of production firstly by being shown in a museum subjected to new codes of representation and new signifying practices, secondly by being sold in the form of everyday objects, images of the collection are reproduced in mugs, mouse pads, tablecloths, tissues, fans,

or bags, giving the visitor an utilitarian, ready-to-wear and commodified perception of art, reminding us of the difficult balance between economy and culture and the way commercial interests have imposed their strategies in this field. Located in the entrance lobby or at the end of the visit, the shops sell items intended to work either as a preview of the collection or as memories of the experience and of the brand (Wallace 137).

Currently, and according to Tate's Trustees strategic plan for the next decade, retail needs to be more explored, especially the possibilities of developing e-commerce, an important sector to expand the brand (*Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees*, 20 January 2010, 6).

Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs's exhibition at Tate Modern in 2014 is an example of how the works shown in the exhibition, very large and colourful, resonated in the many objects sold in the shop in the form of magnets, postcards and notebooks.

Eating places are important assets to boost the Gallery's image. Eating out has become part of contemporary lifestyles and a sign of improved social status (Finkelstein 1989), that's why cultural institutions have invested in the development of cafés and restaurants to attract more audiences. Good sources of profit, they are privileged areas for branding, for socializing and to diversify the services in museums and art galleries, filling the three-in-one type of packaged leisure people like to indulge in nowadays: in the same place you can see art, buy a gift and have a snack. Tate Britain has a restaurant with a Whistler mural, which works as an original mode of displaying a masterpiece of the collection, making it worth visiting; Tate Modern has strategically located the restaurant in the building top floor offering the views to the north bank of the City, and marketing it as very fashionable place to eat in London.

Digital development is a priority for the gallery's branding operations and its different platforms are important vehicles to communicate with audiences. The launch of Tate's website in 1998 opened another channel to communicate its mission and the values of its brand on a wider and global scale, attracting new publics but also promoting new forms of consuming art. Working as an important branding tool, it has a unique capacity to show large quantities of information and to reach wide audiences through the virtual display of its objects, building, resources and projects. Associating the image of the Gallery with social networks like Facebook or

Twitter is a way to include its project in more dynamic and modern forms of communication while reaching and enlarging its publics on a global scale. The website is regarded as Tate's "fifth" gallery and was accessed by a global audience of around 13 million in the period reviewed by the 2012-13 Report (*Tate Report 2012-13*, 37). Tate Kids is an important digital tool to reach young children.

Much of Tate's brand image in the present is represented by Tate Modern, located in a privileged area of London, attracting large numbers of visitors to contemplate modern and contemporary art. Tate Modern is marketed as a great venue where people can have an engaging experience with contemporary art. In its multifunctional space, escalators and lifts link seven floors where visitors can see art, consume in shops and cafés and socialize, making it difficult to distinguish the cultural from the shopping experience.

Tate Modern was created to house the works of the international collection that were cramped at Millbank and its purpose was to make modern and contemporary art accessible, democratic and impressive and to attract young audiences and tourists to the regenerated area of Southwark. It also satisfies the needs of a new urban class that works mainly in the service sector of the City and is interested in consolidating its social status by consuming cultural events or living in a cultural quarter:

Summary of benefits:

Tate Modern will:

- help create 2,400 jobs in London
- help generate between £16 and £35 million of direct and indirect economic benefits in the London borough of Southwark
- act as a catalyst for the regeneration of a key area of central London, by encouraging public and private investment and highlighting Southwark as a desirable place to live and work (...)
- create a new focus for visitors to London, and act as a powerful draw for tourism to the south bank (...)

(Press release, May 2000; on the launch of Tate Modern)

Today, Tate is a very successful art business in Britain with a consolidated position in the arts world thanks to an entrepreneurial vision that includes

strategic planning, the development of management and leadership capability, staff training (especially curators) and a careful analysis of audience survey and market research. It is a complex organization that runs a complex network of public and private funds: the Grant-in-aid (given by the Government through the Department of Culture, Media and Sport), private donations, corporate sponsorship, self-generated income (temporary exhibitions, cafés, restaurants, shops, membership) and, occasionally, grants from the Art Fund and the National Lottery.

Periodically, the Board of Trustees and the director make strategic plans for the development of the brand framed by the latest trends of museum development having in mind the economic contingencies, especially the cuts in the Grant-in-aid announced by the Government:

- a. It was reported that the strategy reflects Tate's adaptation to longer term changes in the broader environment, in museums, and to shorter-term challenges such as the economic situation, cost uncertainty, and public finances. (...) It was stated that an emphasis on broader global perspectives, commercial acumen, collaboration, and greater consistency is evident across each of the six strands. (*Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery*, 21 January 2009, 6)

Trustees and director analyse the performance both in ticket revenue and in the several businesses of the brand: merchandising, catering, publishing and online sales and strategies to develop these areas are planned every year.

The importance of a digital strategy to expand Tate's brand has been strongly highlighted in the Meetings of the Board of Trustees since 2010 and is regarded as a priority in all the activities of the Gallery. Tate Media produces films that accompany major exhibitions and works to amplify and communicate the gallery's activities and project. Tate Online explores every opportunity to expand the brand and its work is highly focused not only on developing e-commerce but also on digital curatorial work in different levels and platforms like the social media, blogs, e-newsletters or apps:

- In response to a query, it was reported that the top three priorities for Tate Media overall are selling exhibitions and memberships, the growth and development of Tate Online, and the development and delivery of the Audience Strategy.

It was noted that the audience strategy needs to be balanced correctly, taking into account both revenue and reach. (*Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery*, 21 January 2009, 7)

Tate is a British art project with an international reach and although it has expanded into four galleries in England, there is no intention to build a gallery abroad and its international strategy does not involve franchising its brand like Guggenheim. Tate fosters cooperation with art networks to expand knowledge about art markets and the new geographies of art production (*Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Tate Gallery*, 16 January 2013, 10).

Having in mind the *pastiche* I made of Magritte's words in the title of this essay I think Tate is not *just* an art gallery. It is no longer the collection of British art donated by Mr Henry Tate housed in a temple-like neo-classical building in Millbank, London. Tate is a very successful family of four galleries, global art brand and business. It provides a good example of the contemporary intertextual and multifunctional corporate art gallery, with a very strong brand identity, and very distant from traditional modes of displaying art. Nowadays people do not contemplate art; they consume it packaged. They visit a gallery filling a demand not only for the quality of the collection but also for spectacle and fashionability. They saw Damien Hirst's blockbuster exhibition at Tate Modern, then had a sandwich in one of its cafés and bought an object in the shop with the reproduction of his most iconic artwork *For the Love of God*. Hirst is dubbed the *enfant terrible* of British contemporary art, a celebrity artist whose installations attract the media and visitors like magnets. Not surprisingly, and receiving enormous media attention and high levels of attendance (around 463,000 visitors), Damien Hirst's 2012 blockbuster exhibition at Tate Modern was reviewed by the *Sunday Times* as "A brilliant Tate show", as it was quoted in the Gallery's website homepage (www.tate.org.uk).

My experience of the event was not very different from this, on a busy and noisy holiday in the Gallery in April 2012, feeling myself part of the show. I still keep memorable images of people waiting in long lines to buy the tickets, others striking poses for photographs at Turbine Hall, the crowded shop full of souvenirs and a diamond-covered skull which was,

according to the media I had seen and read the days before, a “must-see” of the exhibition.

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ABSTRACT

The topics explored in this paper regard how museums and art galleries have addressed the need to invest in image-building strategies in order to make their collections more attractive and their spaces multifunctional to increase visitor numbers and not to lose state and private funding. Drawing on current perspectives about museum management, I explore the case of Tate in Britain and how it evolved from a conventional art gallery built in Millbank, London in the 19th century to a family of four galleries and successful art brand by putting into practice entrepreneurial techniques of strategic planning, branding, marketing and communication to reach wider audiences in a competitive global market of culture and entertainment.

KEYWORDS

Tate; museum; branding; marketing; communication

RESUMO

Os tópicos explorados neste artigo abordam o modo como museus e galerias de arte começaram a investir em estratégias de construção e consolidação de imagem com o objetivo de tornar as suas coleções mais atrativas e os seus espaços multifuncionais para atrair mais visitantes e não perder financiamento público e privado.

Partindo de perspetivas contemporâneas de gestão museológica, é estudado o caso da Tate na Grã-Bretanha e como evoluiu de uma galeria de arte construída em Millbank, Londres no século XIX para uma família de quatro galerias e uma bem-sucedida marca de artes através da prática de técnicas empresariais como o planeamento estratégico, o *branding*, o *marketing* e a comunicação para captar públicos no competitivo mercado global da cultura e do entretenimento.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Tate; museu; *branding*; *marketing*; comunicação

The Construction of the
Supernatural in Two Screen
Adaptations of Emily Brontë's
Wuthering Heights

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The Construction of the Supernatural in Two Screen Adaptations of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*

W*uthering Heights* by Emily Brontë is one of the favourite Victorian novels for screen adaptation, with a long list of versions that started in 1920 with a British silent film directed by A. V. Bramble, and includes several recent adaptations. With both British and American productions, the list alternates between cinema and television films or serials, this being a reason why I have chosen for this paper one adaptation made for the cinema — the classic Hollywood version in black and white, directed by William Wyler and released in 1939 — and one British TV film, directed by David Skynner and released in 1998. The long time span between these versions — of about sixty years — as well as the fact that one was made in the United States and the other in the United Kingdom, one for the cinema and the other for television, may help explain their dissimilar ways of constructing the supernatural dimension of the adapted novel. The different temporal, social, and geographic contexts of production may allow for a comparative study within a cultural critique, since I agree with Jennifer M. Jeffers's words in defence of a cultural critique in adaptation studies:

We need to be especially vigilant in our critique, not of the film's fidelity to the literary text, but of the various decisions made *en route* from the language text to film text, and the important economic, political, historical, and cultural issues involved in the transformation. (Cutchins 123)

This is a viewpoint both shared and emphasized by many recent books and articles on Adaptation Studies, namely by Deborah Cartmell in *Screen Adaptation. Impure Cinema*, in which she mentions the so-called "sociological turn" in Adaptation Studies (21), Timothy Corrigan in the essay "Literature on Screen, a History: in the Gap", underlining the

“potential for adaptation to challenge traditional disciplinary boundaries” as well as the importance of “more exact cultural and historical investigation” (Cartmell, *Literature on Screen* 41), and also Hila Sachar in *Cultural Afterlives and Screen Adaptations of Classic Literature*, and Kamilla Elliott in *Rethinking the Novel/Film Debate*.

This perspective is now being often applied to film adaptations of literary classics, including both the “prestige films” made in Hollywood in the mid-twentieth century and the British “heritage films” of the two last decades of the same century. *Wuthering Heights* is one of the novels whose adaptations are being approached within this vein, with the analysis of themes deemed central and recurrent in the novel. The theme of “home”, for example, is analysed in detail by Hila Sachar, namely concerning Wyler’s adaptation, which she classifies as “cinema of spectacle” (39), relating it to the historical and cultural background of the epoch in which it was produced — an epoch signalled by the beginning of the Second World War.

Yet one feature which, being also central to the novel by Emily Brontë, has notwithstanding been mostly neglected in the analysis of film adaptations, is the presence of the supernatural, that is, the metaphysical dimension which Terry Eagleton recognized to be paradigmatic of the dialectical vision in the novel, by arguing: “It is a function of the metaphysical to preserve those possibilities which a society cancels, to act as its reservoir of unrealised value. That is the history of Heathcliff and Catherine” (120).

1. The Classic Hollywood adaptation of 1939

In his seminal work entitled *Novels Into Film*, first published in 1957, George Bluestone was one of the few authors who addressed this theme, comparing its presence in the novel with the treatment given to it in the Hollywood adaptation of 1939. According to this author, both protagonists are modified in the film in order to come closer to the profile of the conventional heroes of that epoch. In Catherine’s case her social and materialistic motivation is obviously accentuated, by means of her strong attraction to the glamour of the balls and parties given at the Grange and which the film depicts repeatedly and in detail. Besides, her insistence on Heathcliff’s departure to seek fortune abroad makes her a more materialistic

woman, diminishing the importance of her spiritual identification with him.

As for Heathcliff, the motif of demonism and violence is here almost unrelieved, with Laurence Olivier's performance bringing him closer to the conventional romantic hero of melodramas than to the violent "Ghoul" or "Afreet" that Charlotte Brontë saw in the protagonist of her sister's novel. Furthermore, in the brief closing shot which Wyler was forced to add to the film by his producers (Brosh 44), we only see the back of Cathy's and Heathcliff's ghosts walking along hand in hand, in a blurred outline. The image of peace and beatitude attainable in a spiritual after-life is here reduced to a static and very brief shot, which, as a result, leads to the impression condensed in Bluestone's following words: "Emily Brontë's magic is gone" (105).

To these commentaries we should also add the deliberate ambiguity of all the references made to ghosts in this version. Indeed, in one of the first scenes, Mr. Lockwood is awoken by the noise of a bough tipping on the windowpane of the room in *Wuthering Heights* where he is sleeping. When he stands up and puts his hand out of the window, he feels someone grasping it, but he, just like the spectators, can only hear the voice of a girl and cannot see anyone. His interpretation of the incident, which the spectators are supposed to share, is that he just "had a dream" and this allows him to go on to declare: "I don't believe in ghosts".

Later on, on Catherine and Edgar Linton's wedding-day, a scene was added in which Catherine, outside the church and already married, says that she is feeling a "cold wind", which sounds like a foreboding of tragedy, a feeling intensified by a close-up of Ellen with a fearful expression. However, the doubt as to the presence of a spiritual or extra-sensorial dimension is again aroused when Heathcliff, who had just returned from America, appears with the outward aspect and outfit of a gentleman and is referred to as being "a ghost". The term "ghost" is thus deprived of its supernatural meaning, this being a subtle way of deconstructing the idea of the real existence of ghosts. And when, after Cathy's death, Heathcliff begs her to haunt him, and this seems to be actually happening, Ellen, again in a close-up, makes the following ambiguous commentary: "Not her ghost, but her love".

On the whole, we may conclude that the construction of the supernatural in this adaptation is reduced to a small number of very ambivalent

suggestions, dispensing with the ingredients that the critic John Gassner, in a work published in 1943, considered to be: “The Gothic hugger-mugger and exaggerations of the book that was born in the fevered brain of a brilliant recluse” (Bluestone 111).

These changes may be seen as a strategy of the film-makers to turn the events into something understandable to a mid-twentieth century audience. It is important to notice that, notwithstanding, and certainly owing to its dark and wild sceneries, the film was then considered “too heavy” by the majority of the public, being marketed as a Gothic romance (Sadoff 79).

In order to understand both the film-makers strategies and the audiences’ reaction at the time the film was released, we must bear in mind the historical fact that Europe was then at war, and the United States were still in the so-called Depression-era. And, as Liora Brosh underlines, films made in a period of recession, in which audiences were economically deprived, tended to produce escapist fantasies based on riches, material splendour and glamour (29).

This is no doubt visible in Wyler’s *Wuthering Heights*, in which, rejecting the desolate place where she was born, the female protagonist is shown seeking wealth and social status above all. Her spiritual union with Heathcliff, both before and after her death, is clearly minimized, thus making the supernatural dimension so diffused as to become almost inexistent. Furthermore, as George Bluestone and Liora Brosh have emphasized, this film seems to have a political agenda, being meant to support the British in the war, by presenting the characters in a favourable light. Besides, and unlike in the novel, where this is left vague, it is specifically in America that Heathcliff makes his fortune, America being thus presented as the egalitarian culture that enables him to rise (Brosh 36).

2. The British TV adaptation of 1998

This classic and iconic adaptation, with all these ideological marks, has undoubtedly influenced most of the subsequent screen adaptations, with some exceptions, in which we may include the British ITV’s film directed by David Skynner and released in 1998 — one version in which, as I argue, the supernatural dimension is constructed in a very dissimilar

way, resulting in a less dubious and a more emphatic presence.

The difference may be noticed almost from the beginning, namely in the crucial initial scene in which Lockwood is suddenly awoken by the sound of a branch breaking the windowpane. When he stretches his arm out of the window and feels his hand grasped by someone, he not only can hear a girl's voice, but he can see her as well. Both the spectators and Lockwood are confronted with the materialization of a young girl who cries and insistently begs him: "Let me in, let me in!" The spectator will recognize this face as being Catherine's as a child, in the sequences of the long flashback relating to her and Heathcliff's childhood in the moors of *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine's ghost is, therefore, visually represented from the start, which makes it appear as something more real to Lockwood and to the spectators.

The use of image to suggest the presence of the transcendent and spiritual, interacting with the material and corporeal world, pervades this adaptation, namely through the overlapping of images of the past within the present and vice-versa. The suggestion behind these glimpses, neatly presented to the spectators, seems to be the relativity of time dimension — as if the past, the present and the future could be simultaneous, this being liable to be interpreted as an allusion to Einstein's theories about spacetime.

On the other hand, the Gothic atmosphere in this version is not reduced to the scenery, being instead accentuated by the intensity of passions and violence, especially in the sequences after Catherine's death, culminating in the scene in which Heathcliff goes to a graveyard during the night and unburies her corpse, embracing it in a paroxysm of passion and pain. The macabre character of this scene, as well as the violent outbursts of Heathcliff's revenge, including the rape of Edgar's sister, all this given by Robert Cavanah's wild performance, make it akin to a horror film — a genre that became very popular in the last decade of the twentieth century, with a return to classic Gothic ghosts, whose dangers were more psychological than physical, as for example in the film *Sixth Sense* (1999). As Dianne F. Sadoff states in her book on *Victorian Vogue*: "The 1990s literary gothic horror film sought to benefit from the 1980s heritage boom by targeting a niche audience of worried independent cinema fans eager to enjoy quality period vampires (...)" (104).

This attraction to the weird and the uncanny helps explain the frequency with which certain nineteenth-century novels were then adapted to the screen, small or big. From the monsters of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* to freaks like Miss Havisham in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* or Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, all were privileged focuses in films whose aesthetics always comes more or less close to the Gothic.

Within a cultural critique, these Gothic features must be approached bearing in mind the historical and sociological pressures of this period, by connecting them with the specific anxieties of the late twentieth century. We must recall that not only a century but also a millennium were then coming to a close, accompanied by insistent apocalyptic predictions and also by a technological revolution that was increasingly disrupting the traditional means of human communication.

Spectatorial greed for strong emotions, which seems to have characterized audiences from that period to the present day, should actually be seen as a result of a need to exorcize the uncertainties, fears and anxieties of daily life, by plunging into a virtual world which, being still more violent and excessive, may function as a sort of Aristotelian *catharsis*. Quoting Maria Beville in her analysis of the connection between the Gothic and Postmodernism, we may argue that: "Terror remains a connecting and potent link between the Gothic and the postmodern" (9). Indeed, the turbulent landscapes, the terror caused by demonised or ghostly characters, the unrepresentable aspects of reality and subjectivity, which are usually pointed out as being paradigmatic of a Gothic aesthetics, are all distinct features of many films of our age, including this film made in Britain at the end of the twentieth century.

But we should not forget that, this being a film for television, it also raises other specific issues, namely concerning the notion that TV adaptations may contribute to the mission of public service and are generally seen as closely related to the so-called heritage film, by showing an evident interest in British classics. The tendency of television adaptations towards fidelity to the literary sources may no doubt be explained by this double purpose: not only to entertain, but also to educate.

In the case of the 1998 ITV adaptation of *Wuthering Heights*, fidelity to the source novel is signalled in the title of the film, which

includes the name of the novel's author: *Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights*. It may also be verified in its length, which allows for the encompassing of the whole plot, including the second generation of characters, which had been omitted in Wyler's version. On the other hand, we must reckon that since the turn of the century the concept of fidelity has been reconfigured and, as Sarah Cardwell claims: "Adapters have become more concerned with conveying the 'spirit' of the source text. Adaptations have become more courageous and imaginative" (Cartmell, *Literature on Screen* 193).

This opinion may already be applied to David Skynner's options in directing his adaptation of Emily Brontë's novel. Even though he was faithful to the plot, characters and dialogue of the source text, he also uses technological and expressive tools that make this version a clear product of postmodernity at the turn of the century — especially, as I have already underlined, concerning its construction of the supernatural.

The comparison of the film version of 1939 with this 1998 TV adaptation does lead us to agree with Terry Eagleton when he observed: "*Wuthering Heights* has been alternately read as a social and a metaphysical novel" (120). In effect, the emphasis on the social dynamics as a pole of attraction that we find in the former version is replaced, in the latter one, by an emphasis on the metaphysical. And the explanation for the different focuses can certainly be found in the co-related historical and cultural contexts, each film reflecting the sensibility, anxieties and aspirations of the epoch in which they were made and of the respective target audiences.

From the analysis of the more recent adaptation, we may infer that in this global and postmodern age, with its excessive materialistic consumption, and especially since the turn of the century, there seems to be a need for alternative imaginary worlds. Instead of riches or social glamour, the escapist fantasies are nowadays often configured by worlds inhabited by ghosts or vampires. With all the terror they arouse, these supernatural entities still allow for a thrilling and consoling expectation: that, after all, there may be a life beyond this life.

Moreover, and to conclude, we may also see them as an illustration of a very ancient belief, which is reflected, for example, in the famous words pronounced by Hamlet after the appearance of his father's ghost, when he insinuates: "There are more things in heaven and earth (...) / Than are dreamt of in our philosophy" (Shakespeare 195).

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ABSTRACT

Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë is one of the favourite Victorian novels for screen adaptation, with a long list of versions that started in 1920 with a British silent film directed by A. V. Bramble, and includes several recent adaptations. With both British and American productions, the list alternates between cinema and television films or serials, this being a reason why I have chosen one adaptation made for the cinema — the classic Hollywood version directed by William Wyler and released in 1939 — and one British TV film, directed by David Skyner and released in 1998.

The long time span between these versions — of about sixty years — as well as the fact that one was made in the United States and the other in Britain, one for the cinema and the other for television, may allow for a cultural critique based on the acknowledgement of different temporal, social and geographic contexts of production.

The presence of the supernatural is one feature which, being central in the novel, has notwithstanding been mostly neglected in the analysis of film adaptations. This paper will, therefore, focus on the construction of the supernatural in both films, relating the different approaches to their respective cultural contexts.

KEYWORDS

Supernatural; cultural critique; cinema; television

RESUMO

Wuthering Heights de Emily Brontë é um dos romances mais adaptados ao ecrã, com uma longa lista de versões iniciada em 1920 com um filme mudo realizado por A. V. Bramble, e que apresenta várias adaptações recentes. Incluindo produções inglesas e norte-americanas, a lista alterna entre filmes para cinema ou filmes e séries para televisão, sendo este um dos motivos pelos quais escolhi uma adaptação para o cinema — a clássica versão de Hollywood realizada por William Wyler

e estreada em 1939 — e o filme para televisão realizado por David Skyner e estreado em 1998.

O grande hiato temporal entre as duas versões — de cerca de sessenta anos — bem como o facto de uma ter sido feita em Hollywood e a outra na Grã-Bretanha, uma para o cinema e a outra para televisão, podem viabilizar uma crítica cultural baseada no reconhecimento de diferentes contextos de produção sob o ponto de vista temporal, social e geográfico.

A presença do sobrenatural é um aspecto que, embora sendo central no romance, tem sido geralmente negligenciado na análise das adaptações fílmicas. Por essa razão, este artigo debruça-se sobre a construção do sobrenatural em ambos os filmes, relacionando as diferentes abordagens com os respectivos contextos culturais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Sobrenatural; crítica cultural; cinema; televisão

Para uma (re)consideração crítica de *Interlude*, de Douglas Sirk

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Para uma (re)consideração crítica de *Interlude*, de Douglas Sirk

Parece ser comumente aceite que o ensaio “Tales of Sound and Fury, Observations on the Family Melodrama”, de Thomas Elsaesser, ocupou um papel preponderante na definição do género do melodrama no âmbito dos estudos fílmicos (cf. Neale 170-174). Até então, a noção de um género melodramático em cinema era inconstante, de tal forma que se pudera verificar na crítica, ao longo de décadas, uma utilização mais ou menos arbitrária do termo “melodrama” a propósito de filmes muito diversos entre si. Considerando a fluidez deste termo na crítica cinematográfica, Neale escreve:

melodrama — and the shortened and slangier “meller” — were by far the commonest terms used to describe what are often now called *noirs*, whether they were hard-boiled detective films, gangster films, gothic thrillers and woman’s films, paranoid thrillers, psychological thrillers, police films or semi-documentaries. (169)

A partir da década de 1970, no entanto, sob a influência do ensaio de Elsaesser¹ e dos estudos de outros seus contemporâneos, a identificação deste género — na sua específica modalidade fílmica, a do “melodrama familiar” — passou a realizar-se essencialmente a partir de um modelo constituído por um conjunto de filmes realizados por Douglas Sirk para

¹ Logo na introdução do artigo, lê-se: “In this article I want to pursue an elusive subject in two directions: to indicate the development of what one might call the melodramatic imagination across different artistic forms and in different epochs; secondly, Sirk’s remark tempts one to look for some structural and stylistic constants in one medium during one particular period (the Hollywood family melodrama between roughly 1940 and 1963)” (68).

os estúdios Universal entre 1954 e 1959. Deste modo, em vez de começar a ser identificado pela discriminação das suas características, o género acabou por definir-se através do trabalho paradigmático de um realizador. Mais do que “mestre do melodrama”, Douglas Sirk era feito equivaler, da teorização feita na década de 1970 para a frente, ao melodrama em si mesmo, o que significa, ainda hoje, que classificar qualquer filme como melodrama implica verificar de que modo ele corresponde ao modelo encabeçado pelos melodramas de Sirk. Por esta razão, todo o cânone do género se definiu a partir deste centro bem definido. A título exemplificativo da centralidade da obra de Sirk, invocamos um relevante estudo recente,² em cujas páginas finais se encontra uma sugestão de filmografia fundamental do género dividida em subtemas. Significativamente, dando conta desta centralidade, o primeiro conjunto intitula-se “Sirk’s Universal Melodramas” e o segundo “‘Sirkian’ melodramas” (Mercer e Shingler 120).

No entanto, mais do que nos interessar aqui o cânone melodramático estabelecido pela centralidade de Sirk na teorização do género,³ importa-nos começar a atentar no próprio cânone estabelecido no interior da filmografia de Sirk. O primeiro grupo de Mercer e Shingler é composto pelos filmes *All I Desire* (1953), *Magnificent Obsession* (1954), *All That Heaven Allows* (1956), *There’s Always Tomorrow* (1956), *Written on the Wind* (1956), *Interlude* (1957), *The Tarnished Angels* (1958) e *Imitation of Life* (1959). Nesta lista é notória, por exemplo, a ausência de *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* (1958).⁴ Por outro lado, a lista inclui alguns filmes

² *Melodrama: Genre, Style, Sensibility*, de John Mercer e Martin Shingler.

³ Que parece ser aceite. Cite-se, por exemplo, Mercer e Shingler: “[t]he principle exponent of this style was the director Douglas Sirk, whose lavish dramas made for the Universal Studios in the mid 1950s were marked by a highly expressive *mise-en-scène* in which colour, gesture, costume, music, lighting and camera-work all conspired to produce cinematic texts rich with suppressed meaning and significance. Due to the investigations of this group of theorists [Elsaesser, Paul Willemsen, Laura Mulvey, *et al.*], any discussion of cinematic melodrama inevitably returns to Douglas Sirk” (2).

⁴ Também António Rodrigues, por exemplo, não inclui *A Time to Love and a Time to Die* no cânone melodramático de Sirk. Porém, também não inclui *The Tarnished Angels*, contrariamente a Mercer e Shingler (40).

que nem sempre são identificados como particularmente importantes no contexto da filmografia do realizador, como *All I Desire*, *There's Always Tomorrow*⁵ e *Interlude*. Entre todos, este último permanece como o filme mais ignorado, desde o início votado ao fracasso junto do público e da crítica.

Uma das poucas, e pouco relevantes, razões pelas quais *Interlude* surge ocasionalmente referido em textos críticos prende-se com o facto de constituir, com *Magnificent Obsession* e *Imitation of Life*, o trio de *remakes* realizados por Sirk de filmes feitos por John M. Stahl da década de 1930 (*vd.*, por exemplo, Bourget, “Sirk and the Critics”, secção “The auteur, the studio, the genre”, ¶2). *Interlude* baseou-se num argumento inspirado em *When Tomorrow Comes* (1939), que por sua vez adaptava vagamente um romance de James M. Cain publicado em 1937.⁶

Quando, no decorrer da longa entrevista feita por Jon Halliday a Sirk em 1971, surge uma questão relacionada com *Interlude*, Sirk informa o entrevistador de que:

Of all the pictures I have done — except the Columbia pictures — *Interlude* is the one on which I had the least to do with the development of the story. My assistant and the cameraman, Bill Daniels, had already pre-researched locations for me (...). So the story is in no way mine. (127)

Na mesma entrevista, Sirk critica a interpretação de Rossano Brazzi, e explica o fracasso do filme junto do público:

⁵ A propósito deste, cite-se Mário Jorge Torres: “é tão injusto ignorar-se sistematicamente *There's Always Tomorrow* (...) quando se fala da *Sirkiana* essencial” (78). É de notar também que a fortuna crítica de *All I Desire* e *There's Always Tomorrow* deve-se geralmente à facilidade de aproximação entre ambos, que está na base de vários estudos comparativos (cf., a título de exemplo, Basinger 2005, Chiesi 2010, e Schuytter 2010). Algo que os demarca dos restantes melodramas parece ter que ver com o facto de serem a preto e branco, quando se convencionou que a cor é um elemento fulcral no melodrama familiar da década de 1950 (cf., por exemplo, o modo como Mercer e Shingler identificam o estilo de Sirk na nota 3).

⁶ Diz Sirk: “I was given an outline based on the Stahl picture, which had originally been extremely loosely based on *Serenade* by Jimmy Cain” (Halliday 127).

There were other factors working against its success. One was that there were too many foreign actors in it and this had a bad effect in America. Another was that I had to abandon my original idea of having Marianne Koch [Cook] drinking. I thought that alcohol would add to the general disintegration of her marriage with Brazzi. It would give an extra reason for everything being in a bad way. (129)

O espaço reservado a *Interlude*, nesta entrevista, resume-se a três páginas nas quais Sirk não faz senão fornecer razões que justifiquem o fracasso que o filme fora à época.⁷ De resto, e ao contrário do que sucede ao longo da entrevista a propósito de vários dos seus restantes filmes, Sirk não diz praticamente nada que ilumine de alguma forma as possibilidades de leitura de *Interlude*.

A falta de discurso de relevo a propósito deste filme repete-se em praticamente toda a literatura importante produzida acerca do cinema de Sirk. Elsaesser apenas menciona o filme no seu artigo, Paul Willemsen não o refere em “Distanciation and Douglas Sirk” (1971), Laura Mulvey também não o indica em “Fassbinder and Sirk” (1974) e “Notes on Sirk and Melodrama” (1977), Barbara Klinger optou por ignorá-lo no seu importante e aprofundado estudo *Melodrama and Meaning: History, Culture and the Films of Douglas Sirk* (1994), e John Mercer e Martin Shingler, não obstante inserirem o título no conjunto de filmografia recomendada no final do seu volume, não o discutem em momento algum.

Nos casos em que o filme é nomeado, nunca se revela alvo de uma análise aprofundada, limitando-se os autores a algumas considerações avulsas, frequentemente levianas ou precipitadas. Na origem deste tratamento parece estar uma reserva crítica face ao filme. Jean-Loup Bourget, na sua monografia dedicada a Douglas Sirk, começa o seu texto sobre *Interlude* — de apenas uma página e meia, significativamente menos do que dispensa a outros filmes — afirmando: “*Interlude* (*Les amants de Salzbourg*, 1957) est une œuvre ratée” (*Douglas Sirk* 111). R. W. Fassbinder inicia o seu texto dedicado ao mesmo filme escrevendo: “*Interlude* (1957) is a film that’s hard to get into” (84, publicado inicialmente em 1971). No único

⁷ “The film wasn’t a success, except in Latin America, where it appears Brazzi had a huge following” (Halliday 129).

volume de fôlego publicado em Portugal sobre o realizador, *Douglas Sirk*, as referências a *Interlude* encontram-se apenas na tradução portuguesa do artigo de Fassbinder e num parágrafo escrito por Ross Hunter, no qual o produtor — responsável pelo filme — afirma que “[e]sta poderia ter sido uma história de amor magnífica e pouco habitual, mas os personagens suscitavam pouco entusiasmo e não havia química entre as vedetas” (Hunter 111).

Poderia avançar-se outros indícios que atestem a “invisibilidade” de *Interlude* no contexto da filmografia de Sirk, como por exemplo a sua situação precária no mercado de DVD, por oposição ao que se verifica nos restantes filmes pertencentes à fase dos estúdios Universal. Basta, no entanto, tornar evidente que *Interlude* não participou do processo de reavaliação crítica operada em benefício de Douglas Sirk a partir da década de 1970, e sugerir que seria proveitoso procurar trabalhar no sentido de compreender o lugar que este filme ocupa na filmografia do cineasta. Perante este cenário, através de uma análise aprofundada de *Interlude*, esperamos poder contribuir para uma reavaliação do filme que o anuncie como um objecto relevante para o entendimento da, recuperando o termo de Mário Jorge Torres, “Sirkiana”.

Um dos assuntos mais insistentemente apresentados em estudos sobre Douglas Sirk prende-se com a sua condição de estrangeiro em Hollywood. Da mesma forma que realizadores como Robert Siodmak ou Billy Wilder se haviam exilado nos Estados Unidos em fuga ao nazismo, Sirk buscou refúgio no continente americano para evitar uma perseguição à sua esposa judia. Para estes cineastas europeus, realizar filmes no sistema de Hollywood era bem distinto de realizar filmes nos países da sua proveniência, onde frequentemente lhes era permitida uma liberdade artística que em Hollywood não voltariam a possuir, devido a esta ser uma indústria regida essencialmente por valores económicos. Nos Estados Unidos — primeiro na Columbia Pictures e depois nos estúdios Universal —, Sirk era apenas mais um realizador sob contrato, com a liberdade criativa condicionada pelos desejos dos produtores. Pode inferir-se, no entanto, que esta falta de liberdade acabou por estar na origem da singularidade do estilo de Sirk, uma vez que o obrigou a escapar às limitações dos argumentos que lhe eram propostos através de factores como a *mise-en-scène*, o trabalho

de câmara, a direcção de actores, etc.⁸ Este “jogo duplo” está na base da ironia sirkiana e da sua especificidade enquanto *auteur* subversivo a actuar no sistema hollywoodiano, como referem Mercer e Shingler:

Central to Sirk’s aesthetic vision, however, is irony and he is most consistently recognized for his use of an ironic *mise-en-scène*. The settings, décor, lighting, music and camera framing of Sirk’s films often seem to contradict or place an alternative emphasis on what is taking place within the narrative. In simple terms, the story or the characters seem to be saying one thing and the *mise-en-scène* seems to be saying something else and drawing our attention to the irony of the character’s delusions. Irony, then, becomes a central component of Sirk’s status as a progressive or subversive auteur (56).

A “ironia sirkiana”, ou o efeito de distanciamento,⁹ provém então de uma dupla natureza dos filmes, que resulta da confluência de um primeiro nível, diegético, em que o material narrativo e os códigos de representação são usualmente tipificados de acordo com a máquina de produção hollywoodiana, e de um segundo nível, que advém de uma auto-consciência impressa no filme pelo distanciamento de Sirk em relação ao material com que trabalha. Sirk jogava em duas frentes: por um lado, agia no interior da “máquina”, cingindo-se às limitadas possibilidades artísticas que lhe eram permitidas, e procurando ir ao encontro das expectativas tanto de produtores quanto de um público pouco exigentes; por outro, procurava imprimir nos seus filmes a crítica a esse próprio sistema que servia.¹⁰

⁸ *Grosso modo*, esta era uma condição comum à maioria dos realizadores a trabalhar em Hollywood. Refira-se também que Sirk já havia começado a trabalhar com este tipo de restrições nos últimos anos na Alemanha, em que tivera de fazer filmes para a UFA ao serviço da ideologia nazi, da qual se demarcava decisivamente. Disto, *La Habanera* (1937) é um exemplo paradigmático.

⁹ Conferir, a propósito, o artigo de Paul Willemen, onde se lê “in fact in some of his films he takes great care to ensure that the audience does experience a sense of distancing” (26).

¹⁰ “[H]e appropriates the conventions of the Hollywood romance and through the deployment of an ironic *mise-en-scène* uses a popular form of cinema as a tool for social critique” (Mercer e Shingler 56).

No âmbito do aprofundamento desta questão, de resto predilecta na crítica do cineasta,¹¹ *Interlude* é um dos filmes que mais evidentemente a serve, conjugando habilmente esses distintos níveis de significação.

Interlude marca o regresso de Sirk à Alemanha, depois de ter partido para os E.U.A. no início da década de 1940. Num primeiro gesto auto-reflexivo, o nome do realizador surge, nos créditos iniciais, sobre um comboio que chega a Munique, onde viaja a protagonista acabada de chegar da América. Ela é Helen Banning, interpretada por June Allyson, uma das atrizes mais populares da década, porém em 1957 já a decrescer na apreciação do público, estando na fase derradeira da sua curta carreira em cinema.¹² O filme é iniciado com um plano fixo em que se vêem uma estátua e uma fonte ao fundo. Voluntariamente ou não, a figuração da cidade de Munique neste início, e a presença específica da fonte, remetem para um género de filmes muito populares à época, encabeçado por *Three Coins in the Fountain* (Jean Negulesco, 1954). De modo semelhante, o filme de Negulesco começava com imagens associáveis ao género do bilhete-postal da cidade de Roma, para revelar a chegada de uma americana à cidade europeia. O resto do filme, uma espécie de comédia romântica de encontros e desencontros, trabalha sobre o fascínio da América pela Europa através do cruzamento de histórias de mulheres americanas que se dirigiram para Roma também por razões profissionais, mas especialmente — percebemo-lo facilmente, no desenvolvimento do filme — para viver uma grande história de amor. Característica deste género de filmes é um tom

¹¹ Para além de Mercer e Shingler 2004, cf., por exemplo, o estudo de Barbara Klinger, onde se lê: “In Sirk, critics found a filmmaker who, in addition to embodying one of the major axioms of the auteur theory concerning the ability of gifted directors to create films of substance within conventional Hollywood genres, seemed dedicated to critiquing the bourgeoisie” (xi). Logo depois, Klinger insere os filmes na categoria de Elsaesser dos “sophisticated family melodramas”, escrevendo: “[t]his label defined the potential of some melodramas to surpass the genre’s cathartic aims and reactionary tendencies to achieve aesthetic complexity and social commentary” (xii).

¹² Depois de 1957, data de estreia de *Interlude* e de *My Man Godfrey*, aparece apenas em *The Stranger in My Arms*, em 1959. A partir de então dedicar-se-ia quase exclusivamente à televisão.

de superficialidade, de exotismo, em que os ténues enredos amorosos parecem ser essencialmente um pretexto para filmar uma Europa romântica. Esta será a razão pela qual tanto o filme de Sirk como o de Negulesco são iniciados com uma série de planos das cidades europeias, apresentadas como idílios turísticos. Estes planos funcionam como postais de boas-vindas tanto para as protagonistas que então chegam como para o espectador norte-americano que chega com elas e, toldados pelo entusiasmo da novidade, não vêem mais do que resplandecente superfície. A propósito do modo como a cidade de Munique surge representada em *Interlude*, R. W. Fassbinder escreveu:

At first everything seems false. The film takes place in Munich and it isn't the city as we know it. The Munich in *Interlude* consists of grand buildings. Königsplatz, Nymphenburg Palace, the Hercules Hall. Then later you realize that this is Munich as an American might see it. June Allyson comes to Munich to experience Europe (Fassbinder 84).

Neste regresso à Alemanha encomendado pelo estúdio (Halliday 127), Sirk experienciaria uma visão dupla sobre a cidade de Munique: o olhar natural de um alemão (Detlef Sierck) para quem o espaço é familiar, e o do realizador de nome americanizado (Douglas Sirk)¹³, que tem a obrigação (contratual, dir-se-ia) de apresentar o espaço como bilhete-postal (lugar da realização dos sonhos, portanto estranho, não familiar), para consumo do espectador de cinema norte-americano. Daqui surge uma provável cisão entre o início de *Three Coins in the Fountain* e o de *Interlude*: se o primeiro é provavelmente ingénuo,¹⁴ o segundo não poderia — tendo em conta o “jogo duplo” habitual em Sirk — sê-lo. A ironia do realizador revela-se neste início em que se apresenta uma “cidade sonhada” — modelo que tanto assenta em Munique, como em Roma, como noutra

¹³ *Vd.* “From Detlef Sierck to Douglas Sirk”, de Gertrud Koch.

¹⁴ Não obstante também Negulesco ser um estrangeiro ao serviço de Hollywood, é, no entanto, um cineasta que aparentemente cedeu à máquina hollywoodiana, não mantendo a distância que Sirk, Lang ou Siodmak revelavam nos seus filmes.

grande cidade europeia (ou oriental, por exemplo: veja-se os filmes de Josef von Sternberg com Marlene Dietrich) — que, ao contrário do que acontece no filme de Negulesco, se transformará numa “cidade de pesadelo”, uma vez que o movimento do filme será o de conduzir a sua protagonista das superfícies resplandecentes à matéria obscurecida que lhes subjaz.

O filme constrói-se então, desde o início, numa série de duplicidades, da qual a mais clara é a marcada diferenciação entre personagens americanas e europeias, símbolo de uma cisão entre o novo mundo e o velho mundo. Para além da encenação deste encontro, a evidente filiação inicial ao modelo da comédia romântica escapista dá lugar, no desenvolvimento do filme, a um drama muito distante da frivolidade dos joguetes românticos iniciais. A sua estruturação permite aproximar cada uma das quatro personagens mais relevantes a um género: Helen Banning é apresentada como uma personagem “uncomplicated”, e várias vezes equiparada a uma criança; Dr. Morley Dwyer, o amigo de infância americano que ela encontra em Munique e que por ela se apaixona, descreve-se como “primarily a heart man”, o que tanto funciona para “cardiologista” como para “romântico inveterado”; Tonio Fischer, compositor europeu, é atormentado e intempestivo; Reni Fischer, a sua esposa, é uma mulher enlouquecida por um amor obsessivo. As duas primeiras personagens, americanas, ajustam-se ao quadro de comédia romântica estabelecido por *Three Coins in the Fountain*. São “descomplicadas”, de sentimentos simples e puros, aparentemente sem passado. Por seu turno, as personagens alemãs são dotadas de uma psicologia mais complexa, ancorada num passado negro e omissivo. *Interlude* resulta da confluência destes dois mundos: Banning é desejada por Dwyer, mas apaixona-se por Tonio, que a ama de volta, porém Banning está “disponível para amar” e Tonio não, pois é casado com Reni, uma mulher que, porque enlouquecida e dependente, ele não pode abandonar.

A dinâmica entre dois pares de personagens é remanescente de *Written on the Wind*, em que um casal composto por personagens solares, intocados pela decadência da sociedade americana (Halliday 130), coexiste com duas personagens maculadas, o que Sirk identificou como “split characters” (*ibid.*: 133) e que o título de um dos seus filmes descreve como “anjos chamuscados” (“*Tarnished Angels*”). *Interlude*, no entanto, estrutura-se mais explicitamente sobre esta dualidade, algo que tem efeitos, num

primeiro nível, numa divisão clara da narrativa em duas partes distintas.

Após a apresentação de Munique, Banning encontra a nova colega de trabalho, Prue Stubbins, que diz, ao conhecê-la: “Now don’t tell me why you’ve come. You were unhappy in Washington. You wanted to get away, start a whole new, fresh romantic adventure”. Ao questionar de modo tão claro as motivações da protagonista, o filme põe em evidência a sua própria existência enquanto comédia romântica. As palavras de Prue Stubbins parecem ser palavras de quem viu vários filmes do gênero ao qual *Interlude* parece estar a filiar-se, nomeadamente um filme como *Three Coins in the Fountain*. Nas cenas seguintes, Banning encontra-se com vários americanos, de entre os quais o Dr. Dwyer, apresentado como o interesse romântico de Banning. Depois de Banning conhecer Tonio, um maestro, uma série de coincidências juntam-nos, até Fischer persuadir Banning a viajar com ele para Salzburgo. Isto acontece num momento em que Munique já é apresentada como pequena demais para nela haver lugar para o imprevisto e, conseqüentemente, a fantasia romântica. A relação com o cardiologista — por quem Banning não sente atracção amorosa, não obstante os indícios levantados em vários diálogos de que aquele *deveria ser* o seu interesse romântico, e portanto de que ela deveria constituir com ele o par romântico da comédia — tem na sua base relações anteriores entre as respectivas famílias. Neste contexto, Munique torna-se um local em que não só se faz sentir a presença do trabalho (Banning encontra repetidamente as colegas), como também da família, através do doutor Dwyer.

Neste panorama, Salzburgo surge como escape, possibilidade de cumprir a fantasia romântica, surgindo no filme nos mesmos moldes em que havia sido introduzida Munique, enquanto sucessão de bilhetes-postais: o automóvel entra em campo, Tonio Fischer diz: “here it is, Salzburg in sunshine”, seguindo-se-lhe um *travelling* panorâmico sobre a cidade. O efeito irónico é curiosamente reforçado, desta vez, pelas palavras da protagonista: “I used to read about these places when I was a little girl. The old castles, the famous rivers, Mozart’s music. And now here I am”, acrescentando, pouco depois: “the mountains, the castles. You know, it’s just like a fairy tale”. Neste momento em que a protagonista começa por falar da sua infância para acabar a dizer, num tempo presente, que está a viver algo “que *é como* um conto de fadas”, está-se próximo de ver uma criança a experienciar os seus sonhos, uma fantasia materializada. O que o filme

sugere de forma evidente, neste momento, é que a aventura de Banning estará porventura para a realidade desta adulta como a fantasia escapista estivera para a realidade da criança outrora, isto é, que o que o filme está a mostrar é uma *irrealidade*. Isto culmina no momento em que ambos fazem um piquenique, durante o qual Banning narra uma história da sua infância para concluir que: “that day I knew: if you wait, if you only hope, you always get what you want (...) All my life I wanted to come to Europe, and *I always dreamed that it would be just exactly like this*” (itálicos nossos). Após este diálogo, em que a realidade à qual o filme tem permitido acesso é equiparada a um sonho, ouve-se um trovão. “A storm is coming”. E a primeira parte do filme, a da leveza, do anúncio da comédia romântica, do sonho, fica concluída com o estrondo.

Durante toda esta primeira parte, demonstra-se repetidamente a frivolidade dos americanos por oposição à seriedade dos europeus. Na cena em que Banning e Tonio Fischer se encontram pela primeira vez, por exemplo, ele está a ensaiar para o concerto da noite seguinte, sendo perturbado pelo barulho provocado na sala por Banning e a sua colega, que está preocupada em garantir que os convidados americanos ficarão sentados próximos uns dos outros durante o espectáculo, em vez de ficarem espalhados pela sala. A diferenciação nota-se também nas habitações: as casas dos americanos são modernas e incaracterísticas, e as personagens europeias vivem numa grande e ancestral mansão. Tonio Fischer é maestro e amante de música erudita, e as personagens americanas dançam ao som de algo entre o jazz e o calipso. Dwyer e Banning *flirtam* e falam de banalidades do quotidiano, quando as primeiras linhas de diálogo de Tonio Fischer são sobre responsabilidade e culpa. Quando Banning exclama: “everything’s so different from home”, denunciando o seu fascínio pueril pela experiência do mundo, Tonio Fischer responde dizendo: “everything is the same the whole world over”, o que reforça a construção de uma personagem inabalada pela fugacidade das circunstâncias, com um grau de consciência superior. Quando Tonio Fischer leva Banning a visitar a casa de Mozart, sugerindo através de uma série de paralelismos a sua identificação com a figura do compositor austríaco enquanto artista atormentado, Banning não consegue dizer muito mais para além de que a casa é “so simple”. À leveza dos gestos, das expressões e das roupas de Banning opõem-se o hieratismo e a dureza dos de Reni Fischer, etc.

A segunda parte do filme constrói-se sobre o confronto entre a comédia romântica de Banning e Dwyer e o melodrama negro de Tonio e Reni Fischer. Depois do piquenique, e perante uma tempestade, Banning e Tonio Fischer refugiam-se na casa de férias deste. É lá que o motivo do reflexo, figura essencial no cinema de Sirk,¹⁵ adquire relevo, quando ambas as personagens são reflectidas num espelho, ficando inclusivamente em campo duas Banning no momento em que Fischer pergunta se ela sabe cozinhar. É aqui iniciado o processo de complexificação da protagonista e do filme. Banning é vista no espelho no momento em que Fischer distribui as tarefas domésticas (“go and see what there is to eat. I will start the fire”), imitando uma relação conjugal. Esta impressão é confirmada pelo plano seguinte, em que se vê Tonio Fischer a tocar piano para Banning, ao fundo sentada no sofá, imóvel, a observar e a ouvir. A *mise-en-scène*, nesta cena, repete a de outra anterior, em que se vira o maestro a tocar piano para uma mulher — então não nomeada, posteriormente anunciada como esposa de Fischer —, que surgia unicamente reflectida no piano, igualmente inerte e encarando o marido. Banning é então, simbolicamente, colocada no lugar da outra, o que denuncia um problema — uma *falha* — se se atentar em como o filme vinha trabalhando esta personagem e o seu embrionário romance como protagonistas absolutos. O que aqui se vê é que o lugar que esta procura ocupar, ao envolver-se com esse homem, é um lugar já ocupado. Frau Fischer é a original, Banning é “a outra”, no entanto não uma cópia — antes um duplo —, uma vez que no anterior plano se havia visto a esposa em reflexo, e nesta reencenação se tem acesso directo ao corpo de Banning. Para além disso, neste momento Fischer toca a música-tema do filme. O filme — de que a música-tema é, neste momento, metonímia — é o que de radicalmente original os une, é o cenário fantasioso, de sonho, que se construiu para ambos.

A metáfora do filme enquanto sonho é trabalhada, como vimos, através de alusões diegéticas a esse universo, mas também o é, a um outro

¹⁵ Numa entrevista publicada nos *Cahiers du cinéma* em 1967, Sirk dizia, a propósito dos espelhos: “Je crois que l’art doit établir des distances et j’ai été étonné en revoyant mes films du nombre de fois où j’avais utilisé des miroirs car ce sont les symboles mêmes de cette distance. Pour des raisons quasi mystiques, les miroirs exercent sur moi une étrange fascination” (70).

nível, pelo próprio dispositivo narrativo que encena alinhar num tipo de filme específico de Hollywood — a “fábrica de sonhos” — para depois fazer ruir esse modelo, minando-o. O cenário que *Interlude* cria é o de uma comédia romântica, símbolo do sonho de uma personagem que lera sobre aqueles lugares durante toda a sua vida, tendo alimentado o desejo de um dia poder viver neles e apaixonar-se neles. O filme é a formulação da possibilidade de essa personagem cumprir os seus sonhos: ela desloca-se para a Europa, conhece os lugares sobre os quais leu, apaixonou-se na Europa por um europeu, vive esse amor como se de um conto de fadas se tratasse. Na segunda parte, no entanto, ao descobrir que Tonio Fischer é casado, esse filme construído durante a primeira parte cede, para dar lugar a um outro, de natureza diferente. O movimento é o da instauração do sonho (a Europa idealizada), para a metamorfose em pesadelo (a Europa real), para um regresso, no final, à vulgar realidade (os E.U.A.). Em “Distanciation and Douglas Sirk”, Willemen afirma, a propósito dos melodramas de Sirk:

When we compare Sirk’s films with other melodramas, such as the films of Frank Borzage, Leo McCarey and Vincente Minnelli, it becomes evident that Sirk’s rhetoric does not refer to the idealist dichotomy of reality/fantasy which characterises their work. Instead Sirk informs the surface reality of the plot and characterisation with a secondary reality. This reality can consist of:

(i) a different story, as is the case with *The Sign of the Pagan* (...);

(ii) a criticism of the surface reality (*Written on the Wind*, *All I Desire*, *Imitation of Life*) which Sirk achieves by relying on techniques of stylisation which refer the viewer to aesthetic concepts developed in the theatre (eg intensification of the rules of the genre) which result in a totally anti-illusionist mode of representation. (27)

Interlude, embora não seja referido, parece corresponder com justeza à observação de Willemen, no modo como se estrutura sobre uma dicotomia profunda. A sua carga auto-reflexiva provém fundamentalmente, aliás, desta questão.

Depois do interlúdio que representa a sequência na casa de férias, a americana encontra-se com Frau Fischer pela primeira vez. O encontro tem lugar num pavilhão com o interior decorado num estilo que emula a natureza com pinturas de folhagem nas paredes, como se se anunciasse que, a partir de então, o filme “virará do avesso”. A câmara filma a intrusa a entrar, e enceta um *travelling* lateral que revela a esposa sentada junto ao piano. Quando o plano é fixado, estão em campo o piano, as duas mulheres e um retrato da alemã na parede, e, após um discurso alucinatório de Reni, esta nota a semelhança entre o penteado de Banning e o penteado que ela própria tem no retrato. Se antes, através da *mise-en-scène*, se sugerira que Banning é um duplo de Reni, aqui essa relação é comprovada pela proximidade entre a figura da americana e a figura no retrato, símbolo de um passado em que Reni era saudável e amada por Tonio. Percebe-se, então, que o que o maestro procura em Banning talvez seja a mulher que teve no passado, mas que perdeu para a loucura.

O retrato da mulher, a aparência de autómatas de Reni, a loucura, os jogos de duplos, etc., recuperam um imaginário romântico, fantástico, gótico, de Edgar Allan Poe a E. T. A. Hoffmann, que marca presença no cinema desde o mudo (por exemplo, *Daydreams*, 1915, de Yevgeni Bauer), passando pelo melodrama gótico da década anterior, até ao quase contemporâneo *Vertigo* (1958, Alfred Hitchcock). A situação a que se assiste em *Interlude* é, aliás, aproximável da trama de *Jane Eyre*, de Charlotte Brontë, na qual a protagonista, na primeira pessoa, conta a história da sua paixão por um homem que tinha, afinal, uma esposa, uma *madwoman in the attic* em cuja linhagem Reni Fischer claramente se insere. *Interlude* desenvolve-se nesta confluência de géneros, da frivolidade pateta da comédia romântica (conduzida pelo *setting* e pelas personagens norte-americanas) ao horror gótico (presente neste imaginário negro), residindo porventura o melodrama no contacto entre ambos, pois a situação melodramática, em *Interlude*, surge precisamente quando o filme de horror familiar dos Fischer se insinua no mundo de polidas superfícies do filme de inocente descoberta protagonizado por Ellen Banning.

A pulsão horrífica do filme, da qual despontará o melodrama, é materializada nesta cena de encontro. No plano confluem três presenças fantasmáticas: a mulher do quadro, que não pertence à realidade física, mas que no entanto a assombra; a esposa, que é o fantasma da mulher que o

quadro encerra¹⁶; e Helen Banning, que funciona como duplo da mulher do quadro (atestado no penteado idêntico) e, conseqüentemente, da mulher fora do quadro, que é ela antes de se ter tornado fantasma de si própria. Banning é confirmada então como “a outra”, a substituta, ou talvez sejam ambas substitutas, uma vez que a verdadeira, a mulher original à qual ambas (inadvertidamente) aspiram, está fora do filme e do que este mostra. De certo modo, e à maneira retorcida do gótico, o que mais próximo há dessa mulher original, neste plano, é o quadro. O corpo mais importante do filme é um corpo que já não existe, uma figura ausente (lembramos *Rebecca*), e as presenças que o filme mostra são simulacros de um original perdido e irrecuperável. A identificação desta herança parece iluminar o porquê de tantas vezes, durante o filme, Helen surgir em espelhos, ou de Reni Fischer ser introduzida através de um reflexo deformado. Reni é o reflexo corrupto, enlouquecido, do original perdido, e Helen um novo reflexo possível, porém infiel ao original.

Reni — a doente, a louca, a que já não pode agir conscientemente —, estando irremediavelmente ligada a um passado perdido, pode ser entendida como símbolo, se não da morte, pelo menos de uma “não vida”. A propósito desta dicotomia, fora recomendado a Tonio Fischer, perto do início do filme: “You have to go on, to choose between the living and the dead”. Quando o seu médico e amigo o dizia, estava claramente a associar Reni aos mortos, algo de que o filme, neste ponto, se apropria, usando Helen Banning como elemento simbolizante do oposto: a vida, ou a possibilidade de vida.

Se *Interlude* começara por se construir como uma comédia inofensiva, sobre amores e desamores, este desenvolvimento imprime-lhe toda uma herança literária e cinematográfica que o afasta decisivamente de *Three Coins in the Fountain* e o aproxima da narrativa do século XIX e do melodrama gótico da década de 1940. No entanto, se em 1947 e em 1948 Sirk aflorara esses universos com *Lured* e *Sleep, My Love*, em 1957 a sua presença parece já desajustada, especialmente apresentando-se o filme, desde o início,

¹⁶ Que encerra não a mulher, mas uma representação desta. No entanto, nesta cena, a pintura funciona como prisão para essa mulher real, como se a verdade dela residisse dentro do quadro, e o corpo fora dele fosse um corpo esvaziado do que está irremediavelmente aprisionado no retrato.

distanciado de tais universos e aliado a um outro, oposto. *Interlude* apresenta-se, assim, não só como um objecto excêntrico no contexto da filmografia de Sirk, como um objecto excêntrico no contexto do cinema da década. Ao minar o esquema de comédia romântica a partir de meio, o filme corresponde perfeitamente à ironia subversiva que tantas vezes se identifica em filmes como *Magnificent Obsession* ou *Imitation of Life*. *Interlude* é uma “imitação de filme”, um filme sobre formas de fazer cinema, de gerar e subverter expectativas de públicos, o que deveria justificar referi-lo mais frequentemente como exemplo paradigmático da auto-reflexividade de Sirk.

A loucura de Reni é o elemento definitivamente perturbador da ordem que *Interlude* vinha estabelecendo, e como que o contamina, não só no aspecto formal, como no desenvolvimento que o enredo terá. As cenas finais mostram a tentativa de suicídio da esposa de Tonio Fischer, que corre para o rio, sendo salva por Helen Banning. Neste momento, a bolha do sonho/pesadelo rebenta em definitivo, e assiste-se à necessidade de, pela primeira vez durante todo o filme, Helen Banning agir conscientemente, quando se encontra na posição de poder decidir salvar, ou não, a outra mulher. Ela escolhe salvá-la, e assim se completa o processo de transformação desta personagem: se era uma criança (como continuamente fora sugerido em vários diálogos), tornou-se adulta; se era tola, talvez não tenha ganhado em inteligência, mas ganhou ao menos em lucidez. Neste final, *Interlude* revela-se um filme não sobre a aprendizagem do amor (como *Three Coins in the Fountain* levemente é), mas da vida. Afinal, o romance não fora o foco principal, mas sim o amadurecimento existencial de um indivíduo. Em suma, acrescentando à comédia romântica, ao horror e ao drama, o filme revela-se também uma narrativa de formação e um drama ético.

Esta dimensão ética não se prende somente com a diegese, consistindo ainda num exercício meta-cinematográfico. São conhecidos os falsos *happy endings* exigidos pelos estúdios aos realizadores sob contrato nesta época. Estes desfechos eram habitualmente possibilitados por uma espécie de *deus ex machina* que rasurava o efeito de verosimilhança da narrativa (vd. Nacache 119-120). Para a história de Helen Banning e de Tonio Fischer poder culminar num *happy end* (ou seja, na reunião do casal, que é igualmente o final que a comédia romântica — com que o filme, como se viu,

jogara — requer), a personagem da esposa teria de não existir. Reni é, também aqui, o elemento que perturba o filme e a progressão da sua narrativa romântica. O que o desequilibra são os dilemas éticos que essa personagem suscita: Tonio não consegue abandonar a sua mulher (que não é a mulher que ele deseja, mas a que amou no passado) por um sentimento de culpa (“sometimes I feel responsible for what happened”), e o dilema ético maior surge no final, quando Banning tem a oportunidade de escolher fingir não ver que Reni corre para a sua morte por afogamento num lago.

Momentos antes da tentativa de suicídio, a personagem da condessa Reinhart aconselha tentadoramente a americana a ignorar Reni e a ficar com o seu marido. Este, dir-se-ia, é um conselho “desumano”, mas é aquele que permitiria o *happy ending* (reunião do “falso casal”) que não só a tia queria testemunhar no fim do filme, como também, certamente, o público fidelizado ao modelo da comédia romântica. O caminho que Banning escolhe — e o filme, através dela — é o da tomada de decisão ética, responsável, que impossibilita o *happy ending*, mas que a salva moralmente. No final, entre as várias coisas que ela terá aprendido durante o seu percurso, sobressai a de que não é legítimo um indivíduo pensar unicamente no seu final feliz quando ele exige o sacrifício alheio. Isto funciona, num outro nível metaficcional, como comentário aos esquemas tanto dos melodramas com *falsos* (forçados) *happy endings* (a que pertencem quase todos os melodramas realizados por Sirk) como às comédias românticas. Neste sentido, *Interlude* é finalizado numa nota de censura aos modelos do melodrama e da comédia romântica com os quais *flirtara* inicialmente.

Por outro lado, esta salvação moral também não origina um final feliz, mas outro mais nebuloso, que Fassbinder comenta do seguinte modo:

June Allyson goes back to the United States with a minor love she’s met. They won’t be happy together. She’ll always dream of her conductor and the man will sense his wife’s discontent. They’ll concentrate all the more on their work, which will then be exploited by other. Okay. (84)

Também neste desfecho *Interlude* se aproxima de *Written on the Wind*. Na verdade, não obstante Sirk parecer repudiar o filme dizendo que “a história não é de forma alguma sua”, *Interlude* é — apesar das suas especificidades — uma peça que se relaciona organicamente com as restantes da filmografia do realizador. Para Fassbinder, por exemplo,

a loucura de Reni é reveladora da mundividência criadora de Sirk:

Brazzi has a wife, Marianne Koch. And this is the character who is perhaps the most important for an understanding of Douglas Sirk's view of the world. Marianne Koch loves Rossano Brazzi. He married her and she was always happy with him and her love was her undoing. She went insane. All of Sirk's characters are pursuing some kind of longing. (84)

A loucura de Reni Fischer aqui levada ao paroxismo tinha já um antecessor na personagem interpretada por Dorothy Malone em *Written on the Wind*.¹⁷ No universo ultra-romântico de Sirk, o amor macera invariavelmente os amantes, quer sofra concretização (Marianne Koch) ou não (Dorothy Malone).

Por outro lado, *Interlude* permite igualmente compreender melhor a tematização do tempo em vários filmes de Sirk. Robert E. Smith escreve sobre as paixões nos filmes do cineasta, reiterando o carácter temporal, intervalar, destes *love affairs*. A valorização do factor do tempo por Sirk é identificável, desde logo, nos títulos dos seus filmes. O título que ele desejava para *All I Desire* era *Stopover*, uma vez que este, na sua opinião, se adequava mais à história que o filme conta (Halliday 102). *All I Desire* é um filme sobre um intervalo de tempo, uma “escala” na viagem, um interlúdio, em que uma mulher abandona a família para se dedicar a uma carreira de actriz. A carreira falha, e a protagonista regressa para a família. No final, ela permanece com o marido e as filhas; no entanto, Sirk identifica esse final com as restrições do estúdio, pois o final correcto, para si, seria um em que a protagonista voltasse a abandonar a família, concluindo novo *stopover*. Também um título como *There's Always Tomorrow* permite intuir um trabalho cuidado sobre o tempo. Tal como *All I Desire* ou *Interlude*, esse filme ficcionaliza um intervalo na vida de um homem, em que uma antiga paixão regressa, obrigando-o a adquirir consciência de

¹⁷ Em “Love affairs that always fade”, Robert E. Smith equipara a personagem de Koch às de Malone e Robert Stack em *Written on the Wind*: “the striking madness of Reni (Marianne Koch) causes the innocuous romance of the principals (June Allyson and Rossano Brazzi) to pale to insignificance by contrast (...) How can romance coexist in the same world with Kyle [Stack], Marilee [Malone] and Reni?”.

que a sua actual vida de patriarca não é a desejada. O filme termina com a partida dessa mulher, num tom que ironiza o título do filme, uma vez que no dia seguinte ela não estará próxima, restando ao homem uma vida infeliz sem ela. *Interlude*, por fim, estabelece o programa também no título, iniciando e terminando com a viagem de Banning, um instante na sua vida.¹⁸ Invariavelmente, trata-se de intervalos de tempo durante os quais acontecem coisas que permitem às personagens não mais do que aguçar a consciência da sua infelicidade.

Interlude é um filme em diálogo com os restantes do cineasta, partilhando com eles temas e figuras essenciais. Revela-se ainda um dos filmes mais paradigmáticos da ironia que se associa a Sirk, bem como da sua qualidade de autor subversivo a operar na máquina de Hollywood. Parece-nos por isto útil equacioná-lo mais amiúde e mais atentamente em reflexões sobre a obra do cineasta alemão.

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¹⁸ Atente-se, a propósito, na letra do tema-título, com música de Frank Skinner e texto de Paul Francis Webster cantado por The McGuire Sisters: “An interlude that will not fade / Two hearts in love so unafraid / (...) How brief the glow, the secret spell / One kiss hello and then farewell / Yet my heart can smile a little while / Because I knew this interlude with you”.

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RESUMO

Depois de realizar vários filmes na Alemanha durante a década de 1930, Detlef Sierck é obrigado, pela ascensão do Nazismo, a deslocar-se para os Estados Unidos da América, onde realiza cerca de trinta filmes na condição de realizador contratado, primeiro pelos estúdios Columbia e mais tarde pelos estúdios da Universal Pictures. Sob o nome “americanizado” de Douglas Sirk, entra na história do cinema como o mestre do melodrama, em especial devido ao conjunto de *glossy melodramas* iniciado com *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) e terminado com *Imitation of Life* (1959, a sua última longa-metragem). Desta série de filmes, *Interlude* (1957) sobressai como aquele que tem obtido menor fortuna crítica desde o início da recuperação de Sirk na década de 1970. Contrariamente à maior parte da crítica e da ensaística, que insiste em classificar o filme como uma obra menor e desprovida de relevo, este trabalho propõe uma reavaliação de *Interlude*, argumentando a favor da sua importância no contexto da filmografia de Sirk.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Auto-reflexividade; cânone cinematográfico; cinema clássico; Douglas Sirk; melodrama

ABSTRACT

After directing several films in Germany in the 1930's, Detlef Sierck had to go to the United States of America due to the rise of Nazism. In the USA, he directed around thirty films as a contract director, first at Columbia Pictures and then at the Universal Studios. Under the “americanized” name of Douglas Sirk, he entered the history of film as the master of melodrama, especially due to a set of glossy melodramas, starting with *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and ending with *Imitation of Life* (1959, his last feature film). From this set of films, *Interlude* (1957) has been consistently ignored since the start of the critical reappraisal of Sirk's œuvre at the 1970's. Contrarily to the majority of critical views on the film, which tend to classify it as a minor work with no special interest, this

article proposes to critically reassess *Interlude* and defend its relevance on Sirk's filmography.

KEYWORDS

Classical Hollywood cinema; Douglas Sirk; film canon; melodrama; reflexivity

“She dwells in London town”:
The Urban Experience in Selected
Works of Amy Levy

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“She dwells in London town”: The Urban Experience in Selected Works of Amy Levy

The phrase “she dwells in London town” comes from a poem entitled “London in July” published in *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse* (1889) authored by Amy Levy (1861-1889), the late-Victorian Anglo-Jewish novelist, poet and essayist. Repeated references to the British capital (in addition to “London in July” and “A London Plane Tree” the volume contains “A March Day in London” and the sonnet “London Poets”) point to the significance of urban themes and motifs in Levy’s work. My aim is to discuss depictions of London in Levy’s selected poems and in her novel, *The Romance of a Shop*, in order to demonstrate that by situating women at the center of the modern city, she posed a significant challenge to the ideology of gendered private and public spheres. In the last decades Levy’s works have been steadily finding their way into the canon of Victorian literature. On September 14, 2014, to mark the 125th anniversary of her death, the *Jewish Quarterly* and JW3 Jewish Community Centre in London launched the Amy Levy Prize — an award for young unpublished writers whose fiction deals with Jewish themes. This new award is the latest sign of Levy’s recent rise to prominence, as an increasing number of readers come to recognize the value of her literary works to our understanding of late Victorian literature and culture. Amy Levy, as an Anglo-Jewish lesbian woman, may be seen through a prism of various minority identities and as a literary outsider she disappeared from critical view after her suicidal death on September 10, 1889. During her lifetime, she was appreciated by such men of letters as Richard Garnett, who wrote an entry on Levy for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, and Oscar Wilde, who published her short stories in his journal *The Woman’s World*, and called her “a girl of genius” (qtd. in Pullen 9), yet shortly after her death her literary works passed into oblivion.

Today a resurgence of critical interest in Levy's works is taking place due to the efforts of scholars participating in the process of recovering silenced voices. Feminist, Jewish and queer studies provide fascinating insights into her work. Levy's oeuvre encompasses three novels (*The Romance of a Shop*, 1888; *Reuben Sachs: A Sketch*, 1888; *Miss Meredith*, 1889), three volumes of poetry (*Xantippe and Other Verse*, 1881; *A Minor Poet and Other Verse*, 1884; *A London Plane-Tree, and Other Verse*, 1889), a substantial number of short stories, periodical essays, literary criticism and translations of German and Hebrew poetry. The renewed interest in Levy is, to a certain extent, due to a growing accessibility of her texts. Since the early 1990s an anthology of her writing and new critical editions of her novels have helped to establish her place in the literary history of late-Victorian Britain. Melvyn New's 1993 publication of *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy* resurrected Levy's works for a modern audience. Today Levy's poetry is available online as part of the Victorian Women Writers Project at Indiana University, and selections can be found in various anthologies of Victorian poetry. *Reuben Sachs* was reissued by Persephone Books in 2000. In 2006 Broadview Press published critical editions by Susan David Bernstein of *Reuben Sachs* and *The Romance of a Shop*. Levy's life story also attracted scholarly attention: in 2000 Linda Hunt Beckman published a meticulously researched definitive biography *Amy Levy: Her Life and Letters* which contains a selection of Levy's letters made available to the public for the first time in 1990. In 2010 *The Woman Who Dared*, a biography of Amy Levy written by Christine Pullen appeared in print.

In many respects Amy Levy can be considered a trailblazer: a graduate of the Brighton High School for Girls which provided a rigorous academic secondary education for girls of all social classes, she became the first Jewish woman to be educated at Newnham College of Cambridge University. She did not hesitate to fiercely criticize the materialism and conformism of her own middle-class Anglo-Jewish community, rebelling against established modes or representation. As Bryan Cheyette argues in his seminal article "From Apology to Revolt: Benjamin Farjeon, Amy Levy and the Post-emancipation Anglo-Jewish Novel, 1880-1900" Amy Levy occupies a crucial place in Anglo-Jewish cultural history as one of the writers who initiated a literature of "revolt" against the traditions informing early

Victorian Anglo-Jewish writing. For Cheyette, mid-Victorian literature produced by assimilated Jews was "explicitly apologetic" and functioned to mediate the values of Anglo-Jewry's middle and upper-class elite. The elite had "internalized" the values of British culture, therefore their literature reproduced "an ambivalent Jewish identity [which] was the outcome of an emancipation process where 'Jews had to meet the expectations of gentiles'" (254). In the Anglo-Jewish novel of "revolt", on the other hand, "a Jewish idealist — a persona of the novelist — is represented as an example of a moral Jewish self which opposes official Anglo-Jewry" (260). Cheyette convincingly demonstrates that Levy's significance as a writer lies in her refusal to "engage in literary apologetics on behalf of Anglo-Jewry's version of morality" (260). Her realist account of the Jewish transition to modernity, an account which explores conflicts of class, gender and generation, posed a challenge to Anglo-Jewry's mainstream public narrative of progressive integration into British society.

A continuously growing interest in Levy's literary output has been explained by Cynthia Scheinberg by the fact that:

(...) many of the issues (...) [Levy] addresses in her writing speak to concerns of the contemporary critical moment: Jewish Diasporic identity, lesbian identity, women's emancipation, and more general theories of 'otherness' within the English literary tradition (190).

Levy's significance in recent scholarship follows two broad paths, one focusing on Levy as an Anglo-Jewish author and the other viewing her primarily as a New Woman writer. The New Woman — a modern woman challenging conventional notions of femininity — became both a social phenomenon and a literary figure of the 1880s and 1890s. As Sally Ledger notes:

The New Woman of the fin de siècle had a multiple identity. She was, variously a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet (...). She was also often a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late nineteenth-century women's movement. Textual representations of the New Woman (particularly unsympathetic representations) did not always coincide at all exactly with contemporary feminist beliefs and activities. (1)

The New Woman was a quintessentially urban character whose emergence resulted from the circumstances of metropolitan life. Often labelled the “educated working woman” or the “professional woman”, she developed a sustained presence in the city. Levy herself may be seen both as a creator of New Woman fiction and as an embodiment of the New Woman. She pursued higher education, travelled both in England and on the Continent, and actively participated in London’s literary life and its mixed-gender club culture, attending the meetings of the Men and Women’s Club. She turned into a professional woman who supported herself through her literary endeavors and became a member of a circle of women writers and social reformers who frequented the British Museum Reading Room. She wrote extensively on women’s issues, and in her fiction often took up the question of new opportunities for women that arose in the city environment of late-Victorian London. London becomes an important motif in her prose and poetry: it is often a source of inspiration, a subject to be explored and a place where she feels at home as a professional woman writer. In her essays, short stories and novels, she depicts various urban spaces where female characters work, live and freely associate with other women and men. She addresses the changing conditions of modern woman’s life, exploring the controversies surrounding the New Woman’s challenge to traditional gender roles, and notes her increasingly visible presence in the public sphere outside of the home. Creating female characters who want to work, live and freely move throughout London, Levy explores the dilemmas experienced by women suspended between the mobility of social change and the constraints resulting from the tenacious hold of tradition. The city also figures prominently in Levy’s poetry: the eleven poems which open her last volume *A London Plane-Tree* have been called “a veritable love letter to London” (Miles 125).

There have been many attempts to theorize and comment on the nature of public experience in the nineteenth-century city, and what they have in common is the underlying assumption that the urban stroller — the *flâneur* — is male. Initially, the figure of the *flâneur* was tied to the nineteenth-century Paris, as eulogized by Charles Baudelaire. Baudelaire’s *flâneur* — the casual observer and reporter of urban life, who wandered the streets of the nineteenth-century metropolis looking at and listening to the myriad manifestations of the modern city — was a man. When

Walter Benjamin returned to the concept of the *flâneur* in *The Arcades Project*, using Baudelaire's *flâneur* as a starting point in his exploration of the impact of modern metropolis on the human psyche, he conceived him as a man who becomes an expert observer of the urban scene and who can interpret the sights and sounds of the city — often chaotic and fragmentary — into an understandable space. As several critics have maintained the notion of a female equivalent of the *flâneur* — the *flâneuse* — is highly debatable. Martha Vicinus emphasizes that as late as the 1880s "a lady was simply not supposed to be seen aimlessly wandering the streets" (297); thus the *flâneuse* was rendered impossible by the nineteenth-century conceptualizations of appropriate gender roles. "For women", writes Griselda Pollock in her 1988 book *Vision and Difference*, "the public spaces (...) were where one risked losing one's virtue, dirtying oneself; going out in public and the idea of disgrace were loosely allied" (69).

Although it is difficult to argue with the claim that in comparison to men, women had limited access to the life of the metropolis, it must be stressed that the last decades of the nineteenth-century were marked by significant changes in women's lives that resulted in their more visible presence in the city. A growing number of the middle-class women postponed or even rejected marriage and began to enter universities and seek employment outside of the household, often moving out of the family home. This new generation of increasingly emancipated women began to challenge conservative understanding of appropriate gender roles, fought for women's right to obtain higher education and strove to penetrate the public sphere of professions that were traditionally considered as male. Women became much more noticeable in the urban environment, for the city gave them more chances to find work and to actively participate in social life. Therefore the figure of the single woman pursuing independence gains prominence both in late nineteenth-century cityscape and in public discourse. In her article "Neither Pairs Nor Odd': Female Community in Late Nineteenth-Century London", Deborah Epstein Nord writes:

The opportunities afforded by London attracted aspiring women novelists, social investigators and political activists, but the city also represented the antithesis of those private and protected spaces that middle-class women traditionally had occupied (734).

Susan Squier has observed that women “have traditionally been relegated to pastoral and interior settings, both in life and literature” but, in contrast to such restricted settings, cities “hold out the possibility of sisterhood, as women who have escaped from the private home gather in public spaces to work, to play, and to discover that (...) they like each other” (4-5). Thus the male domination of the urban landscape — both real and constructed by a variety of discourses — which turned the city into a space for men’s adventure or a site for self-discovery had been questioned by the growing visibility of women in the public spaces and the emergence of the urban communities of women. As Deborah Parsons points out, “women were entering the city with fresh eyes, observing it from within” and producing “a particular mode of female urban vision” which differs from the detached perspective of Benjamin’s *flâneur* (6).

Amy Levy, a Bloomsbury dweller, was one of such women observing the city from within. Female mobility becomes an important part of her urban vision. In her first novel, *The Romance of a Shop*, the four unmarried Lorimer sisters move from the quiet Campden Hill neighborhood to the city center in order to establish a photography shop there. They have learned the skill of taking pictures from their father, who died unexpectedly, leaving them penniless. The sisters leave, “a large house (...) enclosed by a walled-in garden” (59)¹ — an image that immediately brings to mind John Ruskin’s famous essay “Of Queen’s Gardens” (1865), an eloquent glorification of women’s domestic virtues — and rent “two floors (...) above a chemist’s shop” (81) in Upper Baker Street,² a busy thoroughfare, where they set up rooms and the studio. The boundaries between domestic and commercial space become dissolved in their new establishment which combines the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of commercial

¹ All references to *The Romance of a Shop* are from *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy*, edited by Melvyn New, p. 386-87 and are cited by page number.

² The first short story which made Baker Street famous as the residence of Sherlock Holmes was published in 1887; however 221B Baker Street is a fictitious address, whereas 20B Upper Baker Street was a legitimate address, the letter “B” indicating that the rooms were located above a shop.

enterprise. They move from the enclosed space of the family home surrounded by the garden to a busy street in the center of London, they manage to support themselves through their profession and they come to appreciate opportunities, pleasures and expanding horizons of the urban life.

An important characteristic of the city — any city — is its heterogeneity. As Aristotle noted in *Politics*, "The city is composed of different kinds of men; similar people cannot bring a city into existence" (321). Thus the city becomes a meeting place of a multitude of people from all walks of life, people of different social backgrounds and different customs. Their relations are not founded on the shared memories of the common past and fixed traditions associated with common locality, but have to be newly negotiated. Inspired by Aristotle, Richard Sennett points out that "the city brings together people who are different, it intensifies the complexity of social life, it presents people to each other as strangers" (26-26). He regards the city as an open "trusting" space in which "human displacement is incorporated into everyday life as a positive force on human interaction". The city should not be regarded as "a peaceful, untroubled sanctuary", argues Sennett, but "a scene in which people come alive, where they expose, acknowledge and address the discordant parts of themselves and one another" (354). In *The Romance of a Shop*, Levy shows a variety of interactions of people, events and spaces in London, which give life and rhythm to the urban life.

In the city, the Lorimer sisters begin to communicate with strangers, to hold unchaperoned meetings with potential clients from various walks of life, and they come to enjoy the new kind of social life made possible by their independence. They learn to appreciate the heterogeneous and protean aspects of the city life and begin to feel more and more confident navigating the city streets. Levy writes:

Life, indeed, was opening up for them in more ways than one. The calling which they pursued brought them into contact with all sorts and conditions of men, among them, people in many ways more congenial to them than the mass of their former acquaintance; intercourse with the latter having come about in most cases through "juxtaposition" rather than affinity. They began to get glimpses of a world more varied and interesting than their own. (139)

The Romance of a Shop abounds with references to specific aspects of the urban life, providing numerous details concerning the location of the studio, mentioning such public establishment as the Berkeley Galleries or the British Museum Reading Room, where Gertrude takes “a course of photographic reading” (86), and stating which omnibus line she takes to go there from Baker Street Station. For Gertrude, the novel’s main character, a kind of a New Woman, considered by some critics to be a fictional version of Levy herself — an aspiring urban artist — the sights and sounds of the city are a source of delight and inspiration: she has always been fascinated by “the humours of the town”. She does not want to go about London travelling by Underground: “Because one cannot afford a carriage or even a hansom cab, she argued to herself, is one to be shut up away from the sunlight and the streets?” (86). She is shown “mounting boldly to the top of an Atlas omnibus”, urban transport becoming for her a way to transcend the restricting ideology of separate spheres which would keep her circumscribed in the private sphere. As Vadillo notes:

(...) the specific reference to the ‘Atlas’ omnibus (...) indicates Levy’s knowledge of London’s transportation network and her interest in exposing women’s engagement with the city via its transport system (...). Mass transport (...) emerges in the work of Amy Levy as the key element in the reconfiguration of race, gender and class in the everyday life of the city (71-72).

The presence of women in the streets of late-Victorian London and their increasing mobility are visible in literary works of the period and discussed in the studies of such scholars as Judith Walkowitz³ and Deborah Epstein Nord whose essay “The Urban Peripatetic” (1991) and her 1995 book *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (1995) suggest that women moved about the city primarily by means of walking. However, as Vadillo has convincingly demonstrated, “an examination of various other forms of urban mobility in late-Victorian London (i.e.

³ For a fascinating discussion of the ways in which both working and middle-class women asserted their physical presence in London streets see Judith R. Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London*, London: Virago, 1992.

omnibuses, trams, undergrounds and suburban trains) provides us with new and differing ways of assessing women and modernity aesthetics at the *fin de siècle*" (13). Thus the use of public transport by Levy's heroine may be seen as a significant trope of modernity.

Vadillo points out that from its origins, the public transport system was targeted at women. The founder of the first omnibus line, George Shillibeer advertised it, emphasizing that "every possible attention will be paid to the accommodation of ladies and children" (qtd. in Vadillo 18). However, it needs to be stressed that women were expected to travel in the first-level interior area of the omnibus. The open top of the omnibus was traditionally occupied by men; Gertrude's decision to sit at the top gives her an access to the free vistas of urban spaces and enables her to contemplate from the platform "the familiar London pageant with an interest that had something of passion in it"; she "was never inclined to quarrel with the fate which had transported her from the comparative tameness of Campden Hill to regions where the pulses of the great city could be felt distinctly as they beat and throbbed" (86-87). Gertrude's response to the city may be interpreted in terms of Benjamin's concept of *Erfahrung*: her mobility allows her to experience in a direct way the wealth of sights and sounds London has to offer.

The diction of the passage juxtaposing the *tameness* of Campden Hill with the *beating and throbbing* pulses of London, suggests that Levy is familiar with contemporary warnings that undertaking public travels, women were exposing themselves to danger. As Judith Walkowitz has shown in her 1998 article "Going Public: Shopping, Street Harassment and Streetwalking in Late Victorian London", harassment was a legitimate concern for women in the city, as evidenced by personal testimony and published advice about where and how to walk safely. Yet, it needs to be borne in mind that concerns about women's safety also provided an excuse to restrict women's movements. By having her heroine enthusiastically embrace her new fate and confidently use public transportation, Levy dismisses such concerns. Obviously, Gertrude, "transported", as she phrases it, to the center of the city, has begun to enjoy rather than fear the rapid rhythms of the urban life, despite her lowered social status.

As Deborah Parsons maintains:

(...) [the] omnibus, supreme symbol of commercial London, is frequently employed by women writers as an expression of their entry into once restricted public spaces. The bus offers ‘the freedom of London’ as contemporary slogans advertise, as well as a panoramic yet moving view from its top deck, a means of traversing the city that passes through different social and class-defined spaces (97).

The city becomes more accessible thanks to omnibus rides, and its vitality invigorates Gertrude, who harbors “a secret, childish love for the gas-lit street, for the sight of the hurrying people, the lamps, the hansom cabs” (110). She achieves agency through mobility: her confident use of public transportation allows her to navigate the city spaces increasing both her freedom and chances for work. As Christoph Asendorf has observed, in modernity “mobility is defined as freedom and freedom as mobility” (57).

In her urban poems, Levy describes London as a place that is full of movement and energy, where nothing and no one is at rest. For example, in “A March Day in London”, the speaker, who is walking the streets of London, refers to her state of mind using expressions evoking movement associated with urban transport. She talks of “The little wheel that turns in my brain; / The little wheel that turns all day, That turn all night with might and main” (19).⁴ When she describes the nighttime metropolis, she uses imagery creating the impression of perpetual motion: “The gas-lamps gleam in a golden line; / The ruby lights of the hansom shine, / Glance, and flicker like fire-flies bright” (20). Such verbs as “gleam”, “shine”, “glance” and “flicker” construct an image of the city where nothing remains still and life becomes a series of fleeting moments. Vadillo has compared Levy’s lines to Walter Pater’s famous sentence from *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry*: “To burn always with this hard, gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life”, and she concluded that “Levy’s London is always burning with this ‘gem-like flame’” (74).

⁴ Melvyn New did not include the poem in his edition of *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy*. All references to “A March Day in London” are from Levy’s *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse* published by T. Fisher Unwin in 1889, available online <http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/vwwp>, accessed on October 24, 2014 and are cited by page number of the original edition.

Levy's women move around London traveling by omnibus; thus this means of transport figures prominently in her poetry as well. Her "Ballade of an Omnibus" appeared in *A London Plane Tree* in 1889 and in 1929 her sister Katie enclosed the poem with the letter which she sent to the editor of the London *Observer* in 1929. Katie writes about her sister:

[she] was among the first women in London to show herself on the tops of omnibuses. She excused herself to her shocked family circle by saying that she had committed the outrage in company with the daughter of a dean, who was also the granddaughter of an Archbishop of Canterbury (qtd. in Beckman 139).

The letter reveals that Levy was aware of the transgressive implications of the omnibus ride. As already mentioned, in Levy's time, women travelling by omnibus were expected to sit inside and not on top, where they were exposed to the eyes of strangers. Her sister's account shows Levy pleased with her adventure: she appears to enjoy both a chance of mobility offered by public transport and a chance to defy social convention.

"Ballade of an Omnibus" exalts the pleasures of the city: the speaker — the omnibus passenger — appreciates her freedom to move across urban spaces. As Vadillo claims:

for Levy, the figure of the passenger had important social and political implications because it was as passenger (...) that women poets could become spectators of modern life, challenging masculinist representations of women in the modern metropolis and transgressing the incarcerating ideology of the private/public spheres (40).

The poem, which takes the form of the French ballade (3 stanzas of 8 lines rhyming ababbcbc, with the final line of each stanza repeated at the end of each, and a four-line envoi at the end), celebrates the "city pageant" that could be admired from the top of the omnibus. The melodious verse of the ballade — a form that originated in the musical *chanson* — the apparently effortless rhyme scheme and the free-flowing verse create a fluid effect which corresponds to the fluidity of the city, with its flow of traffic and pedestrians. The juxtaposition of a fixed traditional form of the poem and its modern theme of mobility creates an interesting effect. London

offers the speaker — who can be taken to represent Levy herself — new opportunities to move, to see and to be seen. The first stanza demonstrates that the speaker is satisfied with her position as an omnibus passenger:

Some men to carriages aspire;
 On some the costly hansoms wait;
 Some seek a fly, on job or hire;
 Some mount the trotting steed, elate.
 I envy not the rich and great,
 A wandering minstrel, poor and free,
 I am contented with my fate—
 An omnibus suffices me.⁵ (1-8)

She eschews more elitist modes of transport and embraces her status as a “wandering minstrel, poor and free” who travels using public transportation, which allows her to become immersed in the life of the metropolis. It is as if she — the urban poet — became an intrinsic part of the life of the city: “The ‘busmen know me and my lyre / From Brompton to the Bull-and-Gate” (11-12). It is only in “winter days of rain and mire” (9) when she sits inside the bus; on summer days she mounts “the topmost summit” (14) from which she could see “Croesus” (15). It is worth noting that in Levy’s time, the top of an omnibus had no roof or windows, so passengers travelled in the open air, and nothing separated them from the sounds and sights of the city. Sitting at the top reinforced the sense of movement, for the passengers directly experienced the free flow of air. For the speaker, an omnibus ride becomes an experience that can be enjoyed in any kind of weather and in any mood — a message reinforced by the refrain “An omnibus suffices me”.

From the top of an omnibus, the speaker records various scenes of urban life. She enjoys a panoramic yet moving view from the top of the omnibus as the poem demonstrates that new forms of moving through the city offer new ways of seeing:

⁵ All references to “Ballade of an Omnibus” are from *The Complete Novels and Selected Writings of Amy Levy*, edited by Melvyn New, p. 386-87 and are cited by line number.

I mark, untroubled by desire,
 Lucullus' phaeton and its freight.
 The scene whereof I cannot tire,
 The human tale of love and hate,
 The city pageant, early and late
 Unfolds itself, rolls by, to be
 A pleasure deep and delicate.
 An omnibus suffices me. (17-24)

For the speaker to view the "city pageant" becomes an exhilarating experience. Levy's use of such verbs as "unfold" and "roll" in reference to the scenes of the city life that the speaker observes with pleasure from the top of the omnibus suggests a sense of movement, a series of ephemeral and fleeting images. The ephemeral and fleeting life of the city can be best experienced from the vantage point of the moving omnibus, and this newly-acquired mobility gives the poet with both pleasure and creative inspiration. It may be argued that Levy's poetics of urban space is metaphorically realized through the movement of urban transport.

"Ballade of an Omnibus" is one of the most positive and joyous expressions of Levy's identity as an urban poet in tune with the rhythms of the city, who rejoices in her freedom to participate in its life and to enter public spaces from which women were once barred. In her biography of Amy Levy, Linda Hunt Beckman comments on the poem's humor which "comes from its juxtaposition of the archaic and the modern" and from "[p]opular and high culture (...) tossed together", with Levy making references to "Croesus" and "Lucullus's phaeton" but also alluding to Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado* (138-39). The speaker envies neither Croesus nor Lucullus — both of them proverbial for their wealth and luxurious lifestyle — "an omnibus suffices me", she repeats. As Hunt Beckman puts it "Levy's lyre sings of the democracy of public transportation" (139). Indeed, the last stanza of the ballade — the envoi — may be read as a straightforward expression of a democratic sentiment:

Princess, your splendour you require,
 I, my simplicity; agree
 Neither to rate lower nor higher.
 An omnibus suffices me. (25-28)

Levy's speaker, who is clearly at home in the city, embraces her position as an omnibus-passenger, for it allows her to observe, record and participate in the life of the city, enjoy its movement and find a fitting form to convey it. "Ballade of an Omnibus" demonstrates Levy's ability to create technically accomplished poetry, for she ironically deploys the historical genre to address a modern theme of urban modernity and newly-acquired female mobility. The speaker can ride freely across the urban space, using a democratic means of public transport, "seeing" and "marking" various scenes as they "unfold" themselves before her eyes. "Ballade of an Omnibus" is one of the most positive and joyous expressions of Levy's identity as an urban poet in tune with the rhythms of the city, who rejoices in her freedom to participate in its life and to enter public spaces from which women were once barred.

In Levy's works, the city is not just a setting but it becomes a constituent of identity. The heroine of her novel and the speaker in her poem experience urban life in a unique way as women who enter, seek and find a place for themselves in the public sphere of the modern metropolis. However, in Levy's poetry, the urban space, with its constant flux and movement, is not always constructed as positive and liberating. There are some poems in Levy's final volume that paint a darker picture of the city; their analysis falls beyond the scope of this paper. Yet it needs to be stressed that her London works play an important role in the process of creating a new urban poetics of the *fin de siècle* as they demonstrate that women can belong in the urban world.

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ABSTRACT

Amy Levy (1861-1889), the first Jewish woman to be educated at Newnham College, Cambridge, published three novels, three volumes of poetry and contributed numerous essays to major literary magazines. The city as a space where women find new opportunities for personal and professional development becomes a crucial motif in her works. The urban world that she both inhabited, living in Bloomsbury, and constructed in her works set in London, becomes a place where women can cross boundaries between private and public, interior and exterior. The paper discusses depictions of London in Amy Levy's novel *The Romance of a Shop* and in selected poems from the volume *A London Plane Tree* in order to demonstrate that by situating women at the center of the modern metropolis, she challenges the ideology of gendered private and public spheres.

KEYWORDS

Amy Levy; Victorian literature; the city; ideology of separate spheres

RESUMO

Amy Levy (1861-1889), a primeira judia que estudou na Newnham College, Universidade de Cambridge, é autora de três romances (*The Romance of a Shop*, 1888; *Reuben Sachs*, 1888; e *Miss Meredith*, 1889), três coletâneas de poesia (*Xantippe and Other Verse*, 1881; *A Minor Poet and Other Verse*, 1884; e *A London Plane Tree and Other Verse*, 1889), como também de numerosos ensaios publicados em revistas literárias de renome. Um dos motivos mais significativos da sua obra é o tema da cidade vista como espaço no qual as mulheres encontram novas possibilidades de desenvolvimento pessoal e profissional. O mundo da cidade onde viveu Amy Levy, residente do bairro londrino de Bloomsbury que ela própria construiu nos seus livros cuja acção decorre em Londres, é o espaço onde as mulheres podem ultrapassar barreiras entre a esfera privada e a esfera pública, entre o que está dentro e o que está fora. O artigo analisa as maneiras de apresentar Londres no romance de Amy Levy intitulado *The Romance of a Shop*

e nos poemas selecionados da coletânea *A London Plane Tree*, demonstrando assim que, ao situar as mulheres no centro da metrópole contemporânea, Levy lança o desafio à ideologia vitoriana de esferas separadas para mulheres e homens.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE:

Amy Levy; literatura vitoriana; cidade; ideologia de esferas separadas

Acting the Prince: *Giacomo Joyce* and *Hamlet*

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Acting the Prince: *Giacomo Joyce* and *Hamlet*

G*iacomo Joyce*, probably written during the summer of 1914¹ though only published in 1968,² and which sketches the obsession of a rather timid English teacher for an unnamed female student in Trieste, is James Joyce's shortest prose work and the only one not set in Dublin. This has led to *Giacomo* being rather overlooked and somewhat 'exiled' to the periphery of the Joyce canon. When brought into critical consideration, until recently, questions of categorisation were the order of the day with, for example, Henriette Lazaridis Power asking in the *James Joyce Quarterly*, "What exactly is its genre? Should it be considered an essentially verbal or visual text?" (623). Lazaridis Power did not, arguably (and perhaps understandably), come to a definitive conclusion in 1991, and although the collection of essays, *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*³ has made significant headway in bringing *Giacomo Joyce* into the fold and exploring its literary value, attempting to answer Lazaridis Power's initial question is still no easy matter.

Giacomo Joyce does indeed rather defy clear categorisation, lying somewhere between the prose poem and the dramatic monologue. The

¹ See Richard Ellmann, ed. *Giacomo Joyce*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983 (1968). xvi.

² Fritz Senn has written of the "ripple of excitement early in 1968 when a smallish, limited, expensive edition of a book called *Giacomo Joyce* presented itself to the reading public as a second posthumous work by Joyce, after the considerably longer fragment of Stephen Hero. There was a new, unknown work and uncharted territory" (20).

³ Louis Armand and Clare Wallace, eds. *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*. Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2006 (2002).

former allows Giacomo great technical freedom in presenting his own attempt to experience “[t]he Pleasure that abideth for a Moment” (Wilde 863); while the latter allows the writer “to inhabit a range of personae that may, as opposed to the confidential, earnest lyric ‘I’, open a space for doubt and ambivalence around the speaker” (Wallace 10).⁴

Vicki Mahaffey has put forward that *Giacomo Joyce* is “a seduction piece” (198) in various senses. The plot, such as it is, concerns a failed attempt at seduction (an ‘attempt’, however, that barely warrants even that description). A more successful seduction is that carried out on the reader, who is both teased and seduced by the quantity and use of literary and possibly biographical allusions. The possible echoes of Joyce’s life in *Giacomo* fall outside the scope of this article, but as we read and experience moments of literary recognition, followed by confirmation (or not) through the notes in the various editions,⁵ we find we have been drawn into the game of finding quotations and allusions which seem to have slipped through the editorial net. As we explore Giacomo’s fantasised and highly ambiguous relationship with his girl student, the more echoes we are told of, the more echoes we hear within the framework of what John McCourt has described as the “conscious artistry” of a “heightened awareness of form [and an] inter-textual nature” (197).

⁴ A point which reminds us of Joyce’s distinctions between personal lyrical art and impersonal dramatic art in *Stephen Hero*: “Lyrical art (...) is the art whereby the artist sets forth his image in immediate relation to himself (...); dramatic art is the art whereby the artist sets forth his image in immediate relation to others” (72); and, more explicitly, in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* where Stephen argues that “[t]he personality of the [dramatic] artist (...) impersonalises itself, (...) The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails” (194-5). The drama of *Giacomo Joyce* lies, I believe, in the character’s struggle to free himself from the former position and achieve the latter.

⁵ Ellmann provided more notes on *Giacomo* when editing *Poems and Shorter Writings* Ed., intr. and notes Richard Ellmann, A. Walton Litz and John Whittier-Ferguson. London: Faber and Faber, 1991, than in his 1968 edition of the solitary text. However, the probable echo of Hamlet’s “the readiness is all” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii., 218) in Giacomo’s “all is ready” (Joyce, *Giacomo Joyce* 6), for example, goes unmentioned.

What I shall suggest in the following pages is that there are structural parallels, as well as thematic and textual echoes linking the Shakespeare play and *Giacomo Joyce*. These *Giacomo* parallels and echoes, however, do not always match the order in which they occur in *Hamlet*. Joyce does not restrict himself to a rigid correspondence between either the respective characters or the sequence of events. As he told the Irish artist, Arthur Power, “All art in a sense is distorted” (85). In *Giacomo*, I argue, Joyce adopts and distorts the Elizabethan-Jacobean five act structure. It joins, as we shall see, other textual “ghosts in the mirror” (*Giacomo Joyce* 6), and contrasts with the “nicely polished looking-glass” of *Dubliners*, in which the Irish people could have “one good look at themselves” (*Selected Letters* 90); as well as being a possibly ironic pre-echo of the distortion Shakespeare himself undergoes, in *Ulysses*, within Bella Cohen’s Circean mirror (*Ulysses* 671).

In the accompanying tables for each act which appear in the appendix, I have summarised the main parallels between the two texts. After dividing *Giacomo Joyce* into five acts corresponding to the Shakespeare, I decided to count the number of lines using the 1968 Faber edition of *Giacomo Joyce* reissued in 1983. The line count in the Shakespeare is given according to the 1982 Arden *Hamlet* edited by Harold Jenkins. This approach produced the intriguing result that the “acts” in both texts were roughly similar in length.

Giacomo Joyce is indeed haunted by various literary “ghosts in the mirror”. As we shall see, in addition to *Hamlet*, these range from Shelley’s *The Cenci* to various plays of Henrik Ibsen. Giacomo himself can even be seen as something of a precursor to Jean-Pierre Sarrazac’s concept of the “playwright rhapsode”. A “rhapsode” was the ancient Greek professional reciter of epic poems and, going back to the Greek origins of the word (*rhapto* meaning stitch and *oide* meaning ode or song), Sarrazac’s “playwright rhapsode” assembles various theatrical texts and elements in order to create a new work:

stitching together texts for the theatre as well as by literally quoting or allusively referring to fragments of traditional dramatic genres, aesthetic categories or theatrical conventions and staging solutions. (Borowski and Sugiera 21)

Empowered by Joyce with this *rhapto* ability, Giacomo Joyce multiplies fictional images of himself and those around him. His imagination stages an internalised drama of joy and pain for him to enact his guilty urges and desire for self-aggrandisement in relation to the anonymous girl, who is necessarily also cast in a number of roles. She is a keen student of literature, but there is more than simple teasing in Giacomo describing her as “a lady of letters” (*Giacomo Joyce* 12). More tellingly, she is interested in the theatre, or at least attends it. We hear that “[s]he is dressing to go to the play. There are ghosts in the mirror” Looking “upward from night and mud” into her dressing room this “one below” — both physically and socially — imagines being in her room. Watching his imagined self watching the girl, Giacomo manages to make out her mirror, but not very clearly. She and the others only appear as indistinct reflections, “ghosts”. This is the spark for his imagination and so she is variously dressed as Hilda Wangel (*Idem* 7) from *The Master Builder*; Hedda Gabbler (*Idem* 8); Ophelia (*Idem* 10); Beatrice from Shelley’s *The Cenci* (*Idem* 11); and possibly Nora from *A Doll’s House* (although that name will obviously always create some ambiguity in a Joycean context) (*Idem* 15). She is also associated with the non-dramatic roles of Dante’s Beatrice (*Idem* 11) and Hester Prynne from *The Scarlet Letter* (*Idem* 16).⁶

In dressing himself and the object of his passion in these theatrical “borrowed robes” (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* I. iii. 109) and creating fictional selves, Giacomo casts himself, by implication, in the roles of the male counterparts in the various texts. If she is “Hedda! Hedda Gabler!” (*Giacomo Joyce* 8), then he is — however briefly, and if only in his own eyes — the attractively unconventional, artist-intellectual Lövborg; rather than the George Tesman figure he knows he actually is. He can enjoy these fake parallels with major theatrical figures from his theoretically safe and multiple standpoint as writer/director/spectator.

No text, however, is reflected more significantly in the distorting mirror of *Giacomo Joyce* than *Hamlet*. “I expound Shakespeare to docile Trieste”, Giacomo tells us. “Marked you that?” (*Idem* 10) he adds, misquoting Polonius (we might say), before directly referring to the father

⁶ See Vicki Mahaffey’s “Giacomo Joyce” in *Giacomo Joyce: Envoys of the Other*, 43-44 and 64-65.

of Hamlet's beloved.⁷ *Hamlet* appears, either echoed, mis- or directly quoted, and distorted everywhere in Joyce, as we know: *Giacomo Joyce* is no exception.

Between November 1912 and February 1913, Joyce gave a series of 12 lectures on the Shakespeare play, at the Università del Popolo, in Trieste. When he began them, Joyce was, like Hamlet, 30, and considered himself an exile, if not necessarily the "embittered idealist" Giacomo says the Danish prince "perhaps" is (*Ibid.*). Although the lectures are now lost, his extensive surviving notes⁸ suggest that the Prince and the play would still have been very much in his mind when he came to write *Giacomo Joyce* during the summer of 1914.

Like a blurred reflection of the Prince of Denmark, it seems that Giacomo goes in search of "[t]he only way of expressing emotion in the form of art (...) a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 48). To what extent, however, is Giacomo, like Eliot's Hamlet, "dominated by an emotion which cannot be expressed because it is "in excess of the facts as they appear" (*Ibid.*)? This is, perhaps, "the rub" (*Hamlet*, III. i. 65) for Giacomo, as he composes his "love poem which is never recited" (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce* xi). The "facts" of his relationship with the student, "as they appear", are meagre to say the least. This is why Giacomo's "emotion (...) is inexpressible" (Eliot, *Selected Prose* 48) without the theatrical characters he draws on and the fictional situations they conjure

⁷ Polonius says, "O ho! Do you mark that?" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. ii. 109). It is, however, not unusual for Joyce's characters to misquote the bard. In *Ulysses*, both Bloom and Stephen misquote *Hamlet* I. v. 9-10: "I am thy father's spirit, / Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night." Bloom's version has the ghost name Hamlet and uses 'time' instead of 'term': "*Hamlet*, I am thy father's spirit, / Doom'd for a certain *time* to walk the night" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 192) (my italics). Stephen later also misquotes "Hamlet, I am thy father's spirit" in also naming the prince (*Idem*, 241). Although this is obviously not the place to elaborate on the point, such misquotation forges a significant link between Giacomo and the two characters from *Ulysses* in terms of one of the thematic foundations of Joyce's writing: relationships between parents and children.

⁸ For a discussion of these notes see, for example, William H. Quillian.

up. They are the “set of objects” which allow him to perform (only appearing to act) in his fantasy.

According to Declan Kiberd, Giacomo would, in this respect, be clearly distinct from his author:

For Joyce, *Hamlet* the play as well as Hamlet the character was a dire warning that interior monologue might displace action rather than enable it. His soliloquies immobilise Hamlet: instead of doing, he theorises about doing, in ways that just deepen his depression. (332)

In *Ulysses*, Stephen and Bloom experience both advantages and disadvantages from displacing action through interior monologue. Giacomo Joyce, who only exists within one, goes in search of the “objective correlatives” which structure that world (the text); and which allow him to create, enjoy and distance his “erotic commotion” (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce*, xii).

Vicki Mahaffey has argued that *Giacomo Joyce* represents “an opposition between inner and outer reality” and “how that opposition breaks down”. For Mahaffey, the text prepares the way for the “drama and fantasy” of the “Circe” chapter in *Ulysses* (188). Giacomo’s “objective correlatives” is the means of at least partially satisfying his inner self and, at the same time, protecting his relationship with the exterior world; thus ensuring that this “opposition” actually remains intact. In his awareness of the contrast between the real and the imaginary, however, more than a touch of self-irony is added to the mix: “It will never be. You know that well. What then? Write it, damn you, write it! What else are you good for?” (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).

The thrill of even an imaginary chase is, nevertheless, not to be dismissed too lightly. References, characters and lines from existing dramas come pre-packaged with emotion, meaning he is not required to produce any himself. They are the means, to adapt Joyce’s phrase from “Drama and Life”,⁹ which enable Giacomo to both condition and control this emotional “scene”. They are the external facts shaping his internal fiction. They can also be lowered on Giacomo’s stage to provide a protective curtain. Throughout the text, when his recounting of an episode seems to be moving towards some form of emotional climax, it is expressed or curtailed

by way of a direct theatrical reference¹⁰ or allusion.¹¹ Fictional emotions and, thus, fictional consequences replace real ones. When this is not the case, an emotionally charged and dangerously open ended paragraph/episode is immediately followed by the speaker taking refuge in some kind of performance, an act through which Giacomo can escape the personal.¹²

In his fantasy, the student is passive, silent and seems unable or, perhaps, is simply unwilling to dress herself. “She cannot”, he almost gasps, “no, she cannot. She moves backwards towards me mutely” (*Idem* 7). So he proceeds to help her, his burgeoning excitement conveyed by a quickening stream of “s”, “sh” and “th”:

[H]er lithe body sheathed in an orange shift. It slips its ribbons of moorings at her shoulders and falls slowly: a lithe smooth naked body shimmering with silvery scales. It slips slowly over the slender buttocks of smooth polished silver and over their furrow, a tarnished silver shadow (...). Fingers, cold and calm and moving (...). A touch, a touch. (*Ibid.*)¹³

⁹ For the young Joyce, drama was “strife, evolution, movement in whatever way unfolded; it exists, before it takes form, independently; it is conditioned but not controlled by its scene”, “Drama and Life” in *Occasional, Critical and Political Writing*, 2000, ed., intr. and notes by Kevin Barry, 24.

¹⁰ For example, the eruption of Hamlet’s “Hillo! Ostler! Hilloho!” following “the meek supple tendonous neck, the fine-boned skull. Eve, peace, the dusk of wonder” (*Giacomo Joyce* 3).

¹¹ The allusion through “[c]rossed in love?” (*Idem* 5), to “the star-cross’d lovers” of another Italian city (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* Prologue 2) for example, seems a defensive measure by a Giacomo feeling overwhelmed by the Polonius/Capulet figure of the student’s father. Nevertheless, in this context, it does, almost inevitably, also invoke Juliet’s “[d]eny thy fatherand refuse thy name” (*Idem*, II. ii. 34).

¹² Giacomo’s outburst that “[h]er flesh recalls the thrill of that raw mist-veiled morning, hurrying torches, cruel eyes. Her soul is sorrowful, trembles and would weep. Weep not for me, O daughter of Jerusalem!” is immediately followed by a restoration of intellectualised, distanced emotional order through “I expound Shakespeare to docile Trieste” (*Idem* 10).

¹³ “A touch, a touch” cannot fail to bring Laertes’ comment to mind (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii. 289).

Finally (and typically) he withdraws, as climax is near, into a theatrical reference; the direct quotation, rather than echo, from *Hamlet* fictionalising the action which even in his imagination he is unable to realise. The self-irony Giacomo so often uses to undercut his fantasy appears again in the opening line of the very next paragraph. He reports the debilitated physical state this passion has reduced him to, in which “ess” and “th” sounds mockingly echo his previously increasing sexual excitement: “[s]mall witless helpless and thin breath”.¹⁴

Although his imagination is undressing the girl at this moment, Giacomo is far more intrigued by the idea of “dressing” her. We have already seen how he is addressed by many names which, rather than fulfil their conventional role of identifying him, effectively add layer after layer of fiction-based ambiguity. This student is, as we have seen, given further layers through theatrical identities, as Giacomo makes her, quite literally, a “lady of letters”. How does he dress the girl? It is not “how” but as “who”, the word with which the text begins, that concerns us. As her “pale face surrounded by (...) furs” (*Giacomo Joyce* 1), like a framed blank canvas, seems to be awaiting an artist’s touch, so Giacomo’s “coltura” (*Idem*) fires his imagination as the text unfolds. Both director and audience of her imagined performance, as well as his own, Giacomo can cast her as he likes.

Lacking the temerity to act on his feelings for the student in reality, Giacomo thus moves into the theatrical world of the imagination to carry out his courtship. And it is in keeping with this reticence that he casts himself as the Prince of Denmark, by implication only, however. Observed reality will now be dealt with by his fictional presence; the responsibility for events being delegated to his theatrical identity acting within his literary imagination. Like his near contemporary, J Alfred Prufrock, Giacomo knows full well that he is “not Prince Hamlet” (Eliot, *Collected Poems* 17) but, unlike that “attendant lord”, he allows himself the freedom to ponder the possibilities if he were.

¹⁴ Sibilants will return — “not single spies, / But in battalions” (*Idem*, IV. v. 78-9) to taunt him during his major crisis: “Sliding-space-ages-foliage of stars-and waning heaven-stillness-and stillness deeper-stillness of annihilation-and her voice” (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).

In one of Joyce's very few existing references to *Giacomo Joyce*, he wrote from Zurich in 1917 to Ezra Pound (who was looking for magazine material) that "I have some prose sketches . . . but they are locked up in my desk in Trieste. As regards excerpts from *Ulysses*, the only thing I could send would be the Hamlet chapter, or part of it" (*Selected Letters* 225). The prose sketches are *Giacomo Joyce*. The *Hamlet* chapter is, of course, "Scylla and Charybdis", in which Stephen expounds his Shakespeare theory to a not particularly "docile" audience, especially after Mulligan's arrival, in the National Library. The letter underlines, perhaps coincidentally, a link between *Giacomo Joyce* and *Hamlet*. What I shall now move on to propose is that this connection, as we have seen, runs deep and had already, if only subconsciously, conditioned Joyce's structuring of the Triestine text, creating a parallel version of Shakespeare's five acts.

When Joyce came to write *Giacomo Joyce*, he had already begun to think about the possibility of presenting everyday experience within the framework of a classic of world literature. Ordinary Dubliners, of course, would later be famously part of a free adaptation of *The Odyssey*. *Giacomo Joyce* can, I believe, be seen as a kind of prototype, a trial run, in a sense, for *Ulysses*; in that it presents a select group of ordinary Trieste inhabitants within a small-scale adaptation of a classic work of literature, *Hamlet*.

Like *Hamlet*, *Giacomo Joyce* starts with a question, "Who?" And as with the ghost in the Shakespeare, there is a mystery figure to pursue and discover "in the castle, [with its] gibbeted coats of mail, rude iron sconces over the windings of the winding turret". The "stones" in this "castle" are indeed "resonant" (*Giacomo Joyce* 1). Inside this "castle", during the lesson, the phrase "easy tepid speech" used to describe Giacomo's classroom delivery is also a fitting description of the manner in which Claudius speaks both to the court and Hamlet in I. ii. Although her classmate, like the Danish court, seems to be impressed — "*Che coltura!*" —, the student's reaction is, at first, one of "quiet disdain and resignation" showing her to be "a young person of quality" (*Idem*), and matching Hamlet's initial silence. The later pricks and stings of her eyes, however, suggest both the Prince's tone and attitude towards his uncle. The use of "quiver" is richly ambiguous here. To "quiver" can, of course, be to tremble slightly due to an emotion or through being cold. A quiver is also a long case for carrying arrows. Perhaps there is a distorted echo of Hamlet's famous "slings and

arrows” in the “stings and quivers” of the student’s “burning needleprick” (*Idem*)? This passage also brings to mind the “serpent” that “stung” Hamlet’s father and Gertrude’s troubled conscience which will “prick and sting her”. But this suggests some blurring of roles here. Who is Hamlet and who is Claudius in this scene? In casting himself, through tonal similarity, as Claudius with his “tepid speech”, Giacomo implicitly reveals his sense of guilt over the feelings aroused by the student and her disdainful awareness of them, in addition to manifesting the rather “automatic”, “mechanical” nature of his lessons; his thoughts being on other matters. Like Hamlet’s uncle, this teacher’s “words fly up” but his “thoughts remain below” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. iii. 97).

In my ‘Act II’ of the Joyce text, Giacomo rushes out of a tobacco shop to speak to his student but he is overexcited and can only produce “jumbled words of lessons, hours, lessons, hours: and slowly her pale cheeks are flushed with a kindling opal light. Nay, nay, be not afraid!” (*Giacomo Joyce* 4). This can be seen as a parodic mirroring of the account Ophelia gives to her father in the second act of *Hamlet*, when the Prince appears before her “As if he had been loosed out of hell / To speak of horrors, he comes before me”. “What said he?” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II. i. 86) asks Polonius. Ophelia, however, is unable to say, and goes on simply to describe the prince’s crazed actions. According to this account, Hamlet said nothing to her. Whether Giacomo’s student, presented with “jumbled words” rather than actions, would have been able to give a significantly more detailed report is doubtful. The next paragraph begins with “Mio padre” (“My father”) (*Giacomo Joyce* 5). In Giacomo’s mind she has, like her Shakespearean parallel, gone directly to her father after this embarrassing outburst.

Although this article does not aim to explore *Giacomo Joyce* in relation to the author’s life, if we choose to see the text as biographical, the events are, as Ellmann states, “out of sequence as often as in” (Ellmann intro., *Giacomo Joyce* xiv). Bearing this in mind, it seems appropriate that the parallels with *Hamlet* do not always match the order in which they occur in the Shakespeare: “the time is out of joint” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* I. v. 196), we might say. Therefore, for example, on the opening page, the word “brief” appears three times, following “Yes”. This affirmation, in an apparently innocent context, is immediately taken up and exploited by

Giacomo to feed his fundamental doubts about the future possibilities of any relationship between them. The echo from *Hamlet* comes, of course, from the play within the play: Ophelia comments on the length of the prologue, “’Tis brief, my lord”; and Hamlet replies, “As woman’s love” (*Idem*, III. ii. 148-9).

The graveyard scene, which takes place in Act V of the Shakespeare, happens in my Act II of *Giacomo Joyce*, where Meissel’s “suicide wife” (*Giacomo Joyce* 6) is the focus of the visit. The student gives a flower in my Act I (the event later becoming one of the *Pomes Penyeach*¹⁵); Ophelia distributes flowers in Act IV before, in her mad state, effectively committing suicide.

Hamlet also meets the players in this act and begins to prepare them for a performance after the First Player has performed “a dream of passion” about “the hellish Pyrrhus” and Hecuba, “the mobbled queen” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II. ii. 546, 459, 499). Giacomo’s “dream of passion”, his fantasy about helping the student to dress as she prepares to go to a play (*Giacomo Joyce* 6), is linked to death and juxtaposed with the memory of standing by a suicide’s grave, bringing Ophelia inevitably to mind.

Similarly, in the third act of *Hamlet*, there is the performance of *The Mousetrap*, a theatrical device used to replace direct action by the protagonist, as well as, in a sense, blocking or redirecting dangerous emotions. In the Joyce, Giacomo similarly withdraws behind his two “performances”: his singing of the Dowland song after being stirred by the sight of “a leg-stretched web of stocking” (*Idem* 9), and the lectures on *Hamlet* after his sexually-charged fantasy set in Paris (*Idem* 15). In *Hamlet*, it is also after the spheres of theatre and real life touch and tremble that the prince does finally act, albeit confusedly, stabbing Polonius. This is paralleled, in typically vicarious and disjointed fashion, by Giacomo’s graphic imaginings of the surgeon’s knife operating on the student, which are at once both terrified and sexually suggestive: “The surgeon’s knife has probed in her entrails and withdrawn, leaving the raw jagged gash of its passage on her belly” (*Idem* 11).

¹⁵ “A Flower Given to My Daughter”, *Pomes Penyeach* in *Poems and Shorter Writings*, 53.

The fourth acts of *Hamlet* and *Giacomo Joyce* share a strong emphasis on sensory perception and physicality. In the Shakespeare, many of these references are prompted by the search for Polonius' decaying body. In the Joyce, the same effect stems from intense thoughts about the girl's body and the oppressive physicality of the theatre-goers. Shakespeare's act four is also highly and self-consciously theatrical, full of action. It is also the act in which the main character appears least, a common theatre practice of the time, allowing the actor to prepare for the physical and emotional demands of the final act. Similarly, Giacomo slightly retreats into the background, with his focus being on the theatre audience, spectators rather than actors, reflecting his own genuine role in the events his imagination fashions.

Ophelia's madness in IV. v. finds an echo in the transformation of the student who, at least in Giacomo's eyes, becomes a strange, disturbed being: "Her face, how grey and grave! Dark matted hair". Like Ophelia's crazed singing, the student's "sighing breath comes through" and even Giacomo feels his own "voice, dying in the echoes of its words" (*Idem* 14) just as the words of the Danish court fail to reach Ophelia. Whilst Laertes is stirred into action by Ophelia's vulnerable state, Giacomo is only driven to urge others to take advantage of the student's seeming surrender to her fate as "she leans back ... into luxurious obscurity": "Take her now who will!" (*Ibid.*). His attempt at triumph falls flat, however. He may have found his voice again but not the means to act, even in his imagination.

The fifth acts of both *Hamlet* and *Giacomo Joyce* feature rather surreal scenes or, at least, episodes that seem tangential to the general tone and feel of their respective texts. In *Giacomo Joyce*, there is the hallucinatory "narrow Parisian room" (*Idem* 15) scene in which Gogarty appears: a rather ambiguous friend to the author and self-conscious comic performer (who, of course, achieved the mixed blessing of literary immortality as "Buck Mulligan" in *Ulysses*). In the Shakespeare, Hamlet meets the comic gravediggers and is "reunited" with Yorick, the court jester. There is also a duel, which does not go according to the established rules, in both pieces. The physical, literal duel of *Hamlet*, however, is transformed into a verbal, metaphorical conflict in *Giacomo Joyce*. When we come across: "Why? / 'Because otherwise I could not see you'" (*Idem* 16).

We are suddenly aware that the confrontation, the "duel" between

student and teacher, implicitly promised since the beginning of the text, has actually taken place “off stage”, without our knowledge. Giacomo’s most, perhaps only, truly significant attempt in the text to act has yielded only this rather pallid promise of continued contact. Perhaps the memory of those moments are simply too painful to report? A further possibility is that they will not fit into the grand theatrical framework he has been trying to establish. Such overt action has no place in a tale so largely performed within the confines of imagination. In the cutting or absence of this scene possibly lies Giacomo’s acknowledgement that he has broken his own rules. For whatever reason, however, (and so appropriately for a text in which passivity seems, ironically, to dominate) we are only presented with the consequences, the reaction; not the action itself through the most significant of the few pieces of direct speech in *Giacomo Joyce*.

What follows is a textual breakdown, unlike anything else in the work, mirroring Giacomo’s state: “Sliding-space-ages-foliage of stars-and waning heaven-stillness-and stillness deeper-stillness of annihilation-and her voice” (*Ibid.*).

What has caused this state, this “stillness of annihilation”, so close to Hamlet’s “the rest is silence”? Whether it is through direct or indirect theatrical echoes both the Shakespeare and the Joyce put far more emphasis on reactions than their cause. The “reactor” rather than the actor is thrust under the spotlight. *Giacomo* is ultimately a text about being a spectator. Here we are only given the reaction to the most dramatic moment of the story. Reading between the lines, as we must, it seems that Giacomo has finally made some kind of declaration to the student. She has rejected him and, probably, asked him not to speak of it again, giving her reason which is, rather ironically, the only implicitly affectionate thing she says to Giacomo in the entire text. Giacomo is unable to give us his declaration; not even disguised by a theatrical quotation or allusion. He is, after all, like Prufrock, just “an attendant lord”. The student’s calm and kindly response, even as she seems to let him know she has chosen another, suggests that she does not feel particularly threatened (and perhaps was not even surprised) by his declaration. Enveloped in so much fiction, the true moment of potential drama has, perhaps inevitably, come and gone almost unnoticed. The “stillness” which comes over Giacomo after the student’s “Because otherwise I could not see you” is perfectly in keeping with

Hamlet's last words: "the rest is silence" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* V. ii. 363). Here, however, the literary moves into the religious as Hamlet's final words reproduce the tone of Christ's "Consumatum est".¹⁶ Any doubts that Giacomo Joyce is now also implicitly casting himself as an ironic Christ figure are dispelled by the way he expresses his realisation that she has chosen another: "*Non hunc sed Barabbam!*" (*Giacomo Joyce* 16).¹⁷ That he is aware of the irony of this casting is shown by his inverted reference to *Hamlet* through his use of "Unreadiness" (*Idem*): both Hamlet and Christ were ultimately ready to face their fate.¹⁸

Giacomo Joyce, like the prince, finds emotional release through the theatre; though the teacher is even more spectator than actor. Torn between his attraction for his student and the guilt that attraction instils, he attempts to avoid responsibility whilst satisfying emotional and intellectual needs through imaginatively casting the girl in different theatrical roles and implicitly taking on complementary, self-aggrandising — and of course distancing — roles himself, with the Prince of Denmark as his "first player". Hamlet talks about theatre holding a mirror up to nature (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III. ii. 22), reflecting the truth, observed reality. Giacomo retreats into the world of imagination, with Hamlet being the major ghost in his theatrical mirror, reflecting the distorted reality that Giacomo, at a safe distance, vicariously enjoys: for the English teacher, even more so than for the Prince, "the play's the thing" (*Idem*, II. ii. 600).

¹⁶ "It is finished" (*King James Version, John* 19:30).

¹⁷ "Not this man [Christ] but Barabbas!" (*Idem, Luke* 23:18).

¹⁸ Other literary ghosts from Giacomo's mirror are invoked here. In addition to the echo of Hedda Gabler's bitterly ironic "After this, I will be quiet" (Ibsen 184), Beatrice Cenci declares that "We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well" in the last line of *The Cenci* (Shelley, V. iv. 165).

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Appendix

Act Nº	<i>Hamlet</i> (Total number of lines: 3 892)	<i>Giacomo Joyce</i> (Total number of lines: 250)
I	<p>The play starts with “Who” and is set within a castle. Hamlet is introduced and confronted with the ghost of his dead father, who urges him to act. This begins Hamlet’s agonising as to whether to act on his feelings and suspicions or not.</p> <p>The deceptive suaveness of Claudius is made clear. The domineering attitude of Polonius towards Ophelia is established.</p> <p>Act I has 863 lines (22.17%)</p>	<p>My “Act I” runs from “Who?” to “And when she next doth ride abroad/May I be there to see!” (p. 4 paragraph 1)</p> <p>The play starts with “Who”, which introduces a mystery figure for the protagonist to pursue and discover in a castle-like setting. Giacomo, his pupil and her father are introduced. The deceptive smoothness of public speech is made apparent. The problem presented is his fascination for her and her ambiguous reaction to him, in addition to her close relationship with her father.</p> <p>Act I has 53 lines (21.20%)</p>
II	<p>Ophelia tells Polonius of Hamlet who, seemingly mad, has approached her half-undressed. Hamlet meets the players and begins to prepare them for a performance after the First Player has performed “a dream of passion”.</p> <p>Act II has 780 lines (20.04%)</p>	<p>My “Act II” begins with “I rush out of the tobacco-shop” (p. 4 paragraph 2) and finishes with “Hedda! Hedda Gabler!” (p. 8 paragraph 2). Giacomo has rushed out to speak to the student but has only managed to produce an incoherent babble. His fantasy about helping her to dress as she prepares to go to a play is juxtaposed with the memory of standing by a suicide’s grave.</p> <p>Act II has 51 lines (20.4%)</p>

<p>III</p>	<p>The performance of <i>The Mousetrap</i> is a theatrical device used to replace direct action by the protagonist, as well as redirecting what are conceived as dangerous emotions. It is also here that the prince does finally act, albeit misguidedly, and stabs Polonius.</p> <p>Act III has 897 lines (23.5%)</p>	<p>My “Act III” starts with “The sellers offer on their altars the first fruits” (p. 8 paragraph 3) and closes with “O cruel wound! Libidinous God!”(p. 11 paragraph 3).</p> <p>Giacomo similarly withdraws behind his two “performances”: his singing of the Dowland song after being stirred by the sight of “a leg-stretched web of stocking”, and the lectures on <i>Hamlet</i> after his sexually-charged fantasy set in Paris. Hamlet’s stabbing of Polonius is paralleled, in typically indirect and distorted fashion, by Giacomo’s terrified, yet strangely graphic imaginings of the action of the surgeon’s knife upon the student.</p> <p>Act III has 58 lines (23.2%)</p>
<p>IV</p>	<p>The questioning over and search for Polonius’ body brings in many references to the senses and physicality. Shakespeare’s Act Four is an act of self-conscious theatricality drawing in all the characters. They are driven to “act” here. Following her mad scene, a strangely passive Ophelia drowns, perhaps unconsciously committing suicide, and there is a plot against Hamlet, who appears less in this act.</p> <p>Act IV has 650 lines (16.7%)</p>	<p>My “Act IV” opens with “Once more in her chair by the window,” (p. 11 paragraph 4) and closes with the exclamation “Take her now who will!” (p. 14 paragraph 2).</p> <p>Her body and the spectators in the theatre usher in a multitude of references to the senses and physicality. Giacomo’s focus on the theatre audience, spectators rather than actors, reflects his genuine role in the events his imagination fashions. Even less directly involved now, he stands even more passively apart directing his theatre of the mind. Ophelia’s madness in scene V finds an echo in the transformation of the student who, in Giacomo’s eyes, is transformed into some strange, disturbed being. She is, like Ophelia, grotesquely submissive.</p> <p>Act IV has 41 lines (16.4%)</p>

<p>V</p>	<p>Hamlet experiences the strangely disjointed graveyard scene, in which he is “reunited” with Yorick before Ophelia’s funeral. The prince comes to a decision, a sense of readiness, and takes part in the duel. He ‘purifies’ the court but his own destruction is part of that process. The immediate problem is resolved but there is some ambiguity as to what will happen to Denmark in the hands of Hamlet’s successor.</p> <p>Act V has 702 lines (18.04%)</p>	<p>My “Act V” begins with “As I come out of Ralli’s house I come upon her suddenly...” (p. 14 paragraph 3) and, obviously, runs to the end of the text.</p> <p>The speaker experiences the hallucinatory “Parisian room” scene in which he is strangely “reunited” with an old friend with a taste for the comic. He is in turmoil, as the struggle with his conscience reaches its peak.</p> <p>He then discovers that she has chosen another rather than him. He has lost some form of “duel” for her affections and he feels at once rejected and saved. The possibility of a guilt-ridden relationship, however faint, has been ended.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we are left with another “knot” or puzzle to untie by way of the objects left on top of the piano and the “envoy”. What the immediate future holds for them and their relationship is unclear.</p> <p>Act V has 47 lines (18.8%)</p>
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ABSTRACT

Between November 1912 and February 1913, Joyce gave a series of 12 lectures on *Hamlet* at the Università del Popolo, Trieste. Although these lectures are now lost, his extensive surviving notes suggest that the play was very much in his mind when he came to write *Giacomo Joyce* in 1914.

Giacomo Joyce sketches the obsession of an English teacher (who may or may not be entirely Joyce) for an unnamed female student in Trieste. Full of literary and, especially, theatrical allusions, Joyce's last published work draws us into a search for the theatrical within the narrative as the nature of the protagonist's relationship with his girl student is explored through juxtaposition with a range of allusions from the world stage. No textual "ghosts in the mirror", however, are reflected more significantly in *Giacomo Joyce* than *Hamlet*.

This article argues that Shakespeare not only provides Joyce with distorted verbal echoes and parallel events, but actually furnishes an underlying structure for *Giacomo Joyce* as a whole, through the Elizabethan 5 act structure.

This structural adoption of a classic text to examine contemporary experience can be seen as paving the way for *Ulysses*, which had been in preparation for some time and on which Joyce was about to embark.

KEYWORDS

James Joyce; *Giacomo Joyce*; Shakespeare; *Hamlet*; theatre

RESUMO

Entre Novembro de 1912 e Fevereiro de 1913, Joyce proferiu uma série de 12 conferências sobre *Hamlet* na Università del Popolo, em Trieste. Apesar do texto das conferências se ter perdido, as notas existentes sugerem que esta peça de teatro estava muito presente no seu espírito quando escreveu *Giacomo Joyce* em 1914. *Giacomo Joyce* esboça a obsessão de um professor de inglês (que pode ser ou não ser Joyce) com uma aluna anónima em Trieste.

Repleta de alusões literárias e teatrais, esta obra de Joyce leva-nos a procurar o teatro dentro da narrativa à medida que explora a natureza da relação do protagonista com a sua aluna através da justaposição de um leque de alusões e referências teatrais. Contudo, nenhum dos outros “espectros no espelho” é refletido tão significativamente como *Hamlet*.

Este artigo defende que Shakespeare não só sugeriu a Joyce ecos verbais e acontecimentos paralelos, mas forneceu concretamente a estrutura subjacente a *Giacomo Joyce* como um todo, através da estrutura isabelina em 5 atos.

Esta adoção da estrutura de um texto clássico para examinar a experiência contemporânea poderá ser vista como um abrir caminho para *Ulysses* que, naquela altura, estava em preparação e cuja escrita Joyce estava prestes a iniciar.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

James Joyce; *Giacomo Joyce*; Shakespeare; *Hamlet*; teatro

“A man’s real character will always be
more visible in his household
than anywhere else”: (Gentle)Manliness
and Domestic Violence
in the Mid-Victorian Novel

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“A man’s real character will always be more visible in his household than anywhere else”: (Gentle)Manliness and Domestic Violence in the Mid-Victorian Novel

When in the first edition of *Character* Samuel Smiles wrote that “[a] man’s real character will always be more visible in his household than anywhere else” (308), he aptly verbalized the idea, ripening in the Victorian frame of mind since the beginning of the era, that men’s intrafamilial relations posed an effective test of their moral probity, reliability and (gentle)manly demeanour. The Victorian conceptualisations of masculinity were moulded by the contemporary ideals of domesticity and gentlemanliness to a considerable extent. There was an unprecedented insistence on men’s involvement in family affairs and their active contribution to domestic felicity. According to John Tosh, the Victorians believed that “to be fully human and fully masculine, men must be active and sentient participants in domestic life” (197). Moreover, due to the far-reaching redefinition of the notion of the gentleman, from the appellation denoting affluence and ancestry to “the title of moral nobility superior to legal rank” (181), as *The Spectator* expressed it, meant that gentlemanly virtues were to reform and guide men’s conduct in both public and private spheres. Unfortunately, Victorian society had to confront the bitter truth that “home worship” and promotion of gentlemanly virtues proved insufficient to temper male characters and prevent spousal abuse. The mid-Victorian fiction was instrumental in raising public awareness about marital violence and the pressing need for legal changes to aid women in their strife for security, dignity and independence from domestic perpetrators.

The Victorians invested heavily in disseminating their domestic ideology centred on the purity and harmony of the hearth and close, emotional bonds among family members. Given the traditional connection between women, children and the domestic space, it was men who became the major target of the social campaign. A significant number of prominent

nineteenth-century moralists emphasized the home-oriented stance that Victorian men were expected to adopt. John Stuart Mill, an ardent feminist, stresses the growing domestication of men: “The association of men with women in daily life is much closer and more complete than it ever was before. Men’s life is more domestic” (175); John Ruskin, in turn, underscores the pivotal role of men in protecting and fostering the serenity and felicity of the “vestal temple” (102), by declaring that “the man’s work for his own home is (...) to secure its maintenance, progress, and defence” (122); in addition, the sage views men’s involvement in home life as a facet of paramount importance to their public image: “Generally we are under an impression that a man’s duties are public, and a woman’s private. But this is not altogether so. A man has a personal work or duty, relating to his own home, and a public work or duty, which is the expansion of the other, relating to the state” (122). Samuel Smiles, likewise, celebrates marital blessings and accentuates the ennobling effects of establishing family relationships: “Man enters a new world of joy, and sympathy, and human interest, through the porch of love. He enters a new world in his home” (307). Such a sentimentalized, eulogized picture of the fireside was intended to shield men from the dehumanising impact of the industrial sector, where they spent most of their working hours, as well as to lure them away from degeneration and debasement that men were exposed to in places of public entertainment. As Walter E. Houghton notes, “[i]n the home so conceived, man could recover the humanity he seemed to be losing (...). He might feel his heart beating again in the atmosphere of domestic affection and the binding companionship of a family” (345).

The moral refinement of the Victorian man was also facilitated by gentlemanly codes of conduct. Since gentlemanliness acquired a more democratic, universal appeal in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, men were encouraged to mould their characters in accordance with gentlemanly principles to win public recognition and deserve the rank of a gentleman. Contemporary interpretations of the concept invariably enhance the significance of self-restraint, honesty, politeness, generosity and magnanimity. Cardinal Newman’s famous explication evidently manifests superiority of the qualities of the heart:

(...) it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain (...). The true gentleman in like

manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast (...) his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home (...) he is tender towards the bashful, gentle towards the distant, and merciful towards the absurd (...) he submits to pain, because it is inevitable, to bereavement, because it is irreparable, and to death, because it is his destiny. (208-10)

Christian ethics, which stigmatised aggression and selfishness, and upgraded charitable conduct in all circumstances, underpinned the contemporary construal of the term to a considerable degree. The Victorian man was to abhor violence and irascibility, as signs of animalistic inclinations and the roots of other vices, unworthy of the gentleman. In his essay "The Grand Old Name of Gentleman" J. R. Vernon evidently underscores the meaning of patience and moderation in contemporary understanding of the ideal:

How many flaws are caused in characters that have a gleam of the true nobility, by irritability and impatience! Loss of dignity, of sweetness, of authority; failings alike in justice and in generosity. Calm and equable, though not impassive or cold; patient, though not sluggish; forbearing, but not slovenly, not passing over that which should be noticed — this must the Gentleman be. (566)

The unprecedented elevation of mildness, self-discipline and benignity made this model of manliness fit for both private and public use. Naturally, the public face of the Victorian gentleman was explicitly linked with his domestic deportment. As David Castronovo claims, in Victorian consciousness being a gentleman equalled "being an honest man, a man whose public conduct is high because his private conduct is above reproach" (30). It may be observed that many Victorian thinkers and social activists hoped that proper instruction should help eradicate egoistic tendencies and brutish instincts from male characters. Given the slow pace of changes concerning the legal status of wives, it may be deduced that Victorian politicians shared this overoptimistic view. Yet in reality, many husbands were unable to come up to such high expectations, and the idea of companionship and harmony in marriage often turned into an illusion (Hammerton 73).

At the outset of the Victorian era women's legal position, or rather legal nonexistence, was determined by the common-law doctrine of

coverture, according to which married women, (called *femmes covert*, i.e. “covered women”) had no individual political representation, and were forced to bend to their husbands’ will (Phegley 17). The legal vacuum that women lived in for the greater part of the nineteenth century turned them into little more than husbands’ private possessions. One of the initial bills that diminished men’s legal privileges was the 1839 Custody of Infants Act, which granted women the right to claim custody of children under the age of seven, provided they were not found guilty of adultery (19). The next step towards women’s emancipation was made in 1857 when the Matrimonial Causes Act enabled applying for judicial separation or divorce in a civil divorce court. Notwithstanding the considerable weight that the reform carried for married women, the Divorce Act still discriminated against them, as wives had to evidence not only their spouses’ adultery (as men were required), but also either brutality, incest, bigamy or desertion (20). The financial autonomy of married women was established only after the Married Women’s Property Acts of 1870 and 1882 were passed, finally permitting them to retain their entire capital earned or inherited before and after marriage (26). The gradual improvement of women’s legal status was by no means complete at the end of the period. Furthermore, it took even more time and pain to deconstruct the traditional views on sacred bonds of wedlock, women’s submission and men’s supremacy deeply entrenched in Victorian mentality. Together with nineteenth-century press, contemporary fiction increased the exposure of marital maltreatment to a considerable degree, opening people’s eyes to the extent of wives’ suffering and husbands’ cruelty. The publicity that the question of wife victimization received in the mid-Victorian period heartened women to fight for their rights, and shamed men into penitence. Victorian novelistic discourse undeniably triggered the erosion of the stereotypical attitudes and mobilized support for political, social and moral reforms. According to Lisa Surridge, Victorian novels “(...) take as a central theme the disciplining of spousal violence, both contemplating the public, legal means and creating one of the primary private means by which this was to occur” (9).

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall (1848) was one of the first texts to shed light on the relation between wife assault and women’s legal powerlessness, as Lisa Surridge states (101). What is more, Anne Brontë brought the problem of male self-indulgence and profligacy into focus calling for a

decided reorientation of the early nineteenth-century models of manliness. Even though the heroine, Helen Lawrence, is familiar with the rumours about her suitor's love affairs and dissipated lifestyle, she is attracted by his physiognomy, wit and playful manners. The young fiancée accepts Arthur's proposal, defying her aunt's objections, deeply convinced that she will be able to rehabilitate him and change his dirty habits by loving care and kind remonstrance. Arthur, in turn, promises to "moderate [his] expenses and live like Christian", as well as pursue "prudence and virtue" under her ennobling influence (Brontë 147). He deliberately creates an impression of having gentlemanly aspirations and being mature enough to open his heart to female spiritual power. Nevertheless, Helen's naïve expectations soon turn into a sharp disappointment, when she learns that her husband's egoistic, unprincipled, corrupted character is resistant to positive guidance. Instead of being her husband's redeemer, Mrs. Huntingdon becomes the victim of his violent temper, alcohol addiction and licentiousness. At first, she makes a heroic attempt to save him from total moral downfall, but all her methods prove fruitless. Her diary is saturated with feelings of pain, shame, regret and despair caused by verbal abuse, humiliating treatment, infidelity and recurrent desertion: "I have laboured, and studied, and prayed, and struggled for his advantage; and how cruelly he has trampled on my love, betrayed my trust, scorned my prayers and tears, and efforts for his preservation — crushed my hopes, destroyed my youth's best feelings, and doomed me to a life of hopeless misery (...) I HATE him!" (262-63). Moreover, the awareness that she is "a slave, a prisoner" (312) in her house sentenced to corporal punishment and mental tortures intensifies her sorrow. Helen's legal disempowerment is not the only factor that renders her impotent, as it may be more difficult to overcome mental bondage and embarrassment at having one's family secrets subjected to public scrutiny. Helen sadly remarks that "[i]f your mother and brother are unkind to you, you may leave them, but remember you are bound to your husband for life" (318). The long repressed impulse to act arises when their son becomes involved in his father's vile inclinations. Helen is horrified at Arthur's perverse delight in spoiling his heir. By teaching little Arthur swear words, intoxicating him with spirits and instilling repulsion towards his mother Huntingdon creates an ominous copy of himself. As a loving mother and considerate parent she must save her child from Arthur's

demoralising methods of upbringing. Although Helen's escape is successful, she is unable to terminate her ties with the tyrannical husband. The fear of being detected and robbed of her child constantly lurks in her mind, while her unvanquishable dedication to moral and social norms of propriety preclude a happy union with another man, until her husband's untimely death restores her freedom. In the preface to the second edition Anne Brontë counters some unjust accusations of exaggerated depictions of male beastliness by claiming: "I know that such characters do exist, and if I have warned one rash youth from following in their steps, or prevented one thoughtless girl from falling into the very natural error of my heroine, the book has not been written in vain" (4). In addition, she openly declares her didactic goal of instructing the young audience about the pitfalls of wedlock, founded on female sentimentality and male vanity. Her novel demonstrates that marital violence was not exclusively a working-class sin and that only careful consideration of the burning question could help repair the defective legal system, dismantle stereotypes about innate female passivity and dissipate new ideals of manliness underpinned with Christian and gentlemanly values.

While *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* diagnoses the reasons for spousal maltreatment and exposes abusive practices in rich households, *Paul Ferroll* (1855) by Caroline Clive examines a more intricate issue of women's mental, and frequently unconscious, enslavement. The eponymous character is a respectable member of landed gentry, whose apparent wisdom, sobriety and benevolence are generally admired by both peers and common villagers. However, under the mask of civility and gentlemanliness there hides a ruthless murderer, who secretly knifes his first wife to death, in order to marry his pervious lover. The second Mrs. Ferroll is absolutely ignorant of her husband's heinous crime, and blindly in love with her spouse. Elinor idolises Paul, offers him unconditional devotion, always succumbs to his will and virtually incorporates her life into that of her husband. Mrs. Ferroll is an illustrative example of *femme covert*, a woman deprived of her own identity, invisible for the law, and even for herself. Her psychological dependence on the spouse is so great that she has no opinions, desires and needs of her own, living merely to satisfy his demands. "Your will was always an omnipotent will" (Clive 155) — this peaceful remark reflects Elinor's compliance with Paul's wishes and acknowledgement of his absolute

authority. She is even scared of going away to visit their ill daughter, Janet, lest her absence might ignite his irritation: "I can't do that. I can't have him come home, and find me gone, without his saying go, to my going" (46). Such a selfless attitude gratifies Ferroll's narcissistic personality and allows him to wield enormous influence on his wife. As stated by Adrienne Gavin, "Ferroll's feelings for Elinor are an obsession, a desire for absolute possession" (xxiii). The protagonist frequently manifests his deviant attachment by forbidding her to leave home without asking for his consent: "You shall not leave me", he exclaimed; (...) Nothing should make you leave me now" (174-175). Moreover, he derives sick pleasure from testing the strength of her feelings and tormenting her with vexing questions until she suffers mental strain: "(...) suppose I were called a murderer — was a murderer, could you be faithful still, love me, no matter what I was; never change? (...) 'Oh, heavens! What are you talking of?' she cried, thoroughly frightened" (80). His love verges on a dangerous mania because he demands to possess Elinor at his disposal at all costs: "I want Elinor most. I will fall ill to get Elinor" (48). Even when a cholera epidemic breaks out in the neighbourhood, he would gladly infect her, provided she followed him to the grave. It is evident that Ferroll is madly jealous of his wife's feelings and attention; he requires to be the sole object of her care and affection: "Mr. Ferroll gently told her, that she, his wife, was his only, and must think of no one else" (192). The fixation with his wife increases to such a degree that he regards their only child as his rival for Elinor's love. Actually, Janet becomes another victim of the protagonist's tyrannical measures and learns to worship her father and execute his orders uncomplainingly; as the narrator indicates: "advice from him was to her immutable law" (224). Caroline Clive's novel constitutes an amateur psychological study of mental violence inflicted on a gullible and submissive wife, who does not even realise that she gets addicted to her spouse. Paul Ferroll is not a typical wife-battering brute. He exerts the power of his mind, brilliant, yet monstrous mind, which is extremely difficult to detect and defeat. Mrs Ferroll is trapped in a cobweb of deception and manipulation, living in a fool's paradise until the truth of his first wife's homicide kills her. The author aptly illuminates the danger of fostering in women the attitudes of self-sacrifice and obedience, which may debilitate critical thinking and make them fall prey of men's self-serving desires. Furthermore, by

portraying a duplicitous character, Clive warned Victorian readers that a respectable public behaviour was by no means a guarantee of gentlemanly comportment in the domestic sphere.

Sir Percival Glyde, featured in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), embodies a similar type of masculinity characterised by lack of congruity between appealing external semblance and interior ferocity. Although his fiancée, Laura, falls in love with a benign and honourable drawing teacher, Walter Hartright, prior to her wedding, she feels obliged to fulfil her duty and marry her intended. Since the suitor enjoys an excellent reputation and has always treated Laura and her relatives with utmost respect and courtesy, termination of the engagement would be viewed as an act of gross indecency on the lady's part. "Rank, fortune, good breeding, good looks, the respect of a gentleman, and the devotion of a lover were humbly placed at her feet" (Collins 160), as the narrator underscores, and yet Miss Fairlie feels an instinctive uneasiness in Sir Percival's presence. The first weeks of their conjugal life show that her apparently irrational fears are not ungrounded. As soon as the baronet obtains legal power over his wife, his true nature surfaces. The young wife quickly discovers that his "elaborate delicacy, his ceremonious politeness (...) his modesty (...) were the artifices of a mean, cunning, and brutal man" (274), desperate to get his hands on her family fortune. During their trip to the Continent the husband openly expresses his contempt for Laura and shamelessly admits that he values only her money. He does not care how much pain he inflicts on Lady Glyde, and what a traumatic experience this long journey is to her. Laura sourly complains: "Men little know when they say hard things to us how well we remember them, and how much harm they do to us" (281). Mutual hostility and reserve grow between the spouses; however, his callousness and violence escalate after they return home. Sir Percival employs several strategies to snatch his wife's money, including intimidation, insult, and verbal abuse. When he learns that his attempts are made in vain, he imprisons Laura in her chamber. Only the intervention of his cunning friend, Count Fosco, makes him release his wife from her domestic confinement. Sir Percival further degrades himself as a husband and a gentleman by turning to physical violence in order to extract from his wife information about Anne Catherick. Laura feels totally helpless against his aggression, and later finds it embarrassing to confess the truth

about her feebleness and his ferocity to her sister: “‘Did you tell him?’ ‘I was alone with him, Marian — his cruel hand was bruising my arm — what could I do?’ ‘Is the mark on your arm still? Let me see it.’ ‘Why do you want to see it?’ ‘I want to see it, Laura, because our endurance must end, and our resistance must begin today. That mark is a weapon to strike him with’” (321). Bruises on Laura’s arm provide irrefutable evidence of his savage domestic behaviour, and may become instrumental in exposing him to public judgment, and indeed, unmasking is something that the “ruffian” (323) dreads most. In *The Private Rod: Marital Violence, Sensation, and the Law in Victorian Britain* Marlene Tromp suggests that his use of primitive resources, such as physical abuse, equates him with working-class wife-beaters; hence he practically becomes “a member of a criminal class” (77). Given his real illegitimate status and tyrannical disposition the analogy seems absolutely plausible. The fear of exposing his real face to the public gaze urges him to commit another flagitious crime of fabricating his wife’s death and closing her in a mental asylum, which may be interpreted as a death sentence to her. But for her brave sister and devoted suitor, she would fall victim of her husband’s ruthless plot and surely die of madness and despair. However, it is Sir Percival Glyde, not Lady Glyde, who dies in pain, burnt to death while trying to perpetrate another crime of forging his birth register. Nevertheless, he cannot rest in peace even in his grave, for all his cruel acts are finally publicized posthumously, bringing shame and humiliation upon his name. Lissa Surridge notices that narration in *The Woman in White* mimics the form of a court trial or “a newspaper account of a trial” (151), which may imply that Collins opted for breaking the wall of silence on the secrets of middle and upper-class homes, which, from domestic temples frequently changed into hellish places full of tears, rage and sorrow.

Anthony Trollope’s heroine, Alice Vavasor, would inevitably face such a grim fate, but for her former fiancé, John Grey. In his novel *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865) the writer “invites us (...) to see well beyond the hypocrisies and irrationalities of social conventions, to understand the brutality of society’s treatment of women, the hypocrisies of respectable society, the viciousness of the money game” (7), as George Levine argues. When the protagonist terminates her engagement to honourable, principled and reliable Mr Grey, she is hardly aware what misery and suffering this

rash decision may bring. Her new betrothed, George Vavasor, who is also her cousin and former lover, has a wild, malevolent and uncontrollable temper, and will stop at nothing to achieve his aims. Alice's conduct seems strikingly irrational, for she jilts an honourable and honest gentleman to help the man she does not truly love realise his political aspirations; her chief motivation appears to be the obligation she feels to facilitate the man's success in the public sphere. Like in Sir Percival Glyde's case, George Vavasor's proposal is caused by mercenary reasons. He wishes to obtain control over Alice's small fortune in order to secure a seat in Parliament. However, egoism and materialism are not his only vices. He has sadistic tendencies and is capable of savage acts, which is symbolised by the huge, ominous scar that defaces his cheek: "That black ravine running through his cheek was certainly ugly. On some occasions, when he was angry or disappointed, it was very hideous; for he would so contort his face that the scar would, as it were, stretch itself out, revealing all its horrors, and his countenance would become all scar" (Trollope Vol. 1, 41). That cicatrix sometimes evokes daemonic connotations: "He looked at me like the devil himself" (41), and may be interpreted as a portal to the character's depraved soul. Similarly to Paul Ferroll, George Vavasor uses manipulation and deceit in order to mentally enslave a woman he wants take advantage of. Furthermore, like Arthur Huntingdon, he treats marriage with his cousin frivolously, as a "game" (124), and intends to set "a trap for her" (146). The fact that he has a rival makes the contest more thrilling and worthwhile. He fantasises about "the delight which he would have in robbing Mr. Grey of his wife" (123). However, the character is a skilled actor, capable of concealing his true motives by adopting the pose of civility and gallantry: "He had come to her intending to be gentle, if it might be possible. He had been careful in his dress, as though he wished to try once again if the role of lover might be within his reach" (55-6). Alice's feelings and needs have no meaning for him. She is a mere object of transaction in his hands, a trophy he wants to win and a toy he can play with. The inner savagery and disrespectful attitude to his fiancée begin to manifest themselves gradually from the moment she accepts his proposal. The cool and aloof manner she adopts during their first meeting after the renewed engagement evokes severe indignation in him: "he was assuming that look of angry audacity which was peculiar to him" (364), but he chooses to suppress his anger in that

moment because “he remembered that her money was absolutely essential to him” (365). Alice Vavasor intuitively perceives the potential threat; as the narrator explicitly explains, “[s]he was afraid of him. It must be confessed that she already feared him” (Vol. 2 55). Unfortunately, her fright proves well-founded, as on the next occasion he vents his fury on the girl. His hatred of Mr. Grey and the suspicion that his opponent has tricked him by sending his own money instead of Alice’s resources make him fly into a rage. He shouts at the innocent woman, uses obscene, insulting language, intimidates her and even resorts to corporal violence:

He swore, I know, with a great oath, that if I went back a second time from my word to him he would leave me no peace, — that he would punish me for my perfidy with some fearful punishment. Oh, Kate, I cannot tell you what he looked like. He had then come quite close to me, and I know that I trembled before him as though he were going to strike me (...) I was now crying, at any rate I threw myself back and covered my face with my hands. Then he came and sat by me, and took hold of my arms. Oh, Kate; I cannot tell it you all. He put his mouth close to my ear, and said words which were terrible, though I did not understand them. I do not know what it was he said, but he was threatening me with his anger if I did not obey him. (141- 42)

This scene is one of the most violent incidents in the entire novel. George Vavasor’s vulgar, almost barbaric, treatment of his betrothed exposes his true face and forebodes the nature of their marital relations. Alice would inevitably fall victim to her cousin’s unscrupulous and despotic behaviour, if her former lover, Mr. Grey, did not save her from the most unfortunate and disastrous union. It is later revealed that he did pay George in secret in order to check the real intention behind his rival’s proposal to Miss Vavasor. The antagonist further disgraces himself by attempting a brutal assault on Grey in his private apartment, and then fleeing to America to escape punishment for the crime. Alice is greeted by the previous fiancé with open arms and this time she does not miss the chance of creating a fulfilling and harmonious relationship with the right man. On the example of the protagonist Anthony Trollope, like Anne Brontë, warns future wives against committing an error of judgement as for the merits of their future

spouses and the reasons for marrying. As R. C. Terry argues: “For Trollope a successful marriage demands that each must learn to respect the other’s feelings and, above all, be tolerant” (115). This rule may serve as a recipe for a happy marriage; nevertheless, law should bring proper measures to aid, if golden rules fail.

In “On Love, Marriage, Men and Women” (1849) William Makepeace Thackeray jestingly observes that “[e]very woman manages her husband: every person who manages another is a hypocrite” (270), charging all wives with duplicity and Machiavellianism. This provocative statement alludes to some women’s ability to manipulate their spouses for personal gains. However, his remark actually hits the nail on the head, as women had hardly any other possibility of exercising their will, but through men’s decisions. Men did not have to resort to any cunning tactics, as they had the law, moral authority and social convention at their disposal. The instances of inter-gender abuse depicted by Brontë, Clive, Collins and Trollope evince that men did not refrain from taking advantage of their overprivileged positions against their disenfranchised wives. It turns out that no lofty ideals and no ideologies could warrant the peacefulness and harmony of the hearth, as long as the political system and Victorian mentality were biased. The opening of the Divorce Court heralded the dawn of changes in the models of domesticity, masculinity and law that have not finished yet.

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ABSTRACT

Victorian conceptualizations of masculinity were moulded by the contemporary ideals of gentlemanliness and domesticity to a considerable extent. There was an unprecedented insistence on men's involvement in family life and their active contribution to domestic felicity. The private space came to be recognized as an arena, where gentlemanly virtues could, and should be put into practice. Unfortunately, Victorian society which invested heavily in elevating the significance of the domestic sphere and promoting gentlemanly ethic witnessed a notorious use of home violence. The underprivileged legal status of women and a popular belief in the privacy and seclusion of home actually gave leave to premeditated abuse of male authority. The mid-Victorian fiction was instrumental in raising public awareness about marital violence by depicting male characters who turn out to be their wives' oppressors despite evincing professedly gentlemanly qualities. Such novels as: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Bront (1848), *Paul Ferroll* by Caroline Clive (1855), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860) and Anthony Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865) give illuminating insights into domestic territory which becomes the scene of women's physical and/or mental enslavement and betrayal of gentlemanly ideals.

KEYWORDS

Victorian; violence; domestic; novel; gentleman

ABSTRAKT

Wiktoriańskie ideały męskości były w dużej mierze ukształtowane przez ówczesne pojęcia dżentelmeńskości i życia rodzinnego. W dziewiętnastym wieku nastąpiło przekierowanie uwagi mężczyzn na sferę domową i relacje rodzinne, na niespotykaną wcześniej skalę. Sfera prywatna uważana była za miejsce, gdzie wartości dżentelmeńskie mogły, a nawet powinny być wdrażane. Niestety społeczeństwo wiktoriańskie, które przykładało tak ogromną wagę do świętości domowego ogniska i promowania dżentelmeńskich zasad postępowania musiało zmierzyć się

z problemem przemocy domowej. Dyskryminacja kobiet w obszarze prawa oraz powszechne przeświadczenie o konieczności ochrony domowej prywatności umożliwiły nadużywanie władzy i uprzywilejowanej pozycji przez mężczyzn. Powieści wiktoriańskie, szczególnie te które powstawały w połowie dziewiętnastego wieku, odgrywały kluczow rolę w podnoszeniu świadomości społecznej poprzez ukazywanie postaci stosuj cych przemoc wobec swoich żon, pomimo posiadania pewnych cech angielskiego dżentelmena. Powieści takie jak: *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* autorstwa Anne Bront (1848), *Paul Ferroll* napisana przez Caroline Clive (1855), *The Woman in White* (1860) Wilkie Collinsa, czy *Can You Forgive Her?* (1865) napisana przez Anthony'ego Trollope'a ukazuj przestrzeń domow , jako terytorium, gdzie odbywa się fizyczne lub psychiczne zniewolenie kobiet oraz zdrada wartości dżentelmeńskich.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Wiktoriański; przemoc; domowy; powieść; dżentelmen

I Am Love: Reinventing North American Classical Film Melodrama in the 21st Century

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In the midst of this profound darkness, there seemed to glow on her heart the effulgence of a paradise unknown and unrealized. Her heart was full of the most wonderful light (...), a light which was not shed on the world, only on the unknown paradise towards which she was going, a sweetness of habitation, a delight of living quite unknown, but hers infallibly.

D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love*

0. A quite American Italian film

We have in fact been witnesses to the creation of drama — an exciting, excessive, parabolic story — from the banal stuff of reality.

Peter Brooks

A cold and grayish Milan, covered in (mostly fake) snow, and the Recchi mansion, shining with warmth and gold — the home *par excellence* — illustrate the first extreme spatial split in the universe of *I Am Love* (2009), directed by Luca Guadagnino. In figurative terms, this is a box inside another box, or a house, tightly closed, at the center of a submerged city. So one could start the approach to *I Am Love* via this “isolation” theme. But let me add yet a third space: the dining table, the stage of the first important scene and a sort of Round Table on which the family (re)union is sworn and accomplished.

The dining table is also the last step in the progression of our gaze further inside that microcosm, which is presented in a zoom effect: a panoramic view of the wintry city, freeze frame shots of deserted streets, a track shot with a close-up of windows that continues to the next shot: the abrupt entry into the mansion, intensified by the sudden change to warm and vibrant colors and human presence. The camera shots go from furthest to closest, awakening perhaps in the viewer himself the sense that he has become an intruder and a witness in that private world.

The opening sequence at dinner evokes the memory of Luchino Visconti and Michelangelo Antonioni, among other Italian film masters. Seating at the dining table — an image reminiscent of *The Damned* (Visconti 1969) — are Gabriele Ferzetti (*The Girlfriends* [1955]) and *The Adventure* [Antonioni 1960]) and Marisa Berenson (*Death in Venice* [Visconti 1971]), playing the old couple Edoardo Sr. and Rori Recchiand majestically conveying their cinematic genetic code. Still more curiously, the non-actors Giangaleazzo Visconti di Modrone and Violante Visconti di Modrone also play extras.

But the Italian cultural artery of the film is patent in other ways, such as the name given to Tancredi Recchi, the head of the family and an only child, inspired by the prodigal nephew in *The Leopard* (Visconti 1963), or the initial characterization of Emma Recchi (Tilda Swinton), his wife, who, at first glance, is akin to Dominique Sanda as Micòl Finzi Contini, in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (Vittorio De Sica [1970]).

Having exposed this cinematic framework, let us deflect toward another: that of classical North American melodrama. This probably unexpected detour is meant to reveal *I Am Love* as the revisionist film I believe it is, owing to a nonexclusive, classical tradition in cinema, and also a full-blown melodrama, which is in itself a genre strongly marked by a notion of cumulative composition from various sources. Moreover, it is important to stress that this is a contemporary melodrama, and a questionably “outdated” one, made possible by its modernizing production and, most of all, by a conceptualization of melodrama that is more concerned with the identification of a melodramatic mode that crosses limits of time, space, art form and genre, than with a generic circumscription. As stated by Mercer and Shingler, “considering melodrama as a mode, rather than as either a genre or a style has significant benefits” (95). Ultimately, I intend

to regard the melodramatic component of *I Am Love* as “a mode of conception and expression... a certain fictional system for making sense of experience ... a semantic field of force” (Brooks xvii).

The “Hollywood style” is immediately detectable in the way class structures are presented in the film. The Recchis, a family whose fortune grew from a prosperous Milanese textile factory, belong to the upper middle class, and not to the Italian former — and nostalgic — aristocracy, nor to the lower social strata that would be at the center of a neo-realist narrative. Edoardo Sr., a patriarch representing the first generation of owners, gives a speech at his last birthday in which he extols the values of hard work and perseverance, necessary for the industry to continue “as it is” and maintain the relevance of Recchis’ name. These proud statements and admonitions could well be delivered by an American self-made man, willing to perpetuate through his heirs what he himself built. At the same time as this desire for permanence is expressed, there is an apparent contrast between the family’s financial enterprise and a somewhat tense deeper sphere, a (perforated) bubble of privacy and affection.

On the relations between these two sides of the same coin in the American scenario, Chuck Kleinhans stated:

In twentieth-century America the family completed the transformation from being a productive unit based on private property (the farm, the artisanal tools of production, the small business) to being the center of personal life, the primary institution for the acquisition of personal happiness, love, and fulfillment. (199)

Moving away from the “Viscontian” obsession with the degradation of aristocracy, degeneration, and dissolution of castes, *I Am Love* is set in the 2000s. Although premiered in 2009, the story takes place at the beginning of the decade. Taking a symbolic advantage of that specific transitional period, it enters completely in the era of capitalism, a now endangered economic macro-structure whose peak we saw represented half a century ago in the upper-middle class of American film. It is almost exclusively focused on the family unit, undoubtedly the most important feature in Hollywood classical melodrama (as can be seen in the works of John M. Stahl, Vincente Minnelli, Douglas Sirk and others).

Families seem to be particularly interesting to melodrama in general for their problems and complexes. For instance, the fear of many possible threats from the outside world, the effort to maintain the *status quo*, and the ruling façade that stipulates each member ought to move according to a clearly defined role within the group.

The argument that *I Am Love* is a direct heir to North American classical melodrama is based on three aspects: its insertion in the upper-middle class, capitalist, family melodrama; Emma's leading role, which relates it to the female-centered structure of the woman melodrama and the women's picture, as well as to the typically American genre of the "melodrama of the unknown woman", according to Stanley Cavell (1996); and, lastly, its status as a contemporary melodrama and a parody, for it displays the inevitable self-reflexivity of a work that is consciously making reuse of traditional melodramatic material and *topoi* at a time when they no longer exist (or at least not as they did before).

The terms of the drama

In a key scene at the lower floors of the house we see Emma in complicity with Ida, her housekeeper, chatting, ironing and folding socks. The entire sequence is presented as if to signify that, besides Emma being extremely humble, that house has a *gynoecium*. Actually, all plain domestic rituals bear something religious in the care and solemnity with which they are executed throughout the film. This religious aura gains further expression in the way the mansion is depicted, making it resemble an art gallery or a museum. The camera often tarries in the contemplation of objects, paintings, vases and furniture, nearby indistinct voices that murmur in reverence.

Unexpectedly, Emma and Tancredi's firstborn, Edo, announces he is bringing another guest for dinner, a "girl friend", undermining the perfect orchestration of the ritual and entailing a rearrangement of the seats, as well as some implicit conclusions on his relationship, never before mentioned, with Eva Ugolini. Rori, the grandmother, reacts ironically, a little prejudiced against the young girl of lower stratum. She surely regards this *liaison* between Eva Ugolini and her grandson as a matter of financial interest.

From then on, what previously seemed to be a melodious symphony starts to sound more like noise or, even better, a series of dissonant accords. These are particular moments of melodrama that Peter Brooks defined as “intense, excessive representations of life which strip the façade of manners to reveal the essential conflicts at work — moments of symbolic confrontation which fully articulate the terms of the drama” (3).

Edo has to deal with a constant sense of failure. Betta, his sister, does not live up to her grandfather’s expectations. The bridge between generations is crumbling, which is even more evident in the problematic transfer of the family’s legacy. Edoardo Sr. decides to leave the factory, in equal parts, both to his son, Tancredi, and his grandson, Edo. This will generate a grave dilemma after the old man’s death, since Edo and his father have different ideas about the company’s management and future prospects. Curiously enough, the youngster shows a more conservative, almost retrograde, position, wanting the factory to go back to his late grandfather’s regulations, or, in his own words, back to the “respect for the name, tradition and values”.

I Am Love’s power hierarchy shows up in Edo and Tancredi’s rivalry, as it does in the stories of affirmation and repression of every other character. However, this authority system distances itself from a classical pattern to come close to contemporary conceptions of freedom. Reformulating its melodramatic sources, this system does not necessarily lie in obvious oppression or violence towards the other. Instead, it is basically founded on each individual’s positioning and choices: legitimizing him, paradoxically, often deceptively, as it forces him to enter the system and follow its rules in a “voluntary” manner.

In this type of world, men and women live in separate spheres, they know it and they act according to this precept. Ellen Seiter, in an essay on the American soap operas *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, which are subtly referred to in *I Am Love*,¹ puts the issue of gender roles in the following terms:

¹ In a commentary found in the USA edition of the DVD, Tilda Swinton, who also produced the film, recalls the similarities between the spatial titles in *I Am Love* (“Milano”, “London”, etc.) and *Dallas*’ final credits.

Much of the plot revolves around masculine competition and intrigue in the business world. While women are affected by and sometimes become embroiled in these financial matters, they exist largely as appendages to the men. Often women characters exist in the story as prizes won by the men, rewards for (...) shrewdness and material success... (534)

Tancredi is visually an absent character, he is out of the frame for most of the time, and in an emotional and psychological sense he is an ignorant. He is alienated from domestic life, from Emma's daily routine, from his children's lives, and does not seem to have enough mental readiness to be aware of the situation. He does not know about Betta's homosexuality, he is deliberately misled regarding many details of Edo's life and is excluded from the affection and confidentiality between Emma and the children. She, on the other hand, is the "mute" holder of knowledge, a guardian of others' secrets and of (her own) inner conscience.

Emma might well be understood as an "appendix" in the eyes of Tancredi, one with which he flaunts his manly pride. They met in Russia, while he was looking for works of art and in a collector's impulse he brought her along to Milan to make her his wife. Ultimately, she is just like any other collector's item: an exotic object placed in an entire new *milieu*, exhibited like a prize, like the painting he offered her on their wedding day, suspended in an antechamber, static and lifeless, to be contemplated at a distance.

Names, nouns and verbs

Yet in fact, the central myth in *The Lady of the Camellias* is not Love, it is Recognition. Marguerite loves in order to achieve recognition, and this is why her passion (in the etymological, not the libidinal sense) has its source entirely in other people.

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*

Dominated by Emma's point of view — "the point-of-view of a female protagonist whose desires structure and order the narrative" (Cook 250)

— the “family melodrama”² in *I Am Love* quickly becomes a “woman melodrama”. The narrative focus is gradually oriented to the female leading character, until we realize that this will essentially be *her* story. The film’s very title, *I Am Love*, is a statement that could be uttered by almost any character in the film, but the viewer has reason to believe it is actually Emma’s saying.

Emma is in fact the protagonist of a love story that surpasses any other plotline in the film, even if, in a process we could call experiential “bovaryism”, her own story is influenced by others. Betta’s freedom, independence and non-standard love clearly fascinate her mother, who accompanies such a challenging course almost step by step, thus finding herself, we can assume, both awoken and incited by it. It is no mere coincidence that, when Emma finds Betta’s coming-out message in a postcard she sent her brother Edo, we see her, in a low-angle shot, meditatively reading it, while the outer face of the postcard displays in capital letters, to the film spectator, the word “LOVE”. This way the protagonist is given a perfect label, at the same time as we are given a clue to the movie’s title: Emma is “love”.

Tancredi, who in a classical model would probably, although not necessarily, be a demonized character — he is a second-generation patriarch, devoid of feelings and with a tyrannical tendency — is but a tired man, with an aura of disillusionment and disinterest around him and a spectral role in the film. He moves like a shadow, pushed into the background of the camera’s field of view.

Let us now take a second look at the personal pronoun of the first person singular, *I*, in order to understand how much the emphasis placed on individuality is important. At this point it would be interesting to remind a whole group of North American classical movies, whether pure melodramas or just melodramatic in part, whose titles also correspond to statements uttered by an assertive female character, “I”: for example, *I’ve Always Loved You* (1946), *I’ll Cry Tomorrow* (1955), *I Want to Live!* (1958).

² As conceptualized by Elsaesser (1972).

Emma's issue with identity has various dimensions and it starts with naming. In an episode with Antonio, her lover, she makes herself literally an unknown woman when she says to him "Emma is not my real name. Tancredi gave it to me", and insists before the inquiring lover — another ignorant man, avid to "know" her — in hiding her real name, staging for herself and for him a second degree of "unknowledge" when she untruthfully replies: "I no longer know it".

If this literary "pseudonym", "Emma" — as in *Now, Voyager* (1942) with the fake name "Camille" evoking Alexandre Dumas, the son, among other examples — refers firstly to Flaubert, with all that that implies, it acquires further importance for being the result of her own husband's decision, which forced the substitution of a previous "real" name. The relevance of naming, whether we are talking about real, false or hidden names, or formulas (*I=Love*), is exemplified in a sort of melodramatic protagonist's eponymous title "tradition" in film: *Madame DuBarry* (1919), *Blonde Venus* (1932), *Sadie Mckee* (1934), *Camille* (1936), *Stella Dallas* (1937), *Jezebel* (1938), *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Daisy Kenyon* (1947), *Madame de ...* (1953), *Lola Montès* (1955), *Madame X* (1966).

Nevertheless, Emma does unclothe the nickname they gave her at home, in Russia: "Kitesh". Even if this perpetuates the cloaking of her "true" identity, one we can never access — nor does it matter, since at this stage her character has actually become abstract (or, in other words, typified): she *is* love —, it has the paradoxical effect of including Antonio in an inner world, one that no longer exists at the surface of this fiction, prevailing instead as a memory of the past. Only her eldest son, a kind of modern Oedipus, has taken part in this past world. She says: "Edo loves the Russia inside me". He is also the only other member of the family who speaks Russian, in this way sharing a secret language with his mother. But she gave Antonio access to the Russia "inside" her, a homely, imaginary place, by offering him the password that the affectionate nickname corresponds to.³

³ The significance of "Kitesh" as a password to the character's inner world is clarified once knowing the origin of the term. Kitesh is not, in fact, a Russian name for people, but the name of a mythical village in the country, that, according to a legend, when

Emma is a Russian woman incorporated in the Milanese upper crust. Her foreign condition — a first crack in the “glossy” Italian family portrait — is relevant because it makes her suffer from what seems to be an “outsider complex”. After all, she was picked up as the sudden regent of a *domus* which had been hitherto completely strange to her, in a foreign country. Let us recall the theme of exile or displacement as a very special trope of American melodrama in, for example, *Interlude* (1957), *Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing* (1955), or *The Revolt of Mamie Stover* (1956).

Emma offers an explanation of the dualism between estrangement and adaptation in a long voice-over monologue, whilst we are shown Sanremo’s natural landscapes. First, we see close shots of foliage and flowers, and then a panoramic view of the mountains, as if the voice that tells the story were superimposed on the natural elements, issued from nature. Once again she contrasts her present life with her primitive origin: “When I moved to Milan I stopped being Russian. First, there was too much, the streets, the shops ... I learned to be Italian. Tancredi collected art. He had gone to Russia looking for treasure”. At this moment, we understand that the Emma we came to know is definitely not the one that existed before, who abandoned herself to be a “learnt” Italian: an entity/identity performed with utmost rigor, but forged by chance and circumstances, molded by obligations.

Following that monologue, a hint of change gradually takes shape, proving the “Cavellian” “aria of divorce” from a certain kind of life:

A woman achieves existence (or fails to), or establishes her right to existence in the form of a metamorphosis (or fails to), apart from or beyond satisfaction by marriage (of a certain kind) and with the presence (...) of her children, where something in her language must be as traumatic in her case

threatened by barbarian invasions, was miraculously immersed with all its inhabitants in a nearby lake as a means of self-protection, being there still to this day. I turn to this legendary description to stress, once again, the idea that Emma is, as she herself seems conscious of, a submerged woman more than a repressed one. Inside her, a previous person, a living ghost, is kept and sheltered, and occasionally glimmers, to *emerge* as the film progresses.

as the conversation of marriage is for her comedic sisters — perhaps it will be an aria of divorce, from husband, lover, mother, or child. (Cavell 88)

In *I Am Love* this will be literally represented in the musical piece of *La mamma morta*, by Umberto Giordano, as we shall see.

The protagonist's ordered and pressurized day-to-day life in Milan starts to collapse from her first rendezvous with Antonio, which is marked by strategic flashbacks of her childhood in Russia, stressing the desire for a reunion with herself. Being materially impossible, the trip back "home" takes place as an inner travel, initiated with the finding of love that will unexpectedly open up the possibility of returning to an "Ithaca" of the soul.

The solution for Emma's "identity migration" dynamics is in the final dialogue with her husband, right after Edo's death, when — fulfilling the catharsis of mourning — she plainly verbalizes "I love Antonio". More importantly, she states "You don't know me", thus breaking the last thread of mutual acknowledgment in the marital relationship, declaring herself to be, in her own voice, an *unknown woman*.

Tancredi's reply is "You don't exist". He, on the other hand, tries to deprive Emma of any existence, for she is no longer the one he created and, consequently, the only one he could recognize. So, he intends to erase her as a reaction to his own ignorance. In other words, he covers his eyes to what is before him, and:

[W]hen the man covers his eyes — an ambiguous gesture, between the horror of knowing the existence of others and avoiding the horror of not knowing it, between avoiding the threat of castration that makes the knowledge accessible and avoiding the threat of outcastness should that threat fail — he is in that gesture both warding off his seeing something and warding off at the same time his being seen by something. (Cavell 111)

The new woman no longer "exists" in her husband's limiting definition. He is a negligent creator, rejected by his own creation once she strips the mask imposed on her. She, on the other hand, is now a free woman who became autonomous, threatening and unknowable to him, turned into a frustrated "Pygmalion".

The reborn mother

[I]t's language that counts. Now, the place of language in pictures has to be taken by the camera — and by cutting. You have to write with the camera.

Douglas Sirk, *Sirk on Sirk*

Taking on the classical melodramatic theme of a relationship between a mature woman, married, widowed and/or mother, and a younger man (as in *Mildred Pierce*, *Magnificent Obsession*, or *All That Heaven Allows*), *I Am Love* gives it another twist by portraying a love triangle that, although not in an explicit way, has the eldest son as a medial element between Emma and Antonio. We have seen the same kind of intrusion before, in *Mildred Pierce* (1945), *Imitation of Life* (1959), or even *Leave Her to Heaven* (1945), with Danny (Darryl Hickman), the younger invalid brother of Richard (Cornel Wilde), taking the role of an unwelcome son/stepchild. The innovation here stems from the fact that Edo is twice an intruder: on the one hand, for his oedipal relationship with his mother — which will influence his destiny in the tragic final section of the movie — and on the other, for his rapport with Antonio, fraught with surreptitious moments of homoeroticism.

The cake presented to Edo by Antonio is a principle of seduction by food, aphrodisiac food, as shown in the scene of Emma's pseudo-orgasm while lunching at his restaurant. After the family's factory is sold, Edo goes to Sanremo to meet Antonio and to take further their mutual plans of opening a new restaurant. But other plans, on the part of Edo, seem to be implied. In one of the movie's "Hitchcockian" sequences, while waiting for Antonio at his yard in Sanremo, Edo discovers a lock of his mother's blonde hair. The confirmation of the double betrayal, by his mother *and* by her lover, happens later at the dinner prepared by Antonio, with the buyers of the Recchi factory, in which *ukba* is served. *Ukba* is a traditional Russian fish soup and it was also Edo's favorite dish, whose recipe only his mother knew up until then. Sharing the *ukba* recipe is a clear evidence of the secret intimacy between her and his restaurateur friend, and something that Edo will interpret as a symbol of broken trust.

"Sirk's discussion of melodrama through reference to ancient tragedy", Barbara Klinger tells us, "lent dignity to a maligned genre" (8). And there

is a moment in the film that might explicitly correspond to the *anagnorisis* in Greek tragedy, the moment when the tragic hero *sees it all*. This new-found knowledge will eventually lead Edo to a fatal destiny which, not without irony, is the only solution to the tense love triangle that included him and his mother. Eliminating the surplus element and, therefore, the moral dilemma that would result from the antagonism between Emma's maternal love for Edo and her erotic love for Antonio, her character can start a process of cathartic redefinition that will set her free (and lend her some dignity). She moves from the experience of guilt, so recurring and important to the protagonists of melodrama, to being free of any guilt. This redemption is only made possible by disruptively admitting her love for Antonio and unleashing chaos.

Without the obscene self-reflexivity of *Polyester* (1981), by John Waters, or the directly revisionist form of *Far from Heaven* (2002), by Todd Haynes, *I Am Love* is nevertheless related to these films by their common genealogy. In an era when classical melodrama, as any other classical genre — taken whether as a poetic or an industrial convention —, belong to the past, and cannot be resurrected with any hopes of verisimilitude at the eyes of the modern viewer, these contemporary forms of melodrama try to resume and test, in various ways, the validity and prevalence (or not) of important aspects of that once major genre at the time being. That is why one must consider the unavoidably paradigmatic works of Douglas Sirk, which were already a parody and an active questioning of the genre at the time of their release, although film critics and public alike failed to see this up until Sirk's later reception in the 1970s.⁴

In that regard, we have to consider the similarities between Edoardo Gabbriellini (Antonio in *I Am Love*) and Rock Hudson in *Magnificent Obsession* (1954) and, especially, in *All That Heaven Allows* (1955). They are young “nature boys”, in deep communion with the land where they

⁴ “In a more contemporary setting, reviewers operating under the influence of the power nostalgia of the 1970s transformed Sirk's films (...) into ‘classics’ (...). And, within the highly self-conscious and intertextual climate of today, Sirk's melodramas appear as ‘camp’, as parodic spectacles of excess” (Klinger xv).

keep their Edenic homes, and take their *bourgeois* lovers from the big, fashionable, city (the place of repression and immersion) to the idyllic, romantic countryside, to what one would call *loci amoeni*. There, under lush greenery, flowers and insects, the full license of erotic senses takes place, accompanying a profound inner rearrangement of the relocated female character. Antonio presents Sanremo to Emma, the same way Ron Kirby, his “twin” in *All That Heaven Allows*, saves Cary Scott from her prison home, to introduce her to a telluric, manufactured — not machine made — world.

The physical performance of male characters, unquestionably related to sexual metaphors, is emphasized in their choreographed and functional bodies. In fact, they both lack eloquence (and Antonio hardly speaks at all), since talking is not what they firstly do as characters. They are there to *act*; in one case, through culinary confection, in the other, through gardening, silviculture and craftwork.

Apart from the *decor* and the *mise-en-scène*, *I Am Love* shows the influence of Sirk and other masters of melodrama in its systematic use of symbolic objects, “an artifice that comments on the world, as it comments on the means of representation” (Klinger 9).

Photography and painting appear oppositely as metonymies for modernity and tradition. Betta’s postcard to Edo, intercepted by Emma, is a signed confession and instigation. The painting of a full-bodied female figure, offered by Tancredi as a wedding gift, shown only sideways throughout the film, is motionless and meant for detached contemplation, much like his own wife. The *ukha* soup is a password for new relationships to be established and old relationships redefined. And there is also a style book that Emma picks up at a bookshop, that plays for Antonio a similar role to the one the Russian soup plays for Edo: that of a shared object that is “stolen” by a third element in the triangle.

Still on that subject, one should point out the importance of Emma’s hairstyle, similar to Kim Novak’s in a scene of persecution and voyeurism, directly quoting Hitchcock’s film (*Vertigo*, 1958) but reversing the roles. Instead of Scottie and Madeleine, we find Emma chasing and Antonio being chased along the streets of Sanremo (San Francisco). As happened in *Vertigo* with Madeleine, the camera seems eager for the body of the chased, still elusive and intermittent, always escaping close observation.

In a curious scene, analogous to one in *I'll Cry Tomorrow* (Daniel Mann, 1955) — in which Susan Hayward, playing the protagonist, shocked by the death of her lover, holds, lying in bed, a teddy bear — we see Emma, after her son's death, imitating those gestures. This time she holds a teddy lamb that belonged to Edo as a child, stressing the sacrificial nature of her son's death. Lastly, and relating to that tragic incident, we should note the dress that Emma wears outside the cemetery. Looking close at it, as a sign of the character's emotional shattering, one can see that the black dress is made of flaps sewn together, which makes it a curious correlate to the porcelain vase at Ron's house in *All That Heaven Allows*: an object that is systematically broken up and reconstituted, thus emulating the twists and turns of a love affair.

Recalling the etymology of melodrama (from Greek *melos*, “melody” and “drama”), one must not forget the importance of music in *I Am Love*. Its soundtrack, consisting solely of pieces by John Adams, a contemporary American composer with an important relation to opera, streamlines the image track, and permeates its critical moments, marking their progression, interspersed by no less critical instances of absolute silence. For our purposes, Adams is aptly called a “minimalist” (e.g., Heisinger 1989; Kozinn 2005). And so a dialectic structure is conceived between histrionics and constraint, two key-concepts in the melodramatic mode that seemingly call for a “reconsideration of melodrama in opposition to realism” (Mercer and Shingler 95-97).

The calculation between a notion of contemporary melodrama and *I Am Love* has to be further refined. If histrionics have undoubtedly been lowered in tone, the expressive capacities of containment are here unparalleled, and, in them, is the muted stridency, a kind of excess that is latent and impending all the more so as it is implicit.

A musical moment of utmost importance takes place at the Recchis' bedroom, when Emma is listening on television to “La mamma morta”, an aria taken from *Andrea Chénier*, by Umberto Giordano, and sung by Maria Callas, whose most effulgent exclamation, presented here in a subtle but very significant *mise en abyme*, gave the film its title:

Love's self am I; oh, hear me calling:
I'll guard thee, guide thee, save thee from falling!
Hope on, hope ever!

Love fails thee never!
 Tho' dark the road, and foes assail thee,
 I will not fail thee;
 I am Love whose magic pow'r,
 My name is Love!
 Like golden sunlight falling from the skies,
 All this world can change to Paradise!
 Love' very self am I! (Giordano 38)

The singing is abruptly interrupted by Tancredi, who changes the channel to watch sports. Apart from this annulling gesture, it is notable that *I Am Love* is being musically informed through television, but also through another film. In fact, the words we hear from “La mamma morta” occur as the soundtrack to Jonathan Demme’s *Philadelphia* (1993), another example of a contemporary melodrama with a fundamental mother figure and the open representation of homosexuality. It equally tests the possibilities of melodrama in a time and space that are still adverse, in our case personified by Tancredi, the *silencer*.

The apothecotic ending of Part III of Adam’s *Harmonielehre* gives the tone to the film’s first conclusion: Emma’s escape from the Recchi mansion. Leaving Ida, who helps her run away, crying deeply, she stops for a few moments at the lobby. Behind her is her favorite child’s death, a failed marriage and the glamorous shell in which she had been couched. She is stripped of material possessions and barefoot, wearing Antonio’s large sweater and a negligent hairstyle. Her new unruly hair had been cut — like her previous bonds — by her lover. There is a final exchange of glances, of recognition, with Betta, the one who at the beginning taught her to be true to herself, and to match her body and her heart. We see a smile and a few tears and in the next shot she is no longer there.

This last goodbye, the exemplary conclusion of Emma’s course as *I Am Love*’s melodramatic protagonist, finds a description in the words of Mercer and Shingler:

A breaking-down of “reality” appears, which can be understood as the hysterical moment of the text. At this point, the *mise-en-scène* has a tendency to become explicitly symbolic or coded, with the added accompaniment of heavily repetitive and intrusive music. (13)

After the final credits, we are confronted with a satellite-scene, disengaged from the rest of the film, in which the previous chords of *Harmonielehre* resume, now halftone, in a grave atmosphere, in slow motion and total peace. Emma and Antonio caress each other, seemingly preparing to make love in a cave. One could extrapolate on the reference to *Tristan and Isolde* and Wagner, on the motifs of fairy tales and traditional romantic literature, or on the state of dispossession and primitivism to what Adam and Eve were voted to as a consequence of their achieving knowledge of good and evil, in Christian mythology. But, in essence, what is revealed to us viewers is that the woman we saw blossoming, unlike her counterparts in classical melodrama, has actually found the paradise she was running to, “a sweetness of habitation, a delight of living quite unknown, but hers infallibly” (Lawrence 326).

This practical implausibility, a sort of lovers’ *féerie*, bears no relation whatsoever with reality or society, nor is it any longer a result of conventional “false happy endings” (Mercer and Shingler 60). As an almost surrealist epilogue, it reminds us that melodrama “exists at the very limits of a visual and dramatic medium like cinema”, as “it attempts to articulate those things that it is almost impossible to represent — melodrama speaks the unspeakable and represents the unrepresentable” (97). And so it seems that the closing scene in *I Am Love* represents the possibility of cinema to make the impossible appear before our eyes.

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ABSTRACT

Looking at *I Am Love* [*Io sonno l'amore*] (2009), a film by Luca Guadagnino, in light of three possible genre categories: the family melodrama, the “melodrama of the unknown woman” (Cavell 1996) and the contemporary melodrama, I verify in what ways it deviates from the Italian film tradition to represent a new social paradigm (contemporary and capitalist), at the same time as it pertains to a cinematic matrix that is, all things considered, that of North American classical melodrama. Exploring the identity-questioning device provided in the title through a (self-)metonymic effect (“I am love”), my major topics for analysis and cornerstones in the representation of the film’s protagonist — Emma, an “unknown woman” — are the dilution and refinement of individual boundaries, the problems of recognition and non-recognition, or of self-affirmation and repression among society, and the process of naming in its ontological, literary and cinematic repercussions. These will also function as references to the melodramatic mode itself in cinema, from a classical Hollywood paradigm to a contemporary and international — critically independent — appropriation and recycling of the genre.

KEYWORDS

Film Studies; melodrama; identity; contemporary cinema; genre theory

RESUMO

Vendo *Io sonno l'amore* (2009), um filme de Luca Guadagnino, à luz de três possíveis categorias genológicas: o melodrama familiar, o “melodrama da mulher desconhecida” (Cavell 1996) e o melodrama contemporâneo, verifico em que medida este filme se afasta da tradição cinematográfica italiana para representar um novo paradigma social (contemporâneo e capitalista), ao mesmo tempo que se relaciona com uma matriz cinematográfica que é, em última análise, a do melodrama clássico norte-americano. Explorando o dispositivo de questionamento da identidade dado no título através de um efeito auto-metonímico (“Eu sou

o amor”), os principais tópicos da minha análise, enquanto etapas na representação da protagonista do filme — Emma, uma “mulher desconhecida” — são a diluição e a clarificação das fronteiras do indivíduo, os problemas de reconhecimento e de não-reconhecimento, ou de auto-afirmação e repressão em sociedade, e o processo de nomeação nas suas repercussões ontológicas, literárias e cinematográficas. Estes tópicos funcionam também como referências do próprio modo melodramático no cinema, desde o paradigma clássico de Hollywood à apropriação e à reciclagem, contemporânea e internacional, do género, agora criticamente independente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Estudos Fílmicos; melodrama; identidade; cinema contemporâneo; genologia

A Voyage to Cacklogallinia
by Captain Samuel Brunt:
Investing in (or against) the Empire

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A Voyage to Cacklogallinia by Captain Samuel Brunt: Investing in (or against) the Empire

A *Voyage to Cacklogallinia with a Description of the Religion, Policy, Customs and Manners, of that Country* got into print in 1727, in London, and was authored by a certain “Captain Samuel Brunt”, a pseudonym of a writer whose identity, either willingly or not, is still a mystery. Some have attributed its authorship to Daniel Defoe, others, a wider number of contemporaneous readers and reviewers, to Jonathan Swift (Nicolson 2). However, the crudity of the literary devices used to produce a humoristic effect seem to fall short of Swift’s expertise when compared to his well-known *Gulliver’s Travels*, published just a year before the *Voyage to Cacklogallinia*. As a matter of fact, Jeanne Welcher and George E. Bush included *A Voyage to Cacklogallinia* in their *Gulliveriana* (1970) due to its lack of originality, and its indebtedness and/or similarity to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*. It describes a hazardous voyage at sea, very much in tune with the usual descriptions found in travel writing of the beauties and perils that awaited the seamen in their Atlantic crossings. As usual in this kind of fictional works, there is an encounter with another community made up of an intelligent species. Their bodily features, though, turn out to be rather distinct from the human form: they look like huge *Gallinaceae*. Hence, their name: the *Cacklogallians*.

The relativist notion of man’s position in God’s creation explored by means of several debates between the human visitor and his hosts is quite usual in fictitious travel writing. Nonetheless, the narrative further expands to a flight to the moon with the help of powerful birds, a trait that allows the reader to envisage the work as a kind of primeval science-fiction, in line with Godwin’s *The Man in the Moone* (1638) or Kepler’s *Somnium sive opus posthumum de astronomia lunaris* (1634), or Bergerac’s *Voyage*

to the Moon (1899).¹ All these works illustrate, one way or the other, the influence of the so called “new astronomy” brought to light by Kepler and Galileo, to name but the most famous astronomers at the time. The educated men of the seventeenth century were enthused with the possibility of reaching the moon and wondered what would be there for them to learn, conquer, or seize. Of course this fascination with travelling to the moon and probable findings thereof has continued ever since and well into our days, for instance, with the twentieth-century Armstrong’s travels inspiring science-fiction works focused, precisely, on space travelling.

It may seem that Captain Brunt’s literary contribution was far from reaching the standards of his renowned fellow writers. However, he managed to put together a science-fiction narrative about fantastic travel devices, intertwined with the utopian description of a prosperous and orderly society outside the known world. These aspects are developed by the protagonists of his work, the dullest creatures one could think about: roosters and hens. The result was indeed a success, and several editions were printed after the first one in 1727, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries,² for during the nineteenth century tales mocking societies seemed to have become unpopular.

The intermingling of such popular themes, as is the case with moon travelling and utopias, with the ridiculous chickens definitely causes a comic effect. This perfectly enhances the satiric side of the work, namely, the critique of both human greed and British society’s financial manoeuvres inspired by imperial ideology.

After the narration of some dangerous voyages during which Captain Samuel Brunt had to deal with pirates and stormy weather, the reader is

¹ Cf. Nicolson.

² First edition: London: Printed by J. Watson, and sold by the Booksellers of London and Westminster, 1727.

Some twenty and twenty-first century editions: Marjorie Hope Nicolson, ed. New York, Pub. for the Facsimile Text Society by Columbia University Press, 1940; Marjorie Hope Nicolson, ed. Ann Arbor: Reproduced from the original edition, 1727 London: University Microfilms International, 1979; Woodbridge, Conn.: Research Publications, 1981 and 1982; Farmington Hills, Mich: Thomson Gale, 2005; Hamburg tradition 2012 [online edition].

introduced to a somewhat controversial theme: the relationship between white men and Negroes, and the practice of the slave trade by the European Empires. In the wake of a shipwreck, the captain found himself at the mercy of a community of runaway Negro slaves who treated him with civility and trust, in marked contrast with what was their common lot when serving in white men's households. These Negroes also turned out to feel exactly the same way as white men regarding the most cherished values of European culture: liberty and justice, and, of course, the value of life. When under attack, the chief of the Negroes' community made the following appeal:

For were any among us of so poor a Spirit, to prefer Slavery to Death, Experience shews us, all Hopes of Life, even in such vile Terms, are entirely vain. It is then certainly more eligible to die bravely in Defence of our Liberty, than to end our Lives in lingering and exquisite Torments by the Hands of an Executioner. (Brunt 11)

Meanwhile, slave trade meant an immensely profitable investment, especially as far as the intensive sugar cultivation in Jamaica was concerned. However, it was fraught with dangers: the death of a considerable part of the cargoes occurred frequently due both to shipwrecks or, more often than not, to the extremely bad transportation conditions. Thus, in tandem with those who defended this kind of commerce, as early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, some were already claiming against the moral contradiction of a country that considered itself a liberty and justice champion, having chosen to deprive part of humankind of these very rights. Lawrence Sterne, the author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759), was one of the contesters of this slave trade. However, only some decades later would it be possible to abolish it with the efforts of parliamentarians such as Wilberforce, and the foundation of the Society for the Abolition of Slave Trade in 1787, gathering a significant number of supporters who eventually succeeded in achieving the Abolition Act issued in 1807.

Captain Brunt seems to be drawing his reader's attention to such inhuman conduct when he further tells it was, once more, because of the kindness of a Negro, that the captain was able to escape, though falling prey to new perils and tempests. He was eventually to be shipwrecked in a

strange land where he was completely isolated from his travel-mates. This isolation stresses the uniqueness of our hero's nature, but, simultaneously it paved the way to his admission into the Cacklogallinia realm and its high society. The theme of slavery is apparently forgotten, in spite of the vehement abhorrence that had previously given rise to so much arguing and protest. From now on, the reader is introduced to a satiric utopia, built on a thin allegory where the chickens stand for seventeenth-century Englishmen (and sometimes women):

The *Cacklogallinians* were, in former Ages, a Wise and a Warlike nation, both fear'd and esteem'd by their Neighbours. Their Blood was pure, without being mix'd with the *Owls, Magpies, Eagles, Vulturs, Jays, Partridges, Hens, Hawks*, or any other Species; the Scum of which Nation, by the Fertility of the Country, and the want of Foresight in the *Cacklogallinians*, has been allured to, and permitted to settle in Cacklogallinia, and by their Intermarriages has caused the great Degeneracy those Families, which have kept their Blood untainted complain of. (Brunt 31)

The comparison with the England of past ages becomes absolutely evident, when the narrator further explains:

They were what the English now are, Wise, Modest, Brave, Human, Loyal, Publick-spirited, capable of governing their own, and conquering other Kingdoms: They encouraged Merit, and abominated Flattery. A Pimp in those Days wou'd have starv'd, and even a Concubine of a Prince not be admitted among Hens of Virtue, tho' to make the Fortune of a Husband. There were no Upstarts among the Nobility, and if any were rais'd to Titles, it was by Force of a conspicuous Merit, which gave a Lustre to the August Assembly in which he was enroll'd. Justice was impartially administer'd, and the selling of the People to a Prince or Minister, was a Villainy unknown. None bribed the People to chuse'em for their Representatives; Posts in the Government were given to Fowls capable to serve it, without being burthened with this or that Family, nor were their Revenues loaded with Pensions to worthless and vicious Persons, and given for Services which would be a Disgrace to

publish. Trade flourish'd, Money was plenty, none of their Neighbours durst encroach on their Commerce; their Taxes were inconsiderable. (Brunt: 2005, 31)

The blunt irony used here, by the prime minister of Cacklogallinia himself, clearly illustrates what English public opinion conveyed about the Hanoverian court and its way of life, which impacted so negatively on the public sphere. In fact, after Queen Anne's death, in 1714, George I left his Electorate of Hanover with his courtiers and mistresses, and upon his arrival in England the English court had to adapt to this new master. As a matter of fact, he was not interested in either learning or speaking English and seemed to mistrust everybody that was not from his homeland. The loss of power of the Tories, owing to their former loyalty to Anne and against Hanover, also brought a new generation of Whig politicians to power. Among them was Robert Walpole, the prime minister *de facto* if not *de jure*. His long political career progressed with the Whig government, nominally led by Lord Halifax, but actually dominated by Lord Townshend, Walpole's brother-in-law, together with James Stanhope. At first Walpole held the position of Privy Councillor, but he later rose to that of Paymaster of the Forces. However, with cunning and timely expertise, Walpole managed to survive the turmoil of current politics, in spite of some drawbacks on account of the struggling factions within the cabinet. Nevertheless, in no time he made himself indispensable, both to George I and his son, the Prince of Wales, later George II. He was able to reconcile father and son, who used to have a very sour relationship and had sadly been estranged from each other for quite a long time. This had led to political discontent and potential rebellion. Moreover, the South Sea Bubble, that is, the crash of a commercial and maritime chartered company, whose shareholders were members of the royal house, government personalities and many important people, also required the oratorical skills of a politician like Walpole to protect them from Parliament and public opinion. His success in shielding the royal family from this scandal, made him popularly known as "the Screen".

Notwithstanding Walpole's acknowledged skills as a statesman, the accusation of establishing a kind of oligarchy made up of members of his family and friends became common gossip and a recurrent pun in the opposition's periodicals such as *The Patriot* or *The Craftsman*. To accept

briberies and distribute pensions in order to keep his circle of crownies and thus secure his own post were common practice, in fact, considered necessary devices for the effective rule of much bigger and complex administration. For the so-called country faction this meant the decay of Great Britain and its national moral values.

The debate between the Cacklogallinia's prime minister and his visitor, and slave, concerning the ways of ruling a country while serving the people's or your own interest, is a clear pun on Walpole and his "Robinocracy":

First Lord of the Treasury, Mr. Walpole. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Walpole. Clerk of the Pells, Mr. Walpole's son. Customs of London, second son of Mr. Walpole, in Reversion [i.e., after Robert Mann]. Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Walpole's brother. Secretary to Ireland, Mr. Walpole's brother. Secretary to the Postmaster-General, Mr. Walpole's brother in law. (Plumb78)

The connections between the worlds of politics and literature had already been established by the time Walpole came to power. Swift, Gay, Pope, Thomson, or Fielding, all of them are well known examples of such a relationship. However, as H. T. Dickinson states, "these relationships have scarcely ever been closer than in the early eighteenth century" (1). During the 1720s they were particularly intense because of the already mentioned South Sea Bubble episode and the strained relationship between the King and the Prince of Wales, or else, between the courtly power and the Leicester House circle. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is, certainly, a perfect example of this kind of ethical rebuke by means of a satirical discourse. However, it does not deal with concrete episodes and its censure can be viewed as dateless, while Brunt's narrative deals with the very issues that were upsetting British life in these early decades of the eighteenth century.

No wonder, then, that the long war between England and France on account of the succession of the Spanish crown after Charles II's death, from 1701 to 1714 (although it only really ended with Louis XIV's demise), is also allegorically depicted in the text. In truth, this war aimed at keeping the balance among the European powers, and in order to do so the French and Spanish states had to be kept apart, as well as their respective colonies overseas. If they were united under the rule of the same

government, a Bourbon in this particular case, a huge continental power was bound to rise. To prevent this from happening, the British government fought along with its allies, namely, Portugal, the Dutch Republic and the savoy Duchy. It was a hard expensive war, with a double strategy both on land and at sea. Consequently, vast sums were spent from the public wealth:

I happen'd to be cast on their Coast, just after they had made a Peace with the *Magpyes*, a puissant and neighbouring Nation, after a long, sanguine, and expensive War, which had well nigh exhausted the Forces and Treasure of both Parties, occasioned by the Cacklogallinians pretending they had a Right to nominate a Successor to the Emperor *Chuctinio*, who was in advanced Age, and without issue; and the *Magpyes* pretended their King, as a Relation to that Emperor, had a Right to succeed to the Throne of the *Bubohibonians* which is the Nation of *Owls*... (Brunt 38)

Wars motivated by territorial possessions, or the Right to the throne of a kingdom do seem to be a recurrent trend during the long eighteenth-century, mainly on account of imperial interests which were part and parcel of these conflicts. As usual, all this belligerency implied enormous expenses by governments, thus draining the treasure of the countries, and this way, “every Brain was at Work to project Methods for raising Money to pay the Interest” (Brunt 39). This was the case in Cacklogallinia just as it was in Britain.

The Government established a plan whereby the recently created South Sea Company would assume the national debt of Great Britain in exchange for lucrative bonds. It was widely believed that the Company would eventually reap an enormous profit through international trade in cloth, agricultural goods, and, especially, slaves. It seemed such a promising solution that everybody tried to buy some of these bonds. The king's German mistresses, along with members of the government, and anybody who could invest in the project, bought some shares of the company. In Cacklogallinia a project that involved bringing back gold from the moon was also embraced on by the *Vultuaquilian Squabbarws*, that is, Cacklogallinia king's mistresses, and the aristocracy and all the grandees of the realm.

A Company was erected, Shares sold of the Treasure we were to bring back; and happy was he who could first subscribe. These Subscriptions were sold at 2000 per Cent. Advantage, and in less than two Months, the Time spent in preparing for our Journey, I saw at least Five Hundred Lacqueys, who had fallen into the Trade of buying and selling these Subscriptions in their gilt Palanquins, and Train of Servants after them. The Squabbaws, the Vultuaquilians, the Minister, and some of the Grand Council, shared amongst them Fifty Millions of Spasma's, ready Money, for what they sold of this chimerical Treasure. (Brunt 43)

In fact, the narrator tells us so earnestly what was happening that the thin layer of fiction almost vanishes. Speculation won and everybody was blinded to reality both in the South Sea Company and the Gold from the Moon project. In spite of several objections raised by our traveler, they flew to the moon by means of potent birds and using magnetism to fly, and the gravity of the earth and the moon to ensure the landings. This is a solution which resonates Godwin's flying machine propelled by big, strong birds, the "gansas", as well as the flying island described in Gulliver's travels third voyage, to Laputa, whose landings and raisings to the sky are carried out by means of a magnetic stone (Swift 380-382).

When they arrived at the moon, they are inevitably struck by the truth. Actually, they found the moon a ravishing place, full of natural beauty, consisting of colourful and exquisite flowers, with crystalline water, an altogether lovely landscape, well scented and where harmony ruled. Moreover, it was inhabited by a special people, the Shades or Selenites, souls without bodies who were going through a process of purification in order to gain access to and be worthy of sharing the eternal bliss. In such a world there was no room for the petty ambitions of the sublunary regions.

Cacklogallinians' investment in shares to profit from these imaginary gold mines becomes an attack on their materialistic way of living. The older use of the word "to invest" had actually a military meaning. According to the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, it came from the Middle French *investire*, and before from the Latin and Old Italian *investire*. Up to the seventeenth century, it signified to surround with troops or ships so as to prevent escape or entry, that is, to attack. Somehow, Brunt, with all his honest style of narration, warns his contemporaneous readers that these

speculative investments in very doubtful projects, in fact, “invest” against the cohesion of national identity and solid wealth. Furthermore, if we are to consider the eighteenth-century slave trade as “the gold from the moon”, they are investing against the moral structure of each individual, and so weakening the ethical structure of the whole society, and simultaneously destroying their national identity. The notion of both actual slavery, and economic and social slavery, that is, the subjection of an individual to someone else apparently of a superior status, pervades the work. The investment in slave trade was considered one of the most profitable financial enterprises in imperial economics. In the end, the “gold from the moon” gave rise to one of the major conflicts of the imperial ideology and its economic outcome, since it “invested against” human integrity and identity.

There is a very strong image that depicts the result of greed, speculation, and the exploitation of other people: the Cacklogallians grow in bodily seize whenever they get richer or a new honorific title, or position, but they eat the members of their own community who fell to weaker positions and lost status. Moreover, this repulsive representation of the species is anticipated by its name: “cacklo” is an obvious appropriation of the Greek prefix “Kako”, often written in the latinised form “caco” which is used to refer to something disagreeable or incorrect. The Cacklogallinians’ anthropophagy (or I should say “Gallinaceophagy”) and all the economic tools of eighteenth-century British capitalism did hamper the so-called white man’s ethical and political hegemony. As the Selenite elder advices, there are better and more solid things to invest in:

My son, I hope you will reap a solid Advantage from the perilous Journey you have made, tho’ your Expectation of finding Riches among us is frustrated. All that I have to give you, is my Advice to return to your World, place your Happiness in nothing transitory; nor imagine that any Riches, but those which are Eternal, which neither Thief can carry away, nor Rust corrupt, are worthy of your Pursuit. (Brunt 54)

Investment, as an economic action belongs to a new world view which came into being in tandem with the establishment of the empires and the commercial nets they created. Investment also challenged men to find out how far they would be willing to sail, how far would their commercial

operations reach, how much they would sacrifice to satisfy their goals, or ambitions. In brief how much was investment worth. Or, using Shylock's words, would they go after their neighbour's pound of flesh?

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ABSTRACT

A Voyage to Cacklogallinia with a Description of the Religion, Policy, Customs and Manners, of that Country came to print in 1727, in London, authored by a certain “Captain Samuel Brunt”, a pseudonym of a writer whose identity, willingly or not, is still a mystery. It describes a hazardous voyage by sea, very much in tune with the usual travel writing descriptions of the beauties and perils that awaited the seamen in their cross Atlantic routes.

As usual in this kind of fictional works, the encounter with another community peopled by an intelligent species, the Cacklogallians, is here enhanced by the relativist notion of man’s position within the frame of God’s creation. The narrative further expands to a flight to the moon with the help of particularly powerful birds. However, the utopian factor here intertwined with fantastical travel devices just paves the way to a rather critical view of British society under the spell of imperial ideology. This paper plays on the double and ambiguous meaning of the verb “to invest”. According to its current sense it means to put one’s money in some industrial or commercial project. The older use of the word, up to the seventeenth century, also signified to attack. Investment, one of the main topics of Brunt’s ironic narration, makes the reader wonder how far greed, speculation, and all the economic tools of eighteenth-century British capitalism did hamper the white man’s ethos and political hegemony.

KEYWORDS

Utopia; moon travelling; eighteenth-century capitalism; ethos; to invest

RESUMO

A Voyage to Cacklogallinia with a Description of the Religion, Policy, Customs and Manners, of that Country veio a prelo em 1727, em Londres, assumindo-se como seu autor um certo “capitão Samuel Brunt”, um óbvio pseudónimo de um escritor cuja identidade permanece um mistério até aos dias de hoje.

A obra relata uma tormentosa viagem marítima seguindo o padrão habitual das narrativas de viagem pelas rotas do Atlântico, com descrições das belezas e dos perigos testemunhados e vividos pelos marinheiros. O encontro com uma comunidade de alienígenas inteligentes, os *Cacklogallians*, elemento, aliás, recorrente neste tipo de obra ficcional, ganha uma nova dimensão na medida em que dá ênfase à perspectiva relativista do homem no plano da criação divina. A narrativa prossegue com uma ida à lua, sendo os viajantes transportados pela energia de aves invulgarmente potentes. O enquadramento utópico, aliado aos recursos fantásticos da viagem espacial, destina-se, todavia, a presentear o leitor com uma visão muito crítica da sociedade britânica dominada pela ideologia do império.

O presente artigo centra-se no duplo significado e consequente ambiguidade e sentido do verbo “to invest” (investir). O seu actual significado é: aplicar dinheiro num projecto industrial ou comercial. No passado, mais precisamente até ao século XVII, o termo significava, em primeiro lugar, atacar. O leitor é levado a interrogar-se até que ponto o investimento, ou mais correctamente, o acto de investir procedente da ganância e da especulação inerente ao capitalismo britânico de Setecentos, e um dos tópicos centrais da narrativa irónica de Brunt, condiciona o *ethos* e a hegemonia política do homem branco.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Utopia; viagens à lua; capitalismo setecentista; etos; investir

Nineteen Eighty-Four,
de George Orwell:
Winston Smith no divã

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Nineteen Eighty-Four, de George Orwell: Winston Smith no divã¹

1. Orwell, Freud e a Psicanálise

Ao desenvolver a sua teoria da psicanálise, Sigmund Freud estabeleceu que a chave para a compreensão do ser humano estava (muito bem) guardada no inconsciente e só ao alcançá-lo e descobrir o que ali se escondia é que as verdadeiras causas das patologias psíquicas humanas poderiam ser desvendadas. Em *A Interpretação dos Sonhos* (2001 [1900]), o psicanalista institui que através da análise minuciosa dos sonhos, que até então pareciam apenas um amontoado de imagens sem sentido ou produto do divino e do sobrenatural, é possível descortinar para eles um significado coerente. Segundo Freud, através de uma metodologia muito bem delimitada, os sonhos podem ser desvendados e o sonhador pode finalmente alcançar o que seu inconsciente mostra veladamente.

É sensato dizer que a publicação de *A Interpretação dos Sonhos* mudou a forma como a sociedade ocidental do início do século XX compreendia a mente humana. A partir de Freud, diversos campos de estudo como as artes, a sociologia e a antropologia foram profundamente transformadas. A literatura, como arte absorvente do mundo que a rodeia, abraçou a psicanálise em movimentos literários como o Modernismo dos anos 20 e o Surrealismo. Tais movimentos agregaram as premissas psicanalíticas, usando-as em suas técnicas formais e estruturais.

¹ O presente artigo decorre e é tributário da dissertação de mestrado intitulada “*A Few Cubic Centimetres Inside Your Skull*”: *A Interpretação dos Sonhos de Winston Smith em Nineteen Eighty Four*, de George Orwell apresentada pela autora à Universidade de Lisboa em 14 de janeiro de 2015.

De fato, toda uma classe de intelectuais e artistas da época foi influenciada pela psicanálise e é possível afirmar com segurança que George Orwell foi um destes casos. O escritor inglês raramente mencionava os conceitos psicanalíticos, sendo o artigo “Raffles and Miss Blandish”² (1998 [1944]) uma das raras ocasiões em que Freud é citado explicitamente. Contudo, Orwell admirava inegavelmente o movimento modernista e alguns de seus expoentes, tais como James Joyce. A obra *A Clergyman’s Daughter* (1998 [1935]) foi escrita claramente sob influência do movimento modernista; entretanto, com esta experiência, Orwell descobriu que sua postura dominante era de índole política-ideológica e passou a criticar produções artísticas que desprezassem o assunto, sobretudo tendo em conta que o período histórico e a conjuntura política da época exigiam posicionamentos ideológicos firmes: “a novelist who simply disregards the major public events of the moment is generally either a footler or a plain idiot” (87), disserta em “Inside The Whale” (1998 [1940]). Para Kubal (1982), desde o princípio da carreira Orwell se preocupava com o “tema do poder”: por vezes era a tirania do império britânico, outras o sistema econômico e outras ainda a decadência da classe média.

Apesar de não abraçar a psicanálise abertamente, Orwell utiliza termos muito específicos da psicoterapia em *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Paul Roazen (1987 [1978]) reconhece que a tortura de Winston possui alusões claras à psicanálise:

To O’Brien, Winston is a “difficult case”. Their time together is described as a series of “sessions”. O’Brien’s stated aim is to “cure” Winston, to make him “sane”. (...) Winton seems to have a “disease” which gives him “delusions”. (26)

Ainda de acordo com Roazen, apesar de Orwell não endossar publicamente a psicanálise, o autor se aproximou de diversos pontos-chave da

² No artigo, Orwell cita Freud unicamente no seguinte trecho: “(...) Freud and Macchiavelli have reached the outer suburbs” (356). Neste texto, o escritor discute as imensas diferenças morais entre as histórias de crime de “Raffles” e de crimes com requintes de crueldade de “No Orchids for Miss Blandish”, a destruição de tabus ao atrair os leitores para a violência, a crueldade e a perversão sexual e a conexão destas mudanças morais com o surgimento do totalitarismo.

teoria freudiana, o que comprova a influência em sua obra dos conceitos do médico: “The extent to which, despite all their differences, Orwell’s psychology reveals similarities to Freud’s, testifies to the pervasive influence of psychoanalysis on twentieth-century images of human nature” (34).

Por outro lado e de acordo com Jacinta Matos (2012), a linguagem era parte central na posição do autor sobre o futuro:³ “Orwell strongly believed that we live *in* and *through* language” (6; grifo da autora). Curioso notar que no ensaio “New Words” (1998 [1940]) o escritor discursa sobre a necessidade da criação de novas palavras na língua, nomeadamente a inglesa, a fim de possibilitar a descrição de realidades indescritíveis fidedignamente, como os sonhos. Para Orwell, a falta de palavras cria um grave problema no momento em que devemos relatar as imagens oníricas, a fim de interpretá-las:

How do you describe a dream? Clearly you *never* describe it, because no words that convey the atmosphere of dreams exist in our language. Of course, you can give a crude approximation of some of the facts in a dream (...). And even if a psychologist interprets your dream in terms of “symbols”, he is still going largely by guesswork; for the *real* quality of the dream, the quality that gave the porcupine its sole significance, is outside the world of words. In fact, describing a dream is like translating a poem into the language of one of Bohn’s cribs; it is a paraphrase which is meaningless unless one knows the original. (128-9; grifo do autor)

Esta preocupação torna particularmente curioso o fato de Orwell ter optado por descrever ao todo sete sonhos no decorrer da narrativa de *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Ainda que refletisse sobre a dificuldade de encon-

³ A linguagem fazia parte de um projeto político e ideológico para Orwell. Por esta razão, a Novilíngua (língua implantada em Oceania, *Newspeak* no original) de *Nineteen Eighty-Four* possui uma conotação linguística mas também política na narrativa. Matos julga que, no mundo totalitário da obra, onde todos os valores (incluindo os estéticos) foram deturpados, o “silêncio” produzido pela falta de palavras para expressar sentimentos e idéias é significativo. O indivíduo que viver na Oceania cuja novilíngua esteja completamente implementada, “no longer *owns* the language he uses” (24; grifo da autora).

trar palavras que descrevessem com precisão a atmosfera e conteúdos dos sonhos, o escritor optou por utilizá-los como um meio de revelar aspectos importantes da personagem principal. Por esta razão, compreender o papel dos sonhos descritos em *Nineteen Eighty-Four* torna-se essencial para uma aprofundada compreensão da obra, de quem Winston Smith é e do que esconde em seu inconsciente. Os sonhos da obra influenciam diretamente a personagem, que os relata em passagens cruciais da narrativa. Por que foram descritos? O que escondem? E, mais importante, o que revelam sobre o sonhador?

Winston é a figura da repressão e da resistência em *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, personificando os efeitos nefastos que este tipo de regime pode gerar nos indivíduos que são forçados a viver nele; é, portanto, no seu inconsciente que os verdadeiros sinais e causas de sua oposição encontram-se guardados. Somente ao acessar seu inconsciente é possível trazer à tona os traumas, desejos e lembranças recalçados que desaguarão nos sintomas neuróticos da personagem e que a levaram a se tornar a figura lúcida em meio à insanidade do regime totalitarista retratado na obra.

Apesar de não ser a única forma de alcançar o inconsciente, o sonho é a melhor maneira de acedê-lo, de acordo com Freud, que atesta em *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*: “A maioria dos sonhos artificiais criados pelos escritores de ficção destinam-se a esse tipo de interpretação simbólica; reproduzem os pensamentos do escritor sob um disfarce que se considera condizente com as características reconhecidas dos sonhos” (100-1). Analisar o inconsciente de Winston através de seus sonhos torna-se, assim, na maneira mais eficaz de descobrir quais são seus desejos inconscientes,⁴ perceber quem ele é em seu mais obscuro íntimo e os motivos que o levam a ter o comportamento que tem e como se processa sua resistência ao sistema.

Para uma leitura mais abrangente da obra de George Orwell, é essencial compreender as razões que levam Winston a ser diferente dos demais. O deslocamento de Winston, ocasionado por sua lucidez, o torna um indivíduo solitário. Por não compartilhar com os demais da euforia

⁴ Com exceção dos sonhos dos neuróticos traumáticos, segundo Freud os sonhos são realizações de desejos reprimidos (Cf. *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*).

gerada pelo regime, Winston é “o último homem”.⁵ Por que ele, diferentemente dos demais, consegue ver a realidade? Nem mesmo Julia compartilha da sua percepção, pois, segundo Winston, ela é “only a rebel from the waist downwards” (163). Enquanto Julia apenas deseja liberdade sexual, Winston almeja a liberdade ideológica — que em sentido amplo inclui a liberdade de expressão, sexual e social.

Dito isto, é preciso frisar que analisar a maior parte das obras de George Orwell excluindo sua ideologia política é realizar uma interpretação, se não errada, ao menos incompleta. Desde que foi publicado, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* vem sendo amplamente explorado de acordo com este seu aspecto mais óbvio. Contudo, Winston Smith é uma personagem extremamente complexa do ponto de vista psicológico. Como não pode se expor, seus gestos são friamente calculados a fim de esconder toda a rebelião e pensamentos insurrectos que permeiam sua mente. Analisar Winston Smith através da perspectiva político-ideológica é mais do que válido, é necessário; mas não podemos dizer que seja a perspectiva mais original. A trama psicológica em *Nineteen Eighty-Four* é vasta, sua importância inegável; e unir ambas as interpretações em muito enriquece a compreensão da obra.

2. Sonhos

O primeiro sonho, que denomino de “Sonho Antigo” por ter ocorrido sete anos antes do início da narrativa, refere-se a uma voz advinda da escuridão que diz a Winston uma das emblemáticas frases da obra: “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness” (27). A personagem lembrou o sonho enquanto escrevia em seu diário, em uma clara referência a um conteúdo recalcado que transgrediu a barreira da censura tal como ocorre na terapia pela fala. Outro fator crucial para o trabalho do sonho⁶ trans-

⁵ Referência a *The Last Man in Europe*, o primeiro título da obra e que depois foi mudado para um anagrama do ano no qual o livro foi escrito, de acordo com Bernard Crick (1982 [1980]).

⁶ De acordo com Freud em *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*, o trabalho do sonho consiste na transformação do conteúdo latente (recalcado no inconsciente) em conteúdo manifesto (o sonho como é recordado) através da condensação (compressão de conteúdos

formar o conteúdo latente em conteúdo manifesto foi a cena de um filme de guerra visto na noite anterior:

then you saw a lifeboat full of children with a helicopter hovering over it. there was a middleaged woman might have been a jewess sitting up in the bow with a little boy about three years old in her arms. little boy screaming with fright and hiding his head between her breasts as if he was trying to burrow right into her and the woman putting her arms round him and comforting him although she was blue with fright herself, all the time covering him up as much as possible as if she thought her arms could keep the bullets off him. then the helicopter planted a 20 kilo bomb in among them terrific flash and the boat went all to matchwood. (10; grifos meus)

No dia em que recordou o sonho há muito esquecido, Winston revela ter visto, durante os “Dois Minutos de Ódio”,⁷ “a rapariga de cabelo escuro” (mais tarde descobriremos chamar-se Julia), uma mulher por quem nutria um ódio profundo. Conscientemente, Winston acredita que o ódio pela rapariga foi gerado por ela pertencer à “Liga Anti-Sexo”, um grupo praticante do celibato. Para a personagem, ao advogar o celibato ela sintetiza toda a ortodoxia do Partido, que prega uma perversa política de repressão sexual.⁸ Contudo, ao afirmar que deseja “ravish her and cut her

latentes em conteúdos manifestos menores), deslocamento (sonhos como são lembrados não passam de uma distorção do(s) conteúdo(s) recaldo(s) que os originaram), representabilidade (transformação do conteúdo latente em imagens) e elaboração secundária (tentativa do sonhador de representar em palavras o sonho).

⁷ *Two Minutes Hate* no original. Com exceção de *Big Brother* (por considerar este um nome próprio), neste estudo serão usados termos traduzidos de *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Utilizarei os termos traduzidos para português de Portugal por Ana Luísa Faria, na versão de *Mil Novecentos e Oitenta e Quatro* da editora Antígona (2012). Todos os termos originais aparecerão relacionados em parênteses quando os termos em português aparecerem pela primeira vez.

⁸ Repressão sexual é um complexo de interdições, valores e regras instaurados para controlar a libido dos indivíduos e tanto a repressão ideológica quanto a sexual exercem influências nefastas na sociedade de Oceania. Sobre repressão sexual, Winston reflete em dado momento sobre o propósito do Partido de remover todo o prazer do ato sexual, pois “Not love so much as eroticism was the enemy, inside marriage as well as outside it”

throat at the moment of climax” (17), Winston demonstra inconscientemente esconder um desejo reprimido através de uma repulsa violenta. Na realidade ele a odeia porque a deseja e seu desejo jamais será satisfeito, em uma lembrança do Complexo de Édipo.

A outra pessoa vista por Winston naquele dia é um membro do alto escalão do Partido (O’Brien), por quem a personagem nutria uma empatia gratuita. A personagem acreditava, graças a alguns sinais tais como olhares trocados, que O’Brien também era um rebelde contra o Partido e estava ao seu lado. Por algumas características físicas e tiques que lembravam “an eighteenth-century nobleman” (12), O’Brien representa, no inconsciente de Winston, a figura de seu pai (que deve-se lembrar, é a figura inimiga durante a fase do Complexo de Édipo) e de Goldstein (o “primeiro traidor”,⁹ gerador do tabu do incesto).¹⁰

(68). Em Oceania, o objetivo era tornar o ato sexual uma ação repugnante, necessária apenas para procriação. Winston revela que deseja quebrar o “muro de virtudes” que o Partido prega; por esta razão, um dos atos de rebelião era justamente fazer sexo “performado com sucesso”. Ter desejo sexual era cometer crimepensar (*crimethink* no original) e, portanto, ser subversivo. Julia, ao contrário de Winston, consegue perceber os reais motivos pelos quais o Partido condena o desejo e o sexo: a privação sexual produz um clima de histeria na população, o que, conseqüentemente, pode facilmente transformar-se em desejo de guerra e adoração aos líderes. Nas palavras de Julia: “When you make love you’re using up energy; and afterwards you feel happy and don’t give a damn for anything. They can’t bear you to feel like that. They want you to be bursting with energy all the time. All this marching up and down and cheering and waving flags is simply sex gone sour. If you’re happy inside yourself, why should you get excited about Big Brother and the Three-Year Plans and the Two Minutes Hate and all the rest of their bloody rot?” (139).

⁹ Como primeiro traidor, podemos buscar uma associação com o conceito freudiano de crime primário, desenvolvido em “Totem e Tabu” (1996 [1913]). Tal associação já havia sido feita anteriormente por Smyer: “The reference to Goldstein as the “primal traitor” calls to mind the Freudian concept of the primal crime” (142). O parricídio dos primeiros traidores dá origem ao tabu do incesto no qual os homens não podem relacionar-se com mulheres da mesma comunidade.

¹⁰ Cabe ainda mais uma importante observação acerca do papel exercido por O’Brien sobre Winston. O sujeito, por quem Smith sente uma profunda admiração, exerce uma poderosa influência na personagem desde o princípio. Primeiramente, quando ainda não havia nenhuma ligação entre ambos, O’Brien era alguém “com quem podia

No sonho, Winston está em um quarto escuro,¹¹ que no trabalho do sonho representará a condensação da mãe de Winston e da “rapariga de cabelo escuro”, pois por ambas ele sente o mesmo desejo sexual irrealizável. O “lugar onde não existe escuridão”, referido por uma voz durante o sonho e que a personagem atribuíra a O’Brien, refere-se ao Ministério do Amor, local sem janelas onde as luzes estavam todo o tempo acesas, tal como o próprio Winston o descreve: “In this place, he knew instinctively, the lights would never be turned out” (241). O’Brien, no quarto escuro, afirma que encontrará a personagem no Ministério por conta de seus desejos sexuais. Em outras palavras, o pai de Winston (a figura castradora no Complexo de Édipo) vai encontrá-lo no Ministério do Amor por ele ter desejos sexuais por sua mãe. O desejo do sonho revela-se então como: “Desejo ser punido por meu pai e estou fazendo de tudo para que isto aconteça, pois senti desejos sexuais por minha mãe”.

O segundo sonho de Winston é dividido em duas partes. A primeira consiste na imagem da mãe sentada em um local abaixo dele com a irmã nos braços. O local, profundo, move-se para baixo: “They were in the saloon of a sinking ship, looking up at him through the darkening water” (31). A segunda parte do sonho consiste na visão do que Winston chama

conversar” e que “estava ao seu lado”. Depois, ao divagar sobre para quem estava a escrever o diário, Winston proclama: “He was writing the diary for O’Brien—to O’Brien:” (84; grifo no original). Mas é durante a prisão da personagem que a faceta analista de O’Brien e seu poder sobre a personagem ficam mais evidentes. O’Brien declara que prendeu Winston para “curar sua memória defeituosa”, “salvá-lo” e “torná-lo são”. Em outra passagem, o “analista” afirma que as conversas de ambos são agradáveis: “Do you remember writing in your diary,” he said, “that it did not matter whether I was a friend or an enemy, since I was at least a person who understood you and could be talked to? You were right. I enjoy talking to you” (271). Para Roazen também, a relação de ambos (e principalmente o poder de um sobre o outro) é freudiana — entre paciente e terapeuta. É no divã de O’Brien e sob a influência dele que Winston passa a maior parte do tempo confinado. É através das conversas (e torturas) ocorridas enquanto permanecia em poder de O’Brien que Winston, tal como um paciente, finalmente é “curado” e transforma-se em uma pessoa “normal” — ou, ao menos, na pessoa que o Partido considerava normal.

¹¹ Freud faz referência a quartos em *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*. Segundo o psicanalista: “costumam ser mulheres” (309).

de Terra Dourada.¹² Este talvez seja o sonho mais famoso de toda a narrativa, especificamente por causa da segunda parte. Apesar de ser bipartido, ambos os trechos tratam sobre o mesmo assunto, conforme Freud alega em seu estudo sobre os sonhos: “O conteúdo de todos os sonhos que ocorrem na mesma noite faz parte do mesmo todo” (292). Este sonho nos revelará pela primeira vez um conteúdo traumático da infância de Winston: a discussão que teve com a mãe por causa de um pedaço de chocolate e que acabou por ser a última ocasião no qual viu ambas. Esta memória, traumática na vida de Winston está recalçada em seu inconsciente e só será revelada mais adiante, quando a personagem acordar de outro sonho. O sentimento de culpa pelo sumiço de ambas mais tarde também será revelado quando a personagem afirmar que achava que “tinha matado a mãe”. Sobre memórias esquecidas que fortuitamente alcançam a consciência, Freud explica que as lembranças traumáticas são esquecidas justamente por causarem sofrimento; isto nada mais é do que um mecanismo de defesa responsável por recalcar lembranças dolorosas a fim de privar o ego da angústia.

Tal como no sonho anterior, o filme visto durante a tarde daquele dia foi usado pelo inconsciente da personagem para transformar o conteúdo latente e recalçado em conteúdo manifesto, uma vez que a mãe abraça a irmã, tal como a mulher do filme abraça o filho para protegê-lo das balas. A notícia reportada naquela tarde no telecrã,¹³ de que a porção de chocolate semanal seria diminuída, também foi usada no processo do trabalho do sonho, que usou esta informação, relacionada ao conteúdo traumático de Winston (a briga com a mãe por causa do chocolate), e transformou-a no conteúdo manifesto da imagem da mãe e da irmã a afundar. Uma observação da personagem principal em particular merece atenção: “He was out in the light and air while they were being sucked down to death and they were down there *because* he was up here” (31-2, *italico no original*). Winston estava acima delas, ou seja, ele era superior, tanto porque sua mãe o considerava assim: “His mother was quite ready to give him more than his share. She took it for granted that he, ‘the boy’, should have the biggest portion” (169); quanto porque ele próprio se considerava com mais direitos:

¹² *Golden Country* no original.

¹³ *Telescreen* no original.

“but however much she gave him he invariably demanded more” (*Idem*). Ou ainda quando diz que “he should be given the whole piece” (*Ibid.*) Elas estavam afundando, ou seja, morrendo de fome, porque ele sempre queria mais. Quando elas sumiram, sua mente absorveu o fato como sendo culpa sua, porque ele demandava mais comida que a elas faria falta: “He knew that he was starving the other two, but he could not help it; he even felt that he had a right to do it” (*Ibid.*).

Pode ainda fazer-se uma interpretação deste trecho aludindo aos sonhos típicos¹⁴ com a morte de pessoas queridas. Durante a infância, Winston desejou a morte da mãe e da irmã, para que afinal pudesse ter mais comida, conforme foi possível observar em suas atitudes egoístas. Este desejo de morte recalcado retorna no sonho na forma da morte da mãe e da irmã, uma clara satisfação de um desejo antigo, há muito reprimido.¹⁵

Na segunda parte do sonho, Winston encontra-se em um local recorrente em seus sonhos; tão recorrente que ele não sabia ao certo se já lá havia estado ou não na vida real, denominado pela personagem de Terra Dourada.¹⁶ Em “O Estranho” (1996 [1919]), Freud afirma: “sempre que

¹⁴ De acordo com Freud, sonhos típicos são sonhos que ocorrem com a maioria das pessoas. No caso da morte de pessoas queridas, estes sonhos devem ser distinguidos em duas classes: aqueles sonhos cujo sonhador não fica abalado e, ao acordar, fica estarecido perante sua “insensibilidade”, e aqueles cujo sonhador fica extremamente abalado. Normalmente o desejo de morte está ligado a um desejo antigo, do período da infância do sonhador. Para Freud, como as crianças não têm muita noção do que realmente significa a morte, normalmente sentem a vontade imediata de que a causa da angústia acabe, e a este fim associam a morte. Para elas, a morte não é o fim da vida, mas tão simplesmente o fim imediato de uma fonte de desprazer (Cf. *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*, 223-4).

¹⁵ Sob o prisma político, vale ressaltar que Orwell alerta para os perigos do individualismo quando este é levado ao extremo: Winston luta por sua individualidade em uma sociedade coletiva, mas quando tanto o coletivismo quanto o individualismo ocorrem de forma radical suas consequências são negativas e destrutivas, tais como a que podemos observar nas atitudes da personagem quando criança.

¹⁶ O termo tem ainda uma outra associação, desta vez cultural: remete a *Golden Age*, ou a Idade de Ouro, um período bucólico e arcadiano no qual reinava a paz, a harmonia, a estabilidade e a prosperidade. A Idade de Ouro é sempre tida como um estado ideal e utópico, quando a humanidade ainda era pura. Este período findou com a “queda do homem”.

um homem sonha com um lugar ou um país e diz para si mesmo, enquanto ainda está sonhando: ‘este lugar é-me familiar, estive aqui antes’, podemos interpretar o lugar como sendo os genitais da sua mãe ou o seu corpo” (260). Isto significa que a Terra Dourada, local familiar ao personagem durante o sonho, representa o corpo de sua mãe. Outro aspecto do sonho é bastante peculiar e merece atenção. Winston afirma que durante o sonho, a rapariga do cabelo escuro faz um gesto “With what seemed a single movement she tore off her clothes and flung them disdainfully aside” (32). O particular gesto tem relação direta com o gesto feito pela mãe ao proteger seu filho no barco durante o filme, a imagem responsável por despertar o conteúdo reprimido no seu inconsciente, de sua mãe protegendo sua irmã na infância, ao abraçá-la quando Winston lhe roubara o pedaço de chocolate. Não restam dúvidas de que a cena cinematográfica aliada à figura de Julia (vista naquela tarde e que já reconhecemos que condensa também a representação de sua mãe) foram as responsáveis por despertar na personagem a cena da infância, ainda que ela só venha a ter consciência da conexão das cenas posteriormente. A memória recalçada não rompeu completamente a barreira da censura a ponto de Winston recordar-se da lembrança de infância neste momento, no entanto, em seu sonho, a memória veio à tona disfarçadamente. Considerando que Julia condensa em si a imagem da mãe e dos desejos sexuais não realizados, o sonho aponta para outra culpa, a de ter desejado a mãe.

Como um todo, o sonho ocupa-se dos sentimentos de culpa da personagem, sendo a primeira parte relativa ao trauma por ter matado a mãe e a segunda parte por tê-la desejado. As lembranças traumáticas de Winston foram esquecidas por serem fontes de angústia e lhe causarem sofrimento. Este mecanismo de defesa livra o consciente da personagem de remoer o trauma durante a vida de vigília, contudo durante a noite, o inconsciente alivia a tensão no sonho, revivendo o momento do trauma. Por ter características que lhe denunciam como sendo um neurótico traumático, Winston tem sonhos com características diferentes da realização de desejos, conforme instituído por Freud.¹⁷

¹⁷ Em “Além do Princípio de Prazer” (1996 [1920]) Freud alega que os sonhos dos neuróticos traumáticos são uma exceção à proposição de que os sonhos são realizações de desejos e conduzem o sonhador ao momento no qual o trauma ocorreu.

O terceiro sonho, de ansiedade, possui uma interpretação até muito simples. A personagem está em frente a um muro e do outro lado havia algo terrível que ela não queria encarar. Isto é, claramente, uma alusão ao(s) conteúdo(s) reprimido(s) no inconsciente da personagem, mais especificamente sua fobia; afinal o recalçamento acontece com conteúdos geradores de angústia. Durante a análise, será possível descobrir que o “muro de escuridão” é a barreira da censura e o “algo muito terrível” correspondia o conteúdo gerador de uma fobia. Antes de se recordar do sonho, Winston estava deitado com Julia, após terem tido uma relação sexual, quando um rato aparece no quarto. Neste momento, Winston revela ter pavor dos roedores: “Of all horrors in the world — a rat!” (151). Julia comenta que ratos atacam crianças e que, por isso, muitas mães não têm coragem de deixar seus bebês sozinhos. Winston se apavora e Julia, para protegê-lo, “wound her limbs round him” (*Idem*). O acontecimento, a informação e o gesto de Julia (de protegê-lo, semelhante ao gesto de sua mãe trinta anos antes e da mulher que protegia a criança no filme) foram os fatores decisivos para Winston recordar-se de seu pesadelo. A própria personagem sabe que o que está atrás do muro era algo horrível de encarar — sua fobia — e que de alguma forma o que Julia acabara de dizer estava ligado a ela. O desejo expresso no sonho revela-se então como: “Desejo não saber o que há por trás deste muro, pois é algo muito terrível de encarar”.

De acordo com Freud, as fobias (medos exagerados direcionados a objetos/situações/animais) têm origem sexual¹⁸ e, em geral, decorrem do aumento na intensidade da defesa que ocorre analogamente à tentativa do inconsciente de manifestar o conteúdo angustiante censurado. Em outras palavras: quanto mais os conteúdos angustiantes querem se manifestar, maior a intensidade da barreira de defesa e, portanto no caso das fobias, maiores são os medos irracionais. As fobias, assim como as neuroses e os sonhos, são o retorno do recalçado travestido, uma representação que substitui o conteúdo angustiante original por outro.

Ao analisarmos o aparelho mental de Winston, é impossível não

¹⁸ Em “Obsessões e Fobias” (1996 [1895]), Freud alega que as angústias deste tipo (fobias) são algumas das manifestações psíquicas das neuroses de angústia, não derivam da lembrança e tem origem sexual: “Sua causa específica é a acumulação de tensão sexual produzida pela abstinência ou pela excitação sexual não consumada” (85).

tecer a analogia da fobia de ratos da personagem com o caso do “Homem dos Ratos”, analisado por Freud em “Notas Sobre Um Caso de Neurose Obsessiva” (1996 [1909]). Neste caso específico, o paciente era acometido por um Transtorno Obsessivo-Compulsivo e, de entre vários sintomas, sentia medo fora do normal de que algo terrível fosse acontecer às pessoas que amava: sua namorada e seu pai. A origem de suas neuroses obsessivas remonta à vida sexual infantil. Ao descrever seu grande medo obsessivo, o paciente de Freud especifica que seu temor se referia a um castigo corporal aplicado nos países da Europa de Leste:

... o criminoso foi amarrado...’ — expressou-se ele tão indistintamente, que não pude adivinhar logo em qual situação — ‘...um vaso foi virado sobre suas nádegas... alguns *ratos* foram colocados dentro dele... e eles...’ — de novo se levantou e mostrava todo sinal de horror e resistência — *‘cavaram caminho no...’* — Em seu ânus, ajudei-o a completar. (150; grifo do autor)

O sujeito continua o relato afirmando que foi acometido pela idéia de que este castigo estava sendo aplicado a uma pessoa que lhe era muito cara (no caso, ele estava a se referir à dama a quem admirava). É no mínimo curioso que a personagem também sinta fobia por ratos e que o castigo aplicado por O’Brien para que Winston mude de comportamento com relação ao *Big Brother* seja “a common punishment in Imperial China” (299), que consistia em amarrar uma gaiola na cabeça do torturado com um rato dentro prestes a devorar seu rosto. E, para nossa surpresa, qual a solução encontrada por Winston para que o castigo findasse? Se no caso do “Homem dos Ratos” o medo era de que o castigo fosse aplicado à mulher que amava, no caso de Winston, para salvar-se ele deseja que o castigo seja aplicado na mulher amada.

No caso da fobia de Winston, uma questão está indiscutivelmente clara: a personagem lembrou do referido pesadelo, no qual sua fobia apresenta-se recalcada, quando Julia disse: “Did you know they attack children? Yes, they do. In some of these streets a woman daren’t leave a baby alone for two minutes” (151). A frase de Julia a dizer que ratos grandes atacam bebês despertou em Winston a lembrança de algo que estava escondido “atrás do muro” em seu pesadelo. De alguma maneira, o fato de ratos atacarem bebês estava diretamente relacionado à sua fobia.

Em “A Organização Genital Infantil” (1996 [1923]), Freud afirma que, para as crianças de ambos os sexos, o pênis é o único órgão sexual existente. Para o menino, o pênis das meninas “ainda irá crescer” e, ao se deparar com o fato de que as mulheres adultas não o têm, ele conclui que o que ali estava foi “retirado”, levando-o a um receio de perder o seu órgão tão precioso e a considerar sobre o que precisa fazer (ou não fazer) para preservá-lo. Em “A Dissolução do Complexo de Édipo” (1996 [1924]), Freud faz a ligação entre os dois complexos: a masturbação infantil (geradora da ameaça de castração) é o escape da excitação produzida pelo Complexo de Édipo. Conforme Freud afirma no artigo “A Dissolução do Complexo de Édipo, a futura descoberta de que as mulheres são “castradas” torna-se, na cabeça da criança, a punição caso o amor edípico seja concretizado. É então que, entre o interesse narcísico do pênis e o amor edípico, o primeiro triunfa e “o ego da criança volta as costas ao complexo de Édipo” (198). O Complexo de Édipo é, pois, destruído pelo temor da castração (no caso dos meninos). Caso o complexo não seja destruído mas tão-somente reprimido, persistirá em estado inconsciente e voltará, mais tarde, na forma de manifestações patogênicas. Na teoria da libido,¹⁹ Freud estabelece a libido transformada como geradora do adoecer mental.

A fobia por ratos é mais um dos mecanismos de defesa de Winston contra conteúdos angustiantes; neste caso, a castração remete à castração sexual da infância mas também à castração praticada por Oceania em todos as esferas do ser-humano. Para Smyer, Winston sofria do “medo primitivo de mutilação sexual”, sendo que o uso da expressão “nasty thing” por Julia (uma mulher hipersexual e para quem tudo se relacionava com a sua própria sexualidade), ao referir-se aos ratos, “must refer to the infant’s genital mutilation” (147), fazendo alusão à dupla interpretação possível do termo “nasty”. Pondero ainda que a própria política praticada em Oceania (incluindo até mesmo a Novilíngua) é castradora, uma vez que Winston é obrigado a praticar a abstinência e, assim, acumular tensão sexual. A excitação sexual não consumada, como já pudemos analisar que Winston sentia

¹⁹ Seção do terceiro ensaio em “Três Ensaio Sobre a Teoria da Sexualidade” (1996 [1905]) que, no entanto, só foi acrescentada em 1915, de acordo com o editor da edição inglesa, James Strachey.

por Julia (e por sua mãe) na análise dos sonhos anteriores, também colabora para a produção de suas neuroses.

No quarto sonho, Winston encontra-se dentro do pesa-papéis. Ao despertar do sonho dentro do pesa-papéis, pela primeira vez Winston consegue rememorar a lembrança por tantos anos recalçada, do dia em que viu a mãe e a irmã pela última vez. Duas sentenças são extremamente importantes para a interpretação deste sonho. Primeiro, quando Winston afirma que o sonho estava diretamente ligado a uma lembrança: “There was the dream itself and there was a memory connected with it that had swum into his mind in the few seconds after waking” (*Idem*); e a segunda:

The dream had also been comprehended by—indeed, in some sense it had consisted in — a gesture of the arm made by his mother and made again thirty years later by the Jewish woman he had seen on the news film, trying to shelter the small boy from the bullets, before the helicopter blew them both to pieces. (*Ibid.*)

A descrição deste sonho é mais uma comprovação de que Winston possuía uma lembrança recalçada — até este momento. Ao acordar com seus olhos cheios de lágrimas, pode-se concluir de imediato que o sonho foi o gerador da angústia, mas o que realmente o afligiu foram as lembranças reprimidas (da briga com a mãe e a irmã e o conseqüente desaparecimento delas) que finalmente alcançaram a consciência. Foi este retorno do recalçado o gerador da tensão aqui descrita. Tem-se também finalmente a comprovação da ligação feita em sua mente entre o gesto feito por sua mãe e pela mãe que protegia o filho no barco durante o filme — gestos estes condensados no gesto de Julia no sonho da Terra Dourada. A ligação com a segunda parte do segundo sonho (Terra Dourada) é, portanto, muito estreita, inclusive pelas semelhanças nas descrições imagéticas. No segundo sonho, Winston descreve a paisagem como “a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground” (32) e este é retratado com caracterizações como “luminous dream” (167) e “a summer evening after rain” (*Idem*). No segundo sonho ficou estabelecida uma importante ligação entre o conteúdo manifesto (Julia) formado a partir da condensação de sua figura com a da mãe, despertado pela imagem da mulher que protegia a criança no barco durante o filme. Como já foi interpretado, a Terra Dourada representa o mundo utópico e o corpo de sua mãe; e neste sonho, a representação

é igualmente válida.

O pesa-papéis exerce um papel muito importante e simbólico na narrativa, que não deve ser ignorado. Ao adquirir o antigo objeto “com no mínimo cem anos”, conforme a personagem de Mr. Charrington afirma, o que mais chama a atenção de Winston não é a beleza em si do objeto, mas a beleza de pertencer a um tempo antigo, a um tempo que ele procura insistentemente e constantemente resgatar. A personagem sabe que ter o pesa-papéis e alugar um quarto o levarão inevitavelmente à morte e isto o torna um “suicidal folly”, mas o prazer que Winston obtém ao retornar ao passado, ainda que através da compra deste pequeno artigo, é maior — e é possível perceber sua pulsão de morte em atuação.²⁰ Emblemático também é o fato de que Winston, ao alugar o quarto para poder ficar a sós com Julia, dispõe o pesa-papéis sobre a mesa. Com isto, fica claro que ele deseja que aquele quarto seja um retorno ao passado, com antiguidades que pertenciam aos tempos que sua memória consegue recordar. A idéia de alugar o quarto surgiu, inclusivamente, a partir do pequeno objeto: “the idea had first floated into his head in the form of a vision of the glass paperweight mirrored by the surface of the gate-leg table” (143). Ao explicar a Julia sobre o pesa-papéis, a personagem afirma que o que mais gosta sobre ele é que: “It’s a little chunk of history that they’ve forgotten to alter. It’s a message from a hundred years ago, if one knew how to read it” (152). Para Winston a mensagem era clara: obtendo o objeto, o passado poderia ser recuperado.

Quando Winston afirma que o sonho aconteceu dentro do pesa-papéis, isto nada mais é do que a representação utilizada pelo trabalho do sonho para transformar uma impressão capturada durante a vida de vigília. Em dado momento, Winston declara acerca do objeto em questão:

²⁰ Pulsão de morte ou Tanatos é uma força que tem tendência pela destruição, de acordo com Freud em “Além do Princípio de Prazer”. A pulsão de morte se opõe à pulsão sexual (Eros, que tem tendência pela vida) e tem caráter conservador e retrógrado; já as pulsões sexuais atuam no sentido de um prolongamento da vida. Atitudes de agressividade têm caráter destrutivo e são, portanto, associadas à pulsão de morte (um exemplo disto na obra seriam os “Dois Minutos de Ódio”). O aparato mental vive um conflito opositor entre essas duas forças — ao contrário do que se poderia imaginar, ambas as pulsões atuam de forma conjunta: onde há vida, há morte.

It was as though the surface of the glass had been the arch of the sky, enclosing a tiny world with its atmosphere complete. He had the feeling that he could get inside it and that in fact he was inside it, along with the mahogany bed and the gate-leg table and the clock and the steel engraving and the paper-weight itself. (154)

Com a associação feita entre o quarto alugado e o pesa-papéis, relembro agora a afirmativa de Freud de que os quartos “costumam ser mulheres”, tal como visto anteriormente na análise do primeiro sonho. Neste sonho, o pesa-papéis além de ser um fragmento do passado, também representa o útero de sua mãe — o primeiro “quarto” habitado por Winston e a que por toda a vida ele deseja retornar, um local de aconchego e proteção. É neste momento que Winston declara a Julia que, até aquele momento, acreditava ter matado a própria mãe. Este sonho também versa sobre o trauma vivido e o sentimento de culpa por tê-la “matado”, tal como no segundo sonho; portanto, ele também é uma recondução ao momento no qual o trauma ocorreu.

O quinto sonho, que denomino de sonho análogo por ter imagens oníricas muito parecidas com as da primeira parte do segundo sonho, foi recordado enquanto Winston estava a lembrar-se da memória recalçada da mãe e da irmã, ou seja, a lembrança do trauma, ao romper a barreira da censura, permitiu que outras lembranças relacionadas ao trauma também pudessem ser recordadas. Se, naquele sonho, sua mãe e irmã estavam “looking up at him”, em algum lugar subterrâneo, que mais tarde a personagem descreveu como “They were in the saloon of a sinking ship, looking up at him through the darkening water”, neste sonho sua mãe também estava a olhar para cima, para ele, através da água escura. Tal como no sonho anterior, Winston revive o trauma pela responsabilidade na morte da mãe. Naquela época, ele ainda achava que tinha sido o causador do seu desaparecimento e o fato de esta imagem retornar por diversas vezes durante a vida de Winston denota o quão traumático foi a perda de ambas, principalmente de sua mãe.

Denomino o penúltimo sonho de sonho/memória por Winston não especificar se esta recordação faz parte de uma alucinação ou sonho, uma vez que ele próprio não sabe discernir. Entretanto, acredito ser importante analisá-lo, uma vez que este passo também nos fornece pistas sobre os

recalques da personagem — e como pode ser que este passo refira-se a um sonho, a importância de analisá-lo torna-se ainda maior. Freud, no artigo “Lembranças Encobridoras” (1996 [1899]),²¹ diz que a origem das lembranças não importa, o que corrobora minha opção por analisar este sonho. Outro aspecto importante a ressaltar é a correlação deste sonho com o primeiro analisado, o “Sonho Antigo”.

Agora, Winston afirma que a mesma voz que disse naquele sonho “We shall meet in the place where there is no darkness” afirma neste: “Don’t worry, Winston; you are in my keeping. For seven years I have watched over you. Now the turning-point has come. I shall save you, I shall make you perfect” (256). Em ambos os casos o verbo *shall* representa uma forte afirmação ou intenção, uma instrução, algo inevitável. No sonho anterior, Winston deixou claro que o *shall* usado denotava “a statement, not a command”. Aqui, a intenção do verbo *shall* segue a mesma lógica.

Neste sonho, a voz — que é a mesma, portanto pertence a O’Brien — diz a Winston que vai salvá-lo e torná-lo perfeito. Devo retomar aqui a consideração de que O’Brien corresponde à figura do terapeuta — uma pessoa que pode usar dos seus conhecimentos para, durante a análise, transformar a mente “anormal” em “normal”, segundo os padrões sociais. A figura do terapeuta, e por conseguinte a de O’Brien, é tornar o indivíduo adequado para se encaixar nos padrões estabelecidos pela sociedade de Oceania. Tal como um paciente se torna dependente de seu analista, Winston se apega a O’Brien como a pessoa que pode salvá-lo. Como no “Sonho Antigo”, O’Brien condensa a figura de seu pai e de Goldstein, o rebelde e primeiro traidor. A afirmativa “I shall save you” revela não uma frase ouvida pela personagem, mas justamente um desejo seu de ser salvo por quem tanto admira e que condensa tantas figuras representativas. O termo “salvo”,

²¹ Neste artigo Freud revela ter percebido durante sessões com seus pacientes que muitas lembranças relatadas não haviam de fato ocorrido, ou ao menos não da maneira como eram contadas, ainda que o paciente tivesse plena convicção da sua lembrança. O médico descobriu então o que veio a chamar de lembranças encobridoras: memórias dos períodos infantis que na realidade não existiram ou foram deturpadas mas que estão simbolicamente ligadas a sentimentos que realmente existiram. Freud afirma que estas memórias devem o seu valor não ao seu conteúdo em si mas à relação existente entre este conteúdo e outro que foi recalado.

portanto, se trocado por “punido” (e a punição neste caso aparece como uma forma de amor, tal como os pais punem os filhos para corrigir seus erros), representa o desejo já interpretado no primeiro sonho. Relembrando que Winston se encontrava no Ministério do Amor, lugar onde ele já sabia que ocorreria sua punição, a satisfação do desejo torna-se assim mais evidente. Posteriormente, em outro diálogo entre O’Brien e Winston, este confirmará que acreditava que o local servia para aplicar punições: “‘And why do you imagine that we bring people to this place?’ ‘To make them confess.’ ‘No, that is not the reason. Try again.’ ‘To punish them’” (265). Se no sonho anterior o desejo era “Desejo ser punido por meu pai pois senti desejos sexuais por minha mãe”, neste sonho o desejo pode ser interpretado como: “Desejo ser punido por todos os desejos incestuosos que senti por minha mãe e por tê-la matado”.

Por último estão os sonhos felizes, cujos conteúdos referem-se ao desejo direto e objetivo de Winston de estar com os que ama: sua mãe, Julia e O’Brien. Este sonho é um sonho simples, semelhante aos sonhos infantis cuja interpretação pode ser obtida facilmente como sendo uma satisfação imediata de desejo, uma compensação.²² Sua única fonte de prazer enquanto estava enclausurado era divagar sobre estes sonhos, com estas pessoas. Como, neste momento, sua única fonte de prazer eram os sonhos, nada mais natural do que a satisfação do desejo de que mais sonhos felizes aconteçam durante a noite; a vida onírica supre-lhe e compensa-lhe as vontades impossíveis de serem realizadas durante a vida de vigília.

3. Winston Smith no Divã: O Retorno do Recalcado

Durante a narrativa é possível verificar uma certa tendência em Winston à auto-destruição, uma predisposição à pulsão de morte. As atitudes da personagem denotam que ele não é apenas uma pessoa que age contra o Partido, mas que parece por vezes querer ser apanhado, deixando pistas evidentes, rastros. Winston sabe, conscientemente, que está a caminhar para o mesmo

²² Freud exemplifica em *A Interpretação dos Sonhos* estes sonhos como típicos das crianças, que ainda não tem o aparato mental muito complexo: “Os sonhos das crianças pequenas são frequentemente pura realização de desejos” (125).

fim que sua mãe.²³ Caso caísse nas mãos do Partido, seria “abolished, annihilated: *vaporized* was the usual word” (21; grifo no original), tal como sua família fora no passado. Os textos do diário somente seriam lidos pela Polícia do Pensamento: “And in front of him there lay not death but annihilation. The diary would be reduced to ashes and himself to vapour. Only the Thought Police would read what he had written” (29). A morte era uma certeza: “He had the sensation of stepping into the dampness of a grave and it was not much better because he had always known that the grave was there and waiting for him” (166-7). Não obstante, em nenhum momento a personagem titubeia nos seus atos rebeldes, muito pelo contrário. Sua atitude é sempre direcionada no sentido de desafiar (ou antecipar) o fim que ele sabe estar a caminho. Ao afirmar que “We are the dead” (142), Winston não apenas quer dizer que a atual condição autoritária e opressora imposta pelo Partido está a matar figurativamente os cidadãos de Oceania mas que suas próprias ações levam-no, mais cedo ou mais tarde, para tal desfecho. A personagem, em diversos passos, deixa claro que sabe qual será seu fim pelas atitudes que toma — ainda assim, em nenhum momento hesita em tomá-las.

Esta característica da personagem é particularmente importante, pois a compulsão à repetição²⁴ leva Winston a tomar atitudes auto-destrutivas

²³ Em diversas passagens temos a confirmação de que Winston sabia que seria aniquilado. No início da narrativa, ele escreve em seu diário, em pânico: “*theyll shoot me i don’t care theyll shoot me in the back of the neck i dont care*” (21; grifo no original). A personagem sabia que este era o método empregado pelo partido para aniquilar seus opositores e que este seria seu fim, justamente por ser um opositor. A comprovação de que levaria um tiro vem de O’Brien: “‘Tell me,’ he said, ‘how soon will they shoot me?’ ‘It might be a long time,’ said O’Brien. ‘You are a difficult case. But don’t give up hope. Everyone is cured sooner or later. In the end we shall shoot you’” (287). Quando estava preso, Winston teve um devaneio cujo conteúdo novamente comprova a tese: “He was walking down the corridor, waiting for the bullet. He knew that it was coming in another moment. Everything was settled, smoothed out, reconciled. There were no more doubts, no more arguments, no more pain, no more fear. . . . Suddenly he started up with a shock of horror. The sweat broke out on his backbone” (292-3).

²⁴ Em “Recordar, Repetir e Elaborar” (1996 [1914]) Freud menciona a repetição como expressão da resistência: “podemos dizer que o paciente não *recorda* coisa alguma do que esqueceu e reprimiu, mas expressa-o pela atuação ou atua-o (*acts it out*). Ele o

que o conduzem inexoravelmente ao mesmo fim daqueles a quem supostamente destruiu, na situação traumática que não consegue recordar. Por esta razão, Winston tem diversos sonhos característicos de neuróticos traumáticos: sua compulsão à repetição o conduz de volta à cena do trauma. Smith toma atitudes destrutivas justamente por estas representarem paradoxalmente para ele a vida, o desejo, a satisfação. A rebeldia de Winston torna-se assim ainda mais admirável, pois denota a derradeira tentativa de obtenção de prazer, ainda que seja correndo risco de sofrer as consequências fatídicas. E por acaso não é este o verdadeiro significado de rebelião?

A análise de todos os sonhos de Winston nos revela interessantes aspectos sobre seu aparelho psíquico. Como a personagem é completamente reprimida ideológica e sexualmente pelo sistema, Winston acaba por sofrer de diversas patologias psíquicas, reveladas nos sonhos, uma vez que na vida de vigília ele jamais poderia se permitir demonstrar qualquer vulnerabilidade, qualquer humanidade, pois correria o risco de sofrer as consequências da “vaporização”, caso o fizesse. Este quadro de total repressão imposto pelo sistema político de Oceania contribui para que a personagem revele-se completamente no único momento no qual pode ser ele mesmo e libertar-se: durante seus sonhos. Tomando emprestado de Freud a idéia de que “todos somos neuróticos, em maior ou menor escala”, a repressão sexual, especialmente, torna-se a maior fonte de patologias uma vez que a libido é a força propulsora do ser-humano; quando esta é reprimida, abre-se caminho para o surgimento das neuroses. Winston é o neurótico da narrativa (condição que foi possível descobrir na análise de seus sonhos) mas também é o único que carrega em si a humanidade dos conflitos psicológicos pelos quais os seres-humanos — cujas liberdades individuais são garantidas — passam, em maior ou menor escala. Orwell acaba por nos apresentar em seu romance a inversão de todos os valores sociais estabelecidos, pois é este o resultado do totalitarismo. Este tipo de regime inverte de tal forma os valores sociais que os neuróticos em Oceania, aqueles que mantêm sua humanidade, são considerados insanos justamente por

reproduz não como lembrança, mas como ação; *repete-o*, sem, naturalmente, saber que o está repetindo” (165; grifos do autor). Na compulsão à repetição o indivíduo retoma o que não foi efetivado durante sua infância, ou seja, no caso de Winston, sua aniquilação juntamente com sua família.

serem normais. As vulnerabilidades de Winston Smith são o que afinal o tornam humano. A personagem vive em uma sociedade opressora na qual os cidadãos são reprimidos; viver em Oceania significa não ter permissão para agir ou pensar por si mesmo, deixando a individualidade relegada para apenas “few cubic centimetres inside your skull” (29), como Winston bem sabe. Todos os olhares, gestos e palavras são friamente calculados para não demonstrar o que se passa na mente — correndo o risco de sofrer retaliações caso não o esconda. Pode-se fazer uma leitura freudiana da política empregada em Oceania, comparando-a ao processo do recalque: naquela sociedade o ser-humano tem que recalcar seus desejos, o que pode torná-lo psicologicamente doente.

Winston tem uma memória referente ao passado que nenhum habitante de Oceania compartilha; sua resistência em perpetuá-la é, também, um dos seus vários mecanismos de defesa: manter a memória significa manter-se são. O que diferencia Winston dos demais é justamente sua memória. É dela que provém sua rebeldia, uma vez que ele *sabe* da realidade, tem consciência das mentiras e deturpações praticadas pelo Partido.

Outro mecanismo de defesa da personagem é sua fobia por ratos, ou o medo de ser castrado — e aqui falo do complexo da castração da infância mas também da castração sexual praticada pelo sistema de Oceania, que não permite que o sexo seja praticado por puro prazer, somente para procriação, meramente um dever. Este pavor redireciona o conteúdo angustiante para um objeto externo, que no caso de Winston vem a ser o animal. O protagonista é obcecado pelo tempo anterior ao regime, por se lembrar sobre como as coisas eram, por buscar saber como tudo se passara. O passado, para ele, refere-se a valores tais como a privacidade, o amor, a família e a amizade. Sua mãe é um fragmento do passado, uma memória que ele deseja preservar. Manter sua própria memória significa também manter a memória de sua mãe, é uma maneira de mantê-la ainda viva; sua obsessão com o passado está intimamente relacionada à figura de sua mãe. Posso estabelecer a conexão sexual de sua obsessão com o complexo de Édipo e afirmar que a origem desta neurose se deve a uma má resolução desta fase psicossocial de desenvolvimento infantil; contudo creio ser mais sensato estabelecer a ligação da obsessão também com a castração: Winston é impedido de ser quem é, de pensar o que quiser, de lembrar-se do que e de quem quiser, de ter relações sexuais da maneira que quiser e com quem quiser, é

bloqueado na sua busca por uma vida normal que respeite suas individualidades. Por esta razão, tanto sua obsessão com o passado quanto sua fobia estão ligadas a uma castração maior: a castração de ser. Winston é coibido socialmente, economicamente, sexualmente, culturalmente e até linguisticamente.

“*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not a prophecy. It is something more like a dream” (80), postula Kerr (2003). No curso da narrativa, os sonhos da personagem revelam seus recalques, desejos e traumas; contudo, ao ser aprisionado para tornar-se “são”, a personagem vai aos poucos perdendo a capacidade de sonhar, até o ponto de não mais sonhar completamente. Com isto, Orwell demonstra que a opressão radical do regime totalitarista aniquila toda e qualquer possibilidade de sonhar, tanto metafórica quanto literalmente. Quando estava preso, durante o processo de condicionamento, a personagem pondera: “From now onwards he must not only think right; he must feel right, dream right” (294). O “sonhar certo”, deve-se entender como o condicionamento completo de Winston: a partir do momento em que seu inconsciente não produz o conteúdo manifesto a partir do conteúdo latente, isto significa que a personagem perdeu completamente a individualidade e o seu processo de “cura” foi totalmente concluído. Seu lado humano, com suas neuroses, fobias, tensões, angústias e prazeres ter-se-á desvanecido por completo. “De-eroticized, de-historicized, de-humanized, the person is reduced to a state of pure being” (155), escreve Smyer sobre o Winston pós-tortura. Ele deixou de ser humano, pois perdeu todas as características que o identificam como tal. Ao escrever espontaneamente “ $2 + 2 = 5$ ”, Winston revela que sua racionalidade e capacidade crítica foram finalmente aniquiladas; agora ele está pronto para aceitar as imposições do Partido, sem objetar. Ao encontrar-se com Julia, a personagem confessa que “They could have lain down on the ground and done *that* if they had wanted to” (304), mas que o horror tomou conta de si ao mero pensamento dessa possibilidade. O Winston pós-prisão não tinha mais pulsões de morte no que tange a atitudes rebeldes, mas também sua libido havia sido dizimada: para ele, o corpo que antes significava desejo, agora lembrava “um cadáver”.

Mas sonhar também significa a capacidade de projetar um mundo melhor e, ao ser condicionado, Winston também perde esta habilidade e passa a aceitar o mundo da maneira como ele se encontra. Ao refletir que

“Something was killed in your breast: burnt out, cauterized out” (304), Winston admite para si próprio que perdeu aquilo que o tornava humano. Neste sentido, Orwell nos revela que a pior face do totalitarismo é aquela que impede os indivíduos de sonhar, de manterem-se humanos, de manterem seu inconsciente e de lutarem por um mundo no qual as pessoas preservem sua individualidade de maneira sadia.

O’Brien é um intelectual tal como Winston, com a diferença de que seu inconsciente foi dominado para “sentir certo, sonhar certo”. Uma das maiores decepções de Winston não foi ter sido capturado pelo Partido — isto ele já sabia que aconteceria mais cedo ou mais tarde, era tudo uma questão de tempo. A sua maior decepção ocorre no momento em que percebe que estava realmente sozinho, pois até mesmo um intelectual do porte de O’Brien, capaz de escrever *O Livro* e saber de toda a dominação do Partido, era capaz de praticar o duplopensar²⁵ com perfeição e apagar todo seu conhecimento logo em seguida. A traição maior constatada por Winston foi, portanto, a subjugação do intelectual. Para Orwell, o direito de pensar move a sociedade, e deste modo o fim do pensamento intelectual livre representa o fim da sociedade. Em *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Winston reconhece-se como o último intelectual e, por isso como “the last man”. O último a carregar consigo não só as marcas do passado (traumas, desejos, neuroses e sonhos), mas também a memória destas marcas. Ao morrer e deixar de ser humano, ainda que metaforicamente, a humanidade também chega ao fim.

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²⁵ *Doublethink* no original.

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ABSTRACT

The present article combines George Orwell's work *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with Sigmund Freud's work *The Interpretation of Dreams*, among others, in order to interpret the many dreams described by the main character in the English dystopia following a psychoanalytical perspective. By applying the therapeutic methodology developed by the father of psychoanalysis to the analysis of the dreams described in the narrative, I intend to make manifest the repressed desires in the unconscious of Winston Smith in order to understand his mechanisms of repression and the origins of his neurosis, trauma, phobias and anguish. From this interpretation, it will be possible to understand the main character more deeply and according to an unusual perspective.

The discovery of the repressed contents in Winston's unconscious, not only gives us a new perspective on this character but a new understanding of the work as a whole. From the discoveries made through the interpretation of the character's dreams, it is possible to shed a new light on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, so that the work can be analysed not only in its political and ideological outlook, but can be revealed anew by this psychoanalytical approach.

KEYWORDS

Freud; dreams; unconscious; psychoanalysis; literature

RESUMO

O presente artigo alia a obra *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, de George Orwell, a *A Interpretação dos Sonhos*, de Sigmund Freud, entre outras, a fim de interpretar os diversos sonhos descritos pela personagem principal na distopia inglesa com recurso à óptica psicanalítica. Ao aplicar a metodologia terapêutica desenvolvida pelo pai da psicanálise na análise dos sonhos descritos na narrativa, pretende-se extrair os desejos recalçados no inconsciente de Winston Smith, a fim de compreender seus mecanismos de repressão e as origens de suas neuroses, traumas, fobias e angústias. A partir desta interpretação, torna-se possível compreender a

personagem principal mais profundamente — e de acordo com uma perspectiva incomum.

Ao descobrir os conteúdos recalcados no inconsciente de Winston, não só a personagem ganha uma nova dimensão, mas toda a obra adquire novos contornos. A partir das descobertas feitas através da interpretação dos sonhos da personagem, é possível lançar uma nova luz sobre *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, para que a obra possa ser analisada não somente pela sua perspectiva mais comum, a política e ideológica, mas por outra mais original: a psicanalítica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Freud; sonhos; inconsciente; psicanálise; literatura

OTHER VOICES
OUTRAS VOZES

Hiking the Canyon Country: Towards an Epistemology of Nature

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Hiking the Canyon Country: Towards an Epistemology of Nature

1.

I'm trying to remember. Wasn't there an alcove in a canyon wall, or maybe beneath a steep red cliff, where I paused and sensed the enormous depth contained in mere surfaces? Any such memory is obscured by each new experience. Yet it remains as a palimpsest, underlying my every thought.

Today I'm walking in the Waterpocket Fold, under a mottled sky, among tawny boulders and white sandstone domes. As I move from canyon to canyon, I negotiate a maze, a passage that leads only to itself.

Waterpocket Fold is a massive warp in the earth's crust, formed 65 million years ago. Nearly 100 miles long, it's the largest monocline in North America. It consists of hundreds of gorgeous, convoluted canyons. It's geologically graphic, topographically varied, and little traversed by roads. It contains multitudes: juniper, pinyon pine, cottonwoods, buffaloberry, and prickly pear cactus. Bobcats, mountain lions, coyotes, bighorn sheep, whiptail lizards, and pallid bats. It also contains evidence—petroglyphs, ancient granaries, and cliff dwellings—of human habitation that dates back at least 2,500 years.

I'm living, for a month, in a cabin just outside Capitol Reef, writing, hiking and volunteering for the Park Service. In the course of a February day, I might feed packhorses, accompany an archeologist in the field, or archive historical photographs. But mostly I walk, honing my sense of the vast mystery at the core of my modest inquiries.

Encompassed by wild places, I find obscure paths into philosophy, poetics, and everyday practice. I follow new courses in pursuit of knowledge. Though thought is not the sole purpose of my walking, it accompanies me amiably as I wander wild places.

As Gary Snyder, quoting Thoreau, reminds us, "Wildness is not just the 'preservation of the world,' it *is* the world". The entire world—natural,

cultural, or otherwise — is indeed a wild system. Language is a wild system, too. Though traces of knowledge reside in the pages of books, these pages, at times, lie open to the sun. Now our words are overwhelmed by light. They become obscured, a blur to our eyes. Decipherable markings are valid only momentarily; now we have a language of mystery to consider.

Indecipherable or only partially decipherable marks may have a more lasting effect than supposedly definitive texts. How else am I to explain my attraction to the enigmatic centuries-old petroglyphs that adorn the canyons of the Southwest? These traces are valuable as phenomena rather than as mere tools of inquiry. When a language becomes archaic, or is too subtle for our understanding, it functions exclusively as evidence. It exists for us as an indication that requires no comprehension in order to be compelling.

Knowledge is itself phenomenal. That's why a specific place is so necessary to knowing: where awareness rather than comprehension takes precedence, place might be accorded its autonomous authority. A place, after all, is not primarily a destination, nor an answer of any sort. It does not rely on us to justify its existence. And both science and mysticism admit to no comprehension except that which depends on the autonomy of another. Whether that other is physical or metaphysical matters less than its status as an ultimate authority. "We are certainly not to relinquish the evidence of experiments for the sake of dreams and vain fictions of our own devising; nor are we to recede from the analogy of Nature", writes Newton. "I am who am", proclaims the Judeo-Christian God. Here the phenomenon is not only adequate unto itself — it is, in essence, infallible.

This dynamic leads the poet to venture out with her partially decipherable language and to evoke, hopefully, no destination, but rather an actual place. In this sense, poetic language is not special. It simply fluctuates between the known and mysterious. A poem may be beautiful, but it is also common, ever occurring. The poet merely places a vacillation on display.

From a perch inside the Waterpocket Fold, I watch the moon among moving clouds. Comprehension brightens and fades. As the phenomenon of the moon is foregrounded, then backgrounded, the sky itself becomes moon-grounded. The moon itself is an actual place — a wilderness, in fact — that informs our sensibilities as only place can. And like all wildernesses, the moon is best left untrammelled. The moon as destination is not nearly

so engaging. It is best contemplated from this distance, encountered nearly every night on the terms it dictates like tides.

2.

Luckily, we have memory. We have lore that allows us to continue. Stories, passed down and place-specific, assist us in making sense of the world. But what happens, I wonder, to a human event once it's forgotten? Assuming that traces of phenomena can be stored, is human memory the only possible receptacle? Hiking the canyon country, I feel as if these wrinkles and creases in the earth do store something: primarily, of course, something other-than-human, but something that includes the human as well.

Consider our human endeavors. Tribal peoples have inhabited these canyons since antiquity. Ancient ruins and petroglyphs are both mysterious and apparent. On a ledge off the trail to Hickman Bridge, for example, there's a rock ring, the remains of a pit house that dates back to 700-1300 CE. Further on there's a small, natural hollow closed off by a wall: a granary in the mountain. More than corn was cached in this alcove. A whole way of life, partially remembered, is evidenced in a niche.

Similarly, scientists sometimes speak of the information that is stored in, say, rock layers, tree-rings, or ice-core samples. They assume an inherent knowledge awaiting our discovery, if only we can perceive nature's subtleties. What they may not acknowledge, though, is that the secret they seek is located in nature only by human curiosity. Rock is mute, except when it succumbs. Tree-rings are narratives only to our receptive senses. Ice-cores are silent and most obscure, until we read them as chemical poems. We are, in effect, placing our own deficiencies into the earth we inhabit, in order to address those same deficiencies. The earth, if we are patient and methodical, will recall knowledge to life.

And this knowledge does not negate the value of mystery. As Galileo said, "Extensively, that is, with regard to the multitude of intelligibles, which are infinite, the human understanding is as nothing even as it understands a thousand propositions".

Scientific knowledge is indeed phenomenal. Even as the layers of visible strata, on display in a Utah cliff, become to me a book, I stride or stumble over the pages, my route resolved by a text I'll not master. This is why I can value evidence, even within a scientific world-view, as cardinal

in its status as pure phenomena. The evidence that eventually reveals a narrative — the very rock we traverse or cleave — also determines the course of our inquiry. The questions we ask are formulated by the earth.

Memory, then, as supplied by science, or as practiced by tribal societies via physical culture and oral literature, is a form of portable knowledge. All knowledge is embedded in natural phenomena. Inquiries and narratives help us extract this knowledge for use. But it is greed or dangerous folly — a mining mentality — to assume an extensive intelligence of the earth. Because beyond or behind our glorious stories is a vast interior of unremembered, unrealized lore. The land itself resonates with a memory that includes our own quite easily, but which exceeds ours on a scale we can hardly comprehend. Though our curiosity may place discoveries in the earth, the earth's narrative continues easily without us.

3.

Though the canyons entice me to go constantly deeper, their character is inscribed, quite plainly, on their surfaces. Erosional marks on stone narrate wind patterns and water courses. There are lichen pockmarks, mineral cleavages, and geological scrapes. Canyons, though hidden in their totality, are also ornate conduits, open to the traveler's view. But they disclose only to the traveler who apprehends process and glimpses geological scale.

At some point I vanish inside the canyons. Individualism becomes moot. My familiar self is no longer viable, or apparent, within the confines of a canyon. I traverse not only geography, but also an elaborate epistemology. In the face of the vast intricacy of physical process, any conceptual or static self will fail.

If I am to interrogate the landscape which is itself an interrogation— or at least a probing of the earth's surface — I might remember a secondary definition of the word "traverse": to consider or discuss the whole extent of a subject.

The canyons illustrate the impossibility of a total traversal, particularly here in the massive and convoluted Waterpocket Fold. Canyons always and everywhere conceal, not just an aspect, but the bulk of themselves from us. Their incompleteness, to us, is also their very character. *We are* sensing their totality, their existence, as hidden, nonreliant on human knowledge. In nature, existence itself is epistemology.

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