

Crop



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Apresentação

*But a crop is a crop,
and who is to say where
The harvest shall stop?*

ROBERT FROST

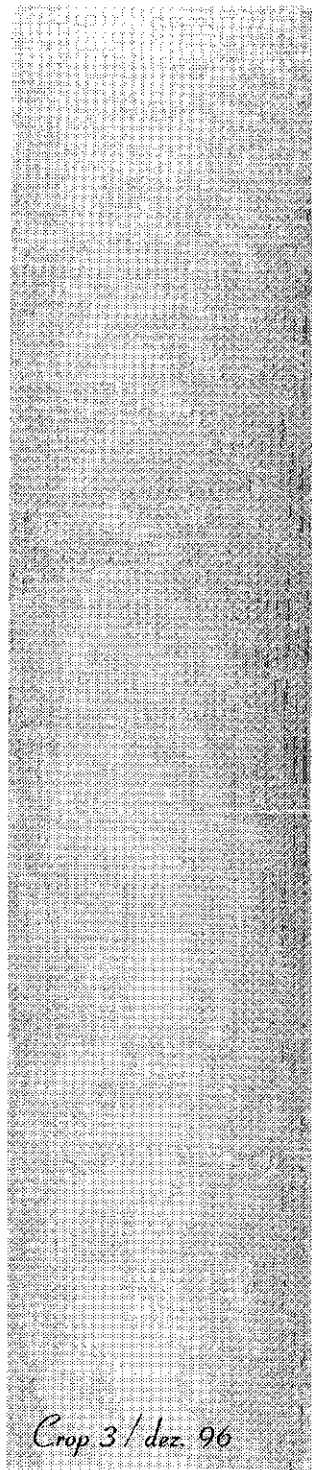
Neste terceiro número da revista **Crop**, reiteramos nosso objetivo de divulgar a produção acadêmica dos docentes e alunos do nosso Programa de Pós-Graduação em Língua Inglesa e Literaturas Inglesa e Norte-Americana – LILINA – do Departamento de Letras Modernas da FFLCH-USP.

Além de textos de pesquisadores de nosso programa, este número assinala uma nova fase da revista, marcada por contribuições de pesquisadores e docentes de renome de outras instituições como José Roberto O'Shea, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Ana Lúcia Almeida Gazzolla, da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Kanavillil Rajagopalan, da Universidade Estadual de Campinas, e N. S. Prabhu, pesquisador e professor aposentado da National University of Singapore, que passou por nosso programa em abril de 1996 e gentilmente cedeu seu texto, ainda inédito, para publicação na revista. Esse mesmo texto estará sendo publicado simultaneamente no *Journal of English and Foreign Languages*, em Haiderabad, Índia.

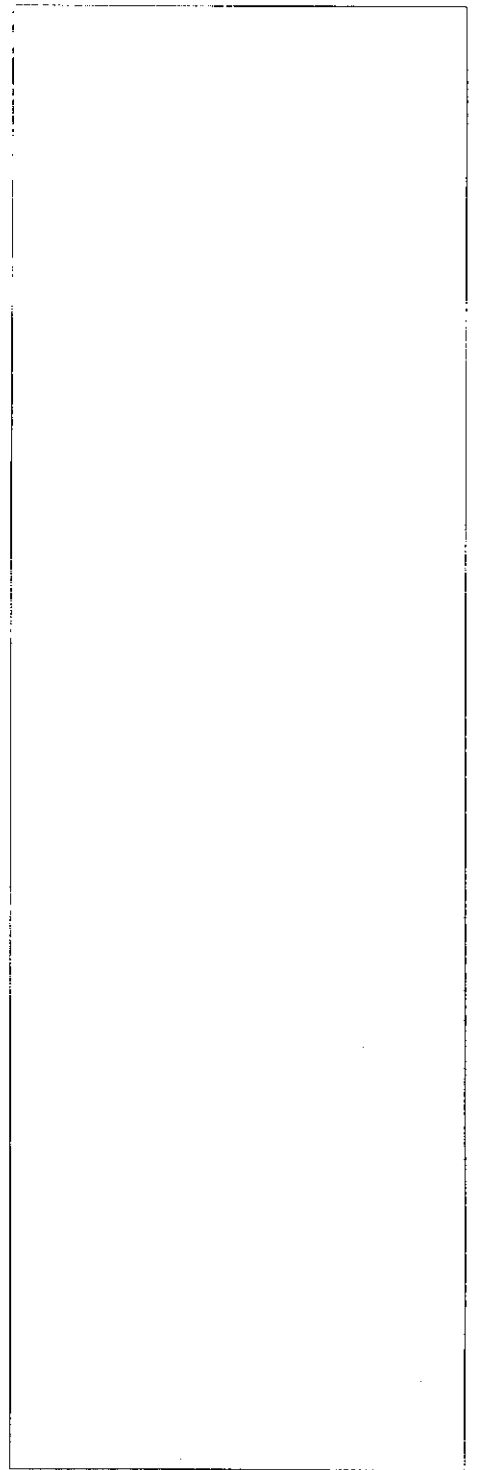
Com esse novo perfil, a **Crop** entra em sua maturidade, abrindo-se para diálogos entre os pesquisadores de nosso Programa de Pós-Graduação LILINA e os de outras instituições, em âmbito nacional e internacional.

LYNN MARIO T. MENEZES DE SOUZA
pela Comissão Editorial

■ Novas contribuições devem ser dirigidas à Coordenação da Pós-Graduação em Língua Inglesa e Literaturas Inglesa e Norte-Americana, Departamento de Letras Modernas, Av. Prof. Luciano Gualberto, 403, São Paulo, SP, CEP 05508-900.



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Literatures in English
Literaturas em Inglês

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Joyce e Walcott:

dois Homeros de nosso tempo... e suas verdes ilhas

PAULO VIZIOLI

Fiction
Ficção

Atualmente, o problema das “fronteiras” parece assumir uma importância cada vez maior na literatura. Stephen Greenblatt e Giles Gunn, na introdução a seu livro *Redrawing the Boundaries: Literatures in English Today*, escrevem que tais fronteiras podem ser nacionais, lingüísticas, históricas, “geracionais” e geográficas, bem como raciais, étnicas, sociais, sexuais, políticas, éticas e religiosas. E concluem:


Essas fronteiras podem ser cruzadas, confundidas, consolidadas, derrubadas; podem também ser revistas, reconhecidas, redesenhadas ou substituídas. Elas só não podem, nos estudos literários, ser completamente abolidas.

Um dos pontos em que essa consciência das fronteiras tem particular utilidade é, sem dúvida, o exame dos autores oriundos de países ou regiões colonizados pela Inglaterra, ou seja, dos escritores da assim chamada “periferia” – sobretudo quando colocados em confronto com o “centro”, representado, num sentido restrito, pela cultura britânica e, num sentido mais lato, pela cultura europeia.

Dois desses autores são, por exemplo, o grande ficcionista irlandês James Joyce, que revolucionou o romance moderno, e o poeta e dramaturgo caribenho Derek Walcott, ganhador do Prêmio Nobel de 1992. É claro que existem enormes diferenças entre ambos, afastados como estão no tempo e no espaço. Joyce, de fato, nasceu no século passado, enquanto Walcott é de 1930; além disso, a periferia a que Joyce pertenceu estava bem próxima do centro – geográfica, étnica e culturalmente –, enquanto a de Walcott se acha consideravelmente mais

remota. Mas a justaposição de seus nomes aqui não é gratuita, pois, mais que as diferenças, pesam as semelhanças entre os dois. Para começar (e isso deve ter algum valor simbólico), ambos vieram de ilhas, e de ilhas muito verdes: um surgiu na Irlanda, que pela cor da paisagem é conhecida como a Ilha de Esmeralda; o outro, em St. Lucia, a pequena ilha antilhana que ele próprio chamou de “este verde nada”. Depois, ambos romperam o isolamento imposto pelas fronteiras de suas respectivas “periferias” servindo-se dos elementos trazidos pelos antigos dominadores. Creio ser emblemático disso o fato de ambos terem recorrido a Homero, o primeiro grande nome das letras europeias, como ponte de ligação entre seus pequenos mundos e o mundo do Ocidente; é o que verificamos em *Ulisses*, a obra central da produção joyciana, e em *Omeros*, o mais ambicioso e significativo poema de Walcott. Portanto, graças a esses recursos de fora, por eles absorvidos e assimilados, puderam aqueles dois Homeros de nosso tempo revelar a alma e o caráter de sua gente e dar vida ao “particular” de onde alcançariam o “universal”. De certa forma, a presença de pontos de contato entre ambos é tão grande que acaba se erigindo em padrão. É o que tentarei mostrar a seguir, focalizando, em primeiro lugar, o caso de James Joyce.

A literatura anglo-irlandesa, a “periferia” de Joyce, se avizinha tanto do “centro” de sua rotação, enriqueceu-o com tantos escritores de inegável estatura (como Jonathan Swift, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke, Richard Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, Bernard Shaw, etc., etc.), que a maioria das pessoas não consegue dissociá-la da literatura inglesa. Exatamente por isso, quando Yeats, atendendo a um pedido que lhe



fora feito por Edith Wharton por intermédio de Henry James, escreveu “On Being Asked for a War Poem”, manifestando total indiferença pelo desfecho da Primeira Guerra Mundial, causou ele um grande choque em seus leitores britânicos, que só então perceberam com clareza que o poeta não era inglês.

A presença de pontos de contato entre Joyce e Walcott é tão grande que acaba se erigindo em padrão

Quanto a Joyce, eu diria que pouquíssimos seriam capazes de esquecer sua condição de irlandês; assim mesmo, nem todos consideram esse fato fundamental, pois sua obra é quase sempre estudada e avaliada no contexto das letras inglesas. E, na verdade, não se pode fugir à sensação de que qualquer história da ficção britânica neste século que excluiu Joyce estaria incompleta.

Essa visão deslocada não constitui necessariamente um mal, sobretudo quando se leva em conta o impacto da realização joyciana no âmbito daquela ficção, com desdobramentos significativos no resto da Europa e alhures. Joyce, afinal, sempre foi cosmopolita, devendo muito não só aos ingleses que o influenciaram – como William Shakespeare, Lawrence Sterne, William Blake, Lord Byron, o Cardeal Newman, Lewis Carroll, Matthew Arnold, Walter Pater e outros –, mas também a inúmeros representantes de nossa cultura ocidental, como Aristóteles, Tomás de Aquino, Giordano Bruno, Giambattista Vico, Rabelais, Flaubert, Tchékhov, etc. e, principalmente Henrik Ibsen, Édouard Dujardin, Homero e Dante Alighieri. Não podemos ignorar toda essa superestrutura; se o fizermos, não estaremos aptos a captar a profundidade e o alcance da arte de Joyce. Por outro lado, porém, muito haveremos de perder se ignorarmos a sua subestrutura irlandesa.

Essa subestrutura é particularmente relevante devido ao fato de Joyce ser um autor extremamente pessoal. Como se sabe, a imagem sua que ele tenta transmitir-nos é exatamente o oposto, tanto assim que faz sua personagem Stephen Dedalus, que em parte o representa,

declarar sua total adesão a um credo estético objetivo em *Retrato do artista quando jovem*:

O artista, como o Deus da criação, permanece dentro, ou atrás, ou além, ao acima de sua obra, refinado a ponto de deixar de existir, indiferente, a aparar as unhas.

A verdade, contudo, é que poucos escritores extraíram tão frequentemente como ele seu material de sua própria experiência de vida, desde os grandes e traumáticos eventos que o marcaram até os pequenos incidentes, idiossincrasias e recordações íntimas. Demonstram-no claramente as personagens que criou, quase todas retratos de parentes seus ou de conhecidos (muitas comparando com os mesmos nomes que tinham na vida real). E, o que é mais, o próprio romancista, sob os mais variados disfarces, desempenha papel proeminente em todos os seus livros, identificando-se com Gabriel Conroy no conto “The Dead” (no Brasil traduzido como “Os vivos e os mortos”); com Stephen Dedalus em *Retrato do artista, Stephen herói e Ulisses*; com Richard Rowan em *Exilados*, com Leopold Bloom novamente em *Ulisses*; e com Shem the Penman em *Finnegans Wake*. Nesse contexto, é óbvio que a presença da Irlanda, o palco onde ele viveu todos os seus dramas, praticamente se auto-impõe, não podendo ser menosprezada.

O próprio Joyce, sob os mais variados disfarces, desempenha papel proeminente em todos os seus livros

Para bem compreendermos essa presença, temos que levar em consideração, em primeiro lugar, o tipo de relacionamento que o escritor teve com sua terra natal. Foi este, notoriamente, um relacionamento de ódio e amor. Numa época em que a Irlanda lutava por sua independência, em que conhecia uma explosão de sentimento patriótico, em que seus escritores procuravam reviver as tradições e as formas literárias populares – a ponto de promoverem a adoção da antiga língua céltica local como idioma do país –, James Joyce parecia a única

voz de expressão nas letras irlandesas a denunciar o lado negativo do caráter nacional. Pode-se dizer que essa rejeição ostensiva da pátria de origem teve suas raízes no próprio lar, no desprezo que o escritor manifestava pela figura paterna, que, a seu ver, reunia em si os defeitos e os vícios mais característicos de sua gente. Apesar de haver herdado quase todas as falhas do temperamento de John Stanislaus Joyce, considerava-se diferente dele, pois, em sua rebelião contra a sociedade local e suas convenções, via-se dotado da coragem que faltava ao genitor.

Joyce desenvolveu certa repulsa pelo apego dos irlandeses à Igreja Católica romana

Para ele, portanto, o pai era o próprio símbolo do irlandês, jactancioso mas inoperante, capaz de submeter-se às piores humilhações para obter um trago. É claro que, nesse ponto, não devemos exagerar, visto que a simpatia que o escritor às vezes demonstra pelo pai e a admiração que tinha por suas tiradas espirituosas (muitas das quais aproveitou em suas obras) evidenciam que ele não o rejeitava com a intensidade que seus livros nos querem fazer crer. Mas não se pode negar que rejeitava aquilo de que John Stanislaus era símbolo, por sua conduta, seu palavrorio, seu entranhado nacionalismo – “all too Irish” (“todo irlandês demais”).

Por outro lado, Joyce desenvolveu certa repulsa pelo apego dos irlandeses à Igreja Católica romana – um traço nacional que ele frequentemente associava à figura de sua mãe. Aparentemente, minimizava o fato de que a Irlanda precisava da Igreja Católica para estabelecer sua identidade diante da Inglaterra protestante; meramente via a Igreja como outra fonte de opressão, a dominar, juntamente com a Grã-Bretanha, seu pobre país e sua cultura periférica. Por isso mesmo, em *Ulisses*, faz Stephen Dedalus declarar: “Sou o servo de dois amos... um inglês e outro italiano: o estado imperial britânico... e a santa Igreja Católica Apostólica Romana”.

Essa aversão pessoal pelo lado negativo da Irlanda tinha, na verdade, profundas raízes na história do país.

Um dos episódios mais chocantes dessa história foi, por exemplo, a morte de Charles Stewart Parnell, o grande líder político que tombou vítima do puritanismo irlandês quando estava a ponto de obter dos ingleses a autonomia nacional. Como consequência disso, o processo de independência da Irlanda não só se atrasou consideravelmente, mas também se tornou muito mais difícil e doloroso, como o demonstram o sangrento Levante da Páscoa de 1916, a violenta repressão que a ele seguiu e, logo após a libertação oficial em 1921, a Guerra Civil (provocada pela perda da região de Ulster), que dividiu a nação até hoje. O sacrifício de Parnell, fruto da traição de seus próprios concidadãos, causou fortíssimo impacto nas mentes de quase todos os escritores e artistas irlandeses. Muitos deles, como Yeats, lograram depois superar o tremendo sentimento de desilusão; outros, como Joyce, não o conseguiram. Eis por que este último, em *Retrato do artista quando jovem*, novamente se serve de seu porta-voz, Stephen Dedalus, para dizer que a Irlanda “é a velha porca que come os próprios filhotes”.

Ao mesmo tempo que rejeitava a Irlanda e amargamente a atacava em seus livros, Joyce somente escrevia a respeito dela

É por essas razões, portanto, que Joyce diverge de quase todos os outros escritores irlandeses contemporâneos. Segundo Herbert Howard (em *The Irish Writers: 1880-1940*, p. 251),

eles [os outros] falavam da castidade irlandesa, enquanto ele próprio via o lavrador irlandês como *le grand masturbateur*; falavam da importância do gaélico, enquanto ele considerava essa língua um instrumento grosseiro; atacavam o materialismo da Inglaterra comercialista, enquanto ele argumentava que o camponês da Irlanda era tão ganancioso quanto o de Yorkshire.

Com visão tão pessimista, Joyce não podia deixar de ver sua terra natal como uma área retrógrada, de grande

pobreza material, intelectual e moral. Para ele, a Irlanda não passava de “uma lembrança de última hora da Europa” (“an afterthought of Europe”), e sua produção literária estava toda ela contaminada por aquela P.G.I., ou seja, “Paralisia Geral dos Insanos”, que ele diagnosticara na sociedade local – uma sociedade, por conseguinte, completamente estagnada.

Em revolta contra a estreiteza mental dos compatriotas, contra sua moralidade hipócrita e seu provincianismo, o escritor decidiu enfim abandonar a pátria como exilado voluntário, passando a viver (com a esposa Nora Barnacle) na Europa continental. Mudando constantemente de cidade e país, tal como um “judeu errante”, morou então em Pola (na Ístria), Trieste, Roma, novamente Trieste, Zurique, ainda uma vez Trieste e finalmente Paris. O “exilado” só retornou à terra natal algumas poucas vezes, para breves visitas; depois de 1912, porém, nunca mais voltou. O que é surpreendente, contudo, é que, ao mesmo tempo que ele rejeitava a Irlanda e amargamente a atacava em seus livros, somente escrevia a respeito dela. Jamais a esqueceu. E, muitos anos mais tarde, quando alguém lhe perguntou como reagiria se tivesse que voltar à Irlanda, respondeu: “Alguma vez a deixei?”

A realidade irlandesa se tornou o ponto de partida de toda a obra joyciana

Essa fixação é compreensível. Talvez, em parte, se deva àquele “amor” de que se falou no início, um amor reprimido, latente, misturado ao ódio, mas sempre lá. Talvez, ainda em parte, se deva ao fato de a Irlanda ser o pesadelo de que o escritor queria despertar, a exemplo de Stephen Dedalus, que revela seu desejo de despertar do pesadelo da História em sua aula sobre Pirro (no segundo capítulo de *Ulisses*). Para conseguir isso, Joyce necessitava examinar a fundo as causas de seus males, transformando em instrumentos de libertação as próprias barras de sua masmorra. Com efeito, como afirma Stephen em *Retrato do artista*, se a sua nacionalidade, a sua religião e até a língua que falava (uma língua que fora do usurpador inglês antes de ser sua) eram as redes

que o aprisionavam, ele tentaria voar com essas redes, como novo Ícaro buscando escapar do labirinto. Se essas redes constituíam a sua *realidade*, era através delas que ele devia alcançar o seu ideal.

A realidade irlandesa se tornou assim o ponto de partida de toda a obra joyciana, que, sem ela, não pode ser compreendida. De fato, foi a Irlanda que levou o autor a analisar seus patricios com olho clínico e a projetar artisticamente a relação de ódio e amor que tinha com eles (como fez em seu primeiro trabalho em prosa, os contos de *Dublinenses*); foi a Irlanda que o compeliu

O paralelismo entre Odisseu e Bloom cria uma justaposição irônica entre um herói nobre e um anti-herói burguês

a se voltar para dentro de si mesmo a fim de se compreender (como fez em *Stephen herói* e *Retrato do artista quando jovem*); foi ela que lhe deu o “particular” de que precisava para ascender ao “universal” – como quando ele transformou seu “exílio” pessoal no exílio do artista no mundo materialista de hoje e, mais que isso, no exílio do homem moderno, sozinho e alienado numa sociedade coletivista (a exemplo do Sr. Bloom em *Ulisses*); ou como quando, indo um passo mais à frente, transmutou aquele “exílio” na expulsão de Adão e Eva do jardim do Éden, na própria Queda do Homem, naquela sugestiva fusão de experiência pessoal e mitos arquetípicos que caracteriza *Finnegans Wake*.

Aliás, foi exatamente essa associação de “fato” e “mito” a sua principal via de acesso ao universal, sua liberação do provincianismo. Graças a ela, pôde ele justapor as mais características e radicais técnicas do naturalismo e as mais complexas e elaboradas técnicas do simbolismo. Essa justaposição é mais do que óbvia, por exemplo, em *Ulisses*. Aqui, as idéias e os modelos, os recursos estilísticos e as alusões simbólicas provêm das mais variadas fontes, algumas das quais inteiramente inesperadas. Nenhuma, entretanto, é tão importante quanto Homero, ou, mais especificamente, quanto *A odisséia* de Homero.

Não há dúvida de que podemos restringir nossa análise de *Ulisses* ao nível naturalista, como alguns críticos fizeram, sem perder de vista seu escopo universal, pois, além de seus aspectos psicológicos (evidentes no cuidadoso estudo da mente humana) e sociológicos (com seu retrato da vida burguesa em Dublin), a abordagem realista nos oferece um quadro das dificuldades de comunicação, da falta de propósitos e da solidão do homem atual. Mas é o nível simbólico, principalmente o simbolismo homérico, que nos fornece o entendimento pleno das implicações temáticas da obra.

De fato, seu paralelismo com *A odisséia* – que fazem de seu protagonista, Leopold Bloom, a contraparte de Ulisses, o herói grego exilado de sua ilha de Ítaca e que tenta retornar ao convívio de sua fiel esposa Penélope (ironicamente representada pela infiel Sra. Bloom) e de seu filho Telêmaco (representado pelo seu oposto, Stephen Dedalus) – nitidamente reflete os temas do “exílio do homem moderno”, de seu “anseio de reintegração” (através da “volta ao lar”) e da “separação” que existe entre marido e mulher e entre pai e filho. Mas, é claro, esses paralelismos homéricos têm muitas outras conotações. Segundo Cleanth Brooks, em seu livro *A Shaping Joy: Studies in the Writer's Craft*, há, pelo menos, três pontos a serem levados em consideração.

Os paralelismos homéricos animam um tema nacional, presente em todos os capítulos

Embora bastante óbvio, o primeiro deles é que o paralelismo entre Odisseu e Bloom cria uma justaposição irônica entre um *herói* nobre, produto de uma época de imaginação, individualismo e audácia, e um *anti-herói* burguês, produto de uma época do prosaísmo, coletivismo e dúvida. Seu efeito, portanto, essencialmente cômico, é o de um mordaz comentário oblíquo sobre os nossos tempos.

O segundo ponto é que esses paralelismos homéricos trazem implícita uma explicação para a esterilidade espiritual do mundo de hoje e para os conseqüentes proble-

mas de comunicação entre os indivíduos (tema que se funde com o do “exílio do homem” na sociedade atual). Parece que, como conseqüência do enfraquecimento da fé religiosa neste século de notável avanço da ciência e da tecnologia, a *Natureza*, vista como basicamente feminina em sua passividade, passou a ressentir-se da falta de um princípio masculino, intelectual e ativo, capaz de dar a ela forma e propósito. Esse princípio masculino poderia ser a Arte – simbolizada por Stephen, o jovem poeta – ou a Ciência – simbolizada por Bloom, com seu interesse por todos os fenômenos naturais. Ocorre, todavia, que a Arte e a Ciência se encontram separadas na fragmentária civilização contemporânea, e nenhuma delas, sozinha, tem força suficiente para ocupar o lugar deixado vago pela Religião; nenhuma delas, sozinha, pode fecundar a Natureza – simbolizada

Ao adotar o inglês como instrumento de comunicação artística, Derek Walcott reproduz o caso de Joyce

por Molly Bloom, a mulher sexualmente insatisfeita, Gea-Terra, “chcia de semente, afirmativa, à espera”. Para levar a termo essa fecundação, o Ulisses simbólico deve antes se reunir a seu filho Telêmaco e depois voltar fortificado para a sua Penélope. Mas essas fusões apenas se tornam viáveis no curso do Tempo, quando os ciclos da História (como previsto por Giambattista Vico) trouxeram a “recorrência” de uma nova era de fertilidade.

O terceiro ponto, por fim, é que, ao lado desses temas universais, os paralelismos homéricos animam um tema nacional, presente em todos os capítulos. Isso é possível porque, de certo modo, a Irlanda se torna a moderna Ítaca, igualmente vítima de “usurpadores” (no caso, os britânicos). Nesse contexto, a “Ilha de Esmeralda”, a “verde Irlanda”, permanece verde – mas um verde que faz lembrar o “verde-ranho” que, naquela estranha “missa negra” que abre o livro, Joyce relaciona com o mar, símbolo de tudo o que é corruptível, de tudo o que se prende à sua imagem do *corpo-de-cão* (“Dogsbody”), o nosso corpo putrescente, em oposição ao eterno e puro

corpo-de-Deus (“Godsbody”), a santa hóstia. Portanto, sua ilha verde também aguarda a redenção.

O caso de Derek Walcott se assemelha ao de Joyce de várias maneiras. Para começar, também ele é, como foi dito no início, um escritor “periférico”. Em segundo lugar, também ele veio de uma ilha, pois nasceu na pequena St. Lucia, no arquipélago das Antilhas. Se a Irlanda tem uma língua diferente do inglês – que é o goidélico irlandês, pertencente ao grupo céltico – St. Lucia fala um *patois* francês, herança da colonização gaulesa da ilha, embora o inglês seja a língua oficial. Além disso, como na Irlanda, a maioria da população (cerca de 90%) é católica romana (também devido à influência francesa). E, finalmente, tal como a Irlanda no passado, St. Lucia tem que descobrir uma identidade própria, que possa caracterizá-la em face dos traços culturais deixados pelos britânicos.

E as semelhanças continuam. Ao adotar o inglês como instrumento de comunicação artística, Derek Walcott reproduz o caso de Joyce, pois também tem um idioma que foi dos “usurpadores” antes de ser dele. E, ainda como Joyce, serviu-se de modelos literários ingleses e, em grau menor, americanos, irlandeses e europeus continentais. Foi, de fato, confessadamente, influenciado por poetas como T. S. Eliot, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, W. B. Yeats, Shakespeare, John Donne e Andrew Marvell; e por romancistas como o próprio Joyce, Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad e Ernest Hemingway.

O sentimento de falta de raízes permeia todos os escritos de Walcott

É óbvio que existem importantes diferenças entre St. Lucia e a Irlanda, entre Walcott e Joyce; mesmo estas, porém, muitas vezes acabam desaguando em novas semelhanças. A principal diferença (que já exemplifica esse fato) é que a Irlanda tem uma população branca, enquanto St. Lucia é povoada sobretudo por negros, descendentes dos escravos africanos trazidos pelos colonizadores franceses. Por conseguinte, sente os males da segregação e do preconceito com muito mais intensidade

do que sentia a Irlanda. O próprio Walcott reflete e sofre na carne essa situação, visto ser um mulato, um homem perdido entre duas etnias, que não é bem-aceito pelos brancos devido à sua atitude moderada diante do problema racial. Sua situação, portanto, vem igualar-se à de Joyce: também ele se sente um “exilado”, um homem sem raízes, na própria terra natal. E, como Joyce, também ele se tornou, por algum tempo, um “judeu errante”, abandonando sua ilha e indo viver na Jamaica (para cursar a Universidade das Índias Ocidentais), em Trinidad (onde fundou o Teatro Oficina de Trinidad), em Londres e nos Estados Unidos, onde se estabeleceu em Brookline para ensinar “creative writing” na Universidade de Boston.

Esse sentimento de falta de raízes permeia todos os seus escritos, como se pode observar em suas peças e nos seus volumes de poesia – como *In a Green Night*, *The Castaway*, *The Gulf*, *Another Life*, etc. Mas é em *Omeros*, um longo poema épico publicado em 1990 (e provavelmente a razão principal da obtenção do Prêmio Nobel por Walcott), que o tema da falta de raízes melhor se evidencia, por sua profundidade e pungência. Isso pode ser ilustrado pela passagem seguinte (extraída de minha tradução da obra, publicada pela editora Companhia das Letras), na qual o negro Philoctete, que sofre de uma ferida incurável na perna (ferida que simboliza a chaga de sua raça), vai em desespero à sua plantação de inhamas e corta todas as plantas, para mostrar-lhes a dor de ficar sem raízes:

*O vento virava as folhas do inhame, iguais a mapas da África,
suas veias sangravam branco, enquanto Philoctete, a cambalear,*

*passava entre os canteiros de inhame como um paciente cada vez
mais fraco numa enfermaria. Sua pele era uma urtiga,
um mercado de formigas a sua cabeça; ouvia os caranguejos gemendo*

*por causa de pinças artríticas, sentiu um grilo-toupeira
furando a ferida até o osso. Seu Joelho era um ferro aceso,
um saco de gelo o seu peito; e entre as grades*

*dos dentes enferrujados, qual um mangusto na jaula,
um grito estava louco para sair; a língua afiava suas garras
contra o céu da boca, matracando-as nas grades com fúria.*

E, mais abaixo, assim prossegue esse Capítulo IV da Primeira parte:

[Philoctete] estendeu o pé. Escorregou o aço cortante como navalha por entre o polegar e o dedo apêlador. As folhas do inhame [encolheram-se num frio suor. Ele talhou todas as raízes na altura do calcanhar.

Talhou-as no calcanhar, notando como se enrolavam, cabeças caídas, sem suas raízes. Maldisse os inhames: "Salope! Vocês vêem agora como é estar sem raízes neste mundo?"

Então soluçou, com o rosto voltado para as folhas trucidadas. [De seus talos abertos gotejou uma seiva igual à sua própria dor. Uma mosca depressa lavou as mãos diante do massacre.

Philoctete sentiu uma formiga rastejando em sua testa. Era a brisa. Ergueu os olhos para um campo azul e um galho onde um andorinhão pousou sem um grito.

Derek Walcott, portanto, exatamente como Joyce, transformou seu problema pessoal no problema de suas personagens, de seu país, de sua raça e de toda a humanidade. Também ele soube como converter o seu "particular" no "universal". E, novamente como Joyce, seu grande e eficaz instrumento para alcançar essa transfiguração foi o poeta grego Homero, que se tornou o próprio título de seu poema, *Omeros*.

Nesse ponto, entretanto, merecem registro algumas diferenças entre a utilização que Walcott fez do modelo homérico e a prática do romancista irlandês. Penso que essas diferenças derivam das atitudes próprias de cada autor em relação a suas respectivas pátrias. O relacionamento de Walcott com St. Lucia, ao contrário do relacionamento de Joyce com a Irlanda, não foi uma mescla de ódio e amor: Walcott simplesmente amava sua pequena ilha; teve que afastar-se dela por longo tempo devido às injunções da existência, mas, assim que podia, voltava para lá. Hoje, é lá que reside boa parte do ano. Ele mesmo sugeriu que, ao proceder dessa forma, está imitando os movimentos do andorinhão, a andorinha do mar – a ave escura que, no poema, simboliza a África e a raça negra –, pois, conforme se lê em *Omeros*,

"tudo o que o andorinhão faz, ele o faz segundo um padrão circular". Foi por isso que o poeta, tendo completado o círculo de suas peregrinações, também voltou para o lar, que ele ama pelo que é, ou seja, como um minúsculo ponto na Natureza, sem associações com a História. E aqui outra vez seu caminho se cruza com o de Joyce, porque também para ele a História era o peso de que procurava despertar; precisava livrar-se dela, dessa coisa associada aos colonizadores europeus, e, ao mesmo tempo, livrar-se da Arte, uma vez que, de acordo com ele, a Arte "é a nostalgia da História". Somente assim poderia aceitar "as verdes simplicidades" de sua terra natal. E é esse retorno à Natureza que constitui para ele – e deveria constituir para o homem moderno – a única possível "volta ao lar", o *nostos* do Ulisses de hoje.

Derek Walcott, exatamente como Joyce, transformou seu problema pessoal no problema de suas personagens

Como resultado dessa atitude básica de afeto e aceitação, Walcott não recria Homero com propósitos irônicos, como Joyce faz em seu famoso livro. Pelo contrário, seu tom é de completa seriedade e não deixa dúvida quanto à intenção épica de seu poema. Outra distinção significativa é que, enquanto em *Ulisses* Joyce se limita a parodiar *A odisséia*, em sua obra Walcott busca recriar também *A iliada*. Isso se explica por não estar ele interessado apenas no tema do "exílio", mas também no tema do confronto entre os grandes impérios – como o que St. Lucia testemunhou entre a Inglaterra e a França na disputa pelas Pequenas Antilhas. Para ele, esses confrontos são recorrências da luta entre gregos e troianos, ou entre Aquiles e Heitor.

Aliás, esses dois heróis homéricos aparecem no poema encarnados em dois pescadores negros de St. Lucia, Achille e Hector, que brigam pela beleza de Helen – a nova Helena de Tróia –, uma criada de cor, que é a *femme fatale* do lugar. Como foi dito há pouco, refletem eles o embate entre gregos e troianos, que, por sua vez,

é refletido por todos os impérios conflitantes da História. Por isso, no livro existem referências a Roma e Grécia, Portugal e Espanha, Inglaterra e França, Istambul e Veneza e assim por diante, até à guerra fria entre os Estados Unidos e a União Soviética. Ao desenvolver esse tema, Walcott, concomitantemente, procura mostrar os efeitos do imperialismo e do colonialismo nos povos subjugados – uma questão que o afeta de perto, como cidadão de uma ex-colônia britânica.

Walcott procura mostrar os efeitos do imperialismo e do colonialismo nos povos subjugados

Para poder associar seus pobres pescadores e seus compatriotas negros com heróis de Homero, o poeta caribenho apresenta uma visão inovadora e pessoal do grande poeta grego. De acordo com Mary Lefkowitz, no artigo “Omeros: Bringing him Back Alive” (que ela publicou no *New York Times Book Review*), o Homero de Walcott nada tem a ver com o poeta cortesão que muitos imaginam; era um filho bastardo, cego, que ganhava a vida recitando seus versos e que vivia como um mendigo, a errar de ilha em ilha pelos mares da Grécia.

Esse Homero é uma figura protéica, infinitamente cognoscível mas fugidia, mudando constantemente de forma. É Omeros... e também o velho cego Sete Mares. Mais tarde aparece como um barqueiro sem lar, também cego, agarrando um pardo manuscrito, somente para ser expulso por um clérigo empertigado dos degraus da igreja de St. Martin-in-the-Fields em Londres. Ele é a voz do mar, é o pintor Winslow Homer, e o poeta romano Virgílio, que guia o narrador (como antes guiou Dante pelo inferno... do próprio Dante, a *Commedia*).

É esse Homero específico, tão metamórfico, que constitui o ponto de partida de todas as analogias encontradas no poema, permitindo ao autor transformar o mar do Caribe no mar Egeu.

Retornemos, porém, ao tema do “exílio” em *Omeros*.

Para abordá-lo, os paralelos não se fazem mais com *A iliada*, mas com *A odisséia* (como em Joyce). De certo modo, podemos dizer que Telêmaco, o jovem que sai em busca de seu pai Ulysses, é a mesma personagem que representa Aquiles, isto é, o pescador Achille, que no Livro III do poema sonha, sob os efeitos de uma insolação, com uma fantástica viagem à África, à procura de seu pai, Afolabe, para recuperar suas raízes, sua identidade. Mas, como tudo é metamórfico, Telêmaco pode ser também o próprio autor, que mais de uma vez imagina entrevistas com seu pai falecido, igualmente em busca de sua identidade como escritor caribenho. Quanto à figura de Ulisses, vem representada no poema por um homem branco, o “Major” Plunkett, um inglês que lutou na Segunda Guerra sob o comando do general Montgomery. Sente-se alienado em face de seu país e de seus compatriotas, torturado por um forte senso de culpa pelos excessos do imperialismo britânico.

Walcott chamou Joyce de “Homero de nosso tempo”

Na procura de um novo lar para si, passa a considerar a ilha de St. Lucia como a sua Ítaca, identificando-se com o lugar a despeito da cor de sua pele e da sua condição de “patrão branco”. Se Plunkett é Ulisses, sua mulher Maud – nascida em Glen-da-Lough, na Irlanda – é Penélope. A exemplo de sua predecessora, seu drama é a solidão, uma solidão talvez ainda mais patética e amarga, pois, enquanto a heroína grega se sente só na ausência do marido, Maud se sente assim na presença de Plunkett. Além disso, enquanto a Penélope homérica passava o tempo tecendo uma mortalha para o sogro Laerte, a de Walcott tece uma mortalha para si mesma.

Com tantos pontos de contato, não é de admirar que Derek Walcott se sinta tão ligado a James Joyce, a quem chamou de “Homero de nosso tempo”. Sua admiração por ele é mais que evidente nas referências que faz à terra natal de Joyce, no Capítulo XXXIX, onde fala da história do país e das lutas que ainda hoje “separam um Shawn de um Shem, / numa Irlanda que

ficou mais velha sem ficar mais sábia”; e também nas alusões que, no mesmo capítulo, faz ao próprio Joyce, que desponta como um “magro *flâneur* girador-de-bengala”, a contemplar a passagem de sua musa, Anna Livia Plurabelle.

Tais alusões representam, sem dúvida, um reconhecimento de dívida e um tributo a um mestre. Mas não significam, absolutamente, que Walcott seja um imitador de Joyce. Militam contra isso as grandes diferenças que existem entre ambos e que aqui fizemos questão de apontar. Suas semelhanças, portanto, não podem ser todas tomadas como decorrências da emulação; a maioria delas provém, isso sim, de coincidências resultantes da condição comum dos dois autores como escritores “peri-

féricos”. Essas coincidências, tão numerosas, passando pelas inquietações, pela temática e pelas soluções artísticas encontradas, sugerem certamente a existência de um padrão. Pode não ser o único padrão, conveniente para todos os escritores assim chamados “pós-coloniais”, mas é um dos mais eficientes e prolíficos e, como tal, merece atenção.

(Texto traduzido e adaptado de uma conferência pronunciada no dia 1.º de fevereiro de 1995, durante o XXVII Seminário Nacional de Professores Universitários de Literaturas de Língua Inglesa.)

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**Fielding's
Joseph Andrews
and Cervantes's
Don Quixote:
points of similitude
in the history
of the novel**

GABRIELA HATSUE YUASA

Points of similitude: first words

Joseph Andrews, Fielding's novel of 1742, and *Don Quixote*, Cervantes's masterpiece written in the sixteenth century, seem from the very beginning to have a lot in common in their role as significant literary works of their ages.

To start with, both seem to have been written in order to make an amusing parody of previous works or genres, and through this parody they would provide a critical view of them. So *Joseph Andrews* would have been originally written to be a complete satire on *Pamela*, its situations and values so peculiarly described by Richardson. Fielding's only purpose in his second attempt at the subject (the first one being *Shamela*, published in 1741) would be to expose again all the hypocrisy and pretentiousness inherent in the story of the virtuous servant-maid whose "resistance against temptation" is rewarded at the end by means of marrying her master. Fielding himself furnishes the reader at the beginning of the novel with several references to *Pamela*, Squire Booby

(Richardson's Mr. B) and other similarities of plot and structure itself. At the same time, *Don Quixote* would be taken simply as a serious and vivid attack upon chivalric romances, knight-errantry and the medieval mind. For the idea of taking a common man that, in a kind of delirium, decides all of a sudden to become a knight only due to his excessive reading of chivalric romances could be just a façade for a strong criticism against that era and its presuppositions.

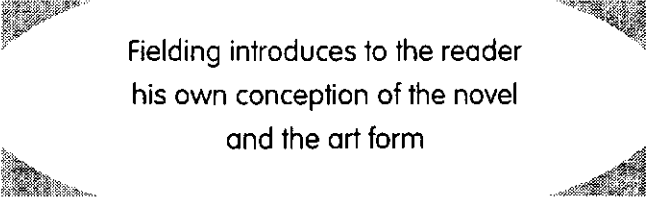
Yet one has to be aware that these assumptions alone tend to the superficial. Both *Joseph Andrews* and *Don Quixote* prove to be in fact more than what their appearance makes us readers believe. *Joseph Andrews* may seem a parody and only that at the beginning of the novel, but after a few chapters it is not difficult to feel that Fielding, perhaps absorbed in the vividness of his creative mind, is in fact introducing to the reader his own conception of the novel and the art form. The structure, the plot, the narrative evolve in such a way, gaining force especially with the rise and development of Parson Adams in the narrative, that the impression we have is that Fielding ends up giving us a very different book from the one he intended. Similarly Cervantes, by choosing the element criticized (chivalry) as a means for his own criticism, in fact promotes the survival of what he apparently wants to eliminate. Not only that, by 'diving into' that form still in the making, he somehow helps the new literary genre to develop, as Josué Montello says:

Ao passar do verso à prosa, a época medieval, em vez de arruinar-se, conquista elemento precioso de sobrevivência. Daí surgir um dos elementos constitutivos de novo gênero literário: o romance, que é a epopéia transfigurada.¹

Therefore the very first aspect in which we can find similarities between the two novels is the fact that both novels deviate from their authors' initial intention. The final result, then, is quite different from what one may expect to find at the beginning of both narratives.

Having this in mind, one should also not forget the way the two narratives are organized to the reader. Fielding's choice of dividing the novel into several books,

each one divided into several chapters, reminds us of Cervantes. Especially if we consider that each chapter has a title giving a previous account of what is going to be told – just as Cervantes did in *Don Quixote*.



Fielding introduces to the reader
his own conception of the novel
and the art form

Another aspect to be taken into account is the structure itself. *Joseph Andrews* resembles Cervantes's masterpiece in several ways, as explicitly stated on the title-page of the novel, "Written in Imitation of the Manner of Cervantes, Author of *Don Quixote*." This is easy to observe. Walter Allen points out that

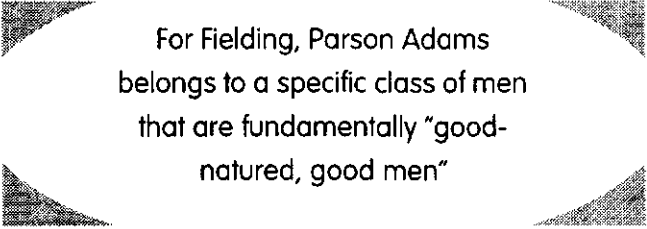
Joseph Andrews is a novel of adventures met while traveling on the road; Joseph, thrown out of his footman's employment in Lady Booby's service in London, for showing himself adamant against seduction either by her ladyship or by her woman Mrs. Slipslop sets out to walk home to his sweetheart Fanny. He meets Parson Adams, whose teaching has so fortified his virtue, walking to London in the hope of getting his sermons published, but Adams has characteristically forgotten to bring his sermons with him and so returns with Joseph. They run the gauntlet of dishonest innkeepers, irresponsible and brutish country gentlemen, pompous, sycophantic, and sometimes equally brutish clergymen.²

According to this brief synopsis of *Joseph Andrews*'s plot, the relation with Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is obvious. More important than that, however, is in my opinion the recurrence of the literary theme of the journey implicit in the narrative, structuring the novel as a whole. The journey here functions as a means of experiencing both adventure and personal growth, exciting episodes and acquisition of knowledge. For the journey theme traditionally presupposes the quest for the meaning of life, and the ultimate result of it is the modification of the traveler in

some aspect of his existence. This is a very common theme in literature, as we can notice in the examples of Ulysses, Robinson Crusoe, J. Bunyan's Pilgrim and others.

Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams do perform a journey. From the point they meet each other, they undergo a series of curious events together in their way back to the country. Martin Batestin says that the "theme of Joseph Andrews is implicit in its structure, the symbolic pilgrimage of its good men from the Great City to Parson Adams's country parish."³

As the journey gets to its end, Joseph, due to several pieces of advice and example, has visibly become wiser. The experience on the road with Parson Adams has helped him to acquire a more realistic and mature way of seeing the world. The same is true of Sancho Panza. After so many adventures, he finally becomes a governor of "su insula" and though the experience does not last long, we could say it is a successful event in his life.



For Fielding, Parson Adams
belongs to a specific class of men
that are fundamentally "good-
natured, good men"

His remarks in general demonstrate a development he lacked at the beginning of the narrative. For both Joseph Andrews and Sancho Panza wandering around in the companionship of their "masters" definitely helps them to become better persons. And one can surely be certain that it is not different with Parson Adams and Don Quixote. Their experience has enlarged their view, as we are going to see further on.

Parson Adams and Don Quixote

If we carefully analyze and compare these characters of the two novels, it is difficult not to notice the existence of several characteristics in common.

Although Joseph Andrews gives the novel its title, Parson Adams is a brighter character. He is the "heart

of the novel.” He is introduced and described right in the third chapter of Book One.

Fielding begins by telling us that he was “an excellent scholar,” having “applied many years to the most severe study, and had treasured up a fund of learning rarely to be met with in a university.” But, more important than that, Fielding describes Parson Adams’s character and personality saying that

He was besides a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world, as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he had never any intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly and brave to an excess; but simplicity was his characteristic...⁴

The first thing we get to know about Parson Adams’s character is that he is essentially a *good* man. According to these words, there seems to have no inclination to intended evil in him; basically, he means no harm to anyone. His intentions and emotions are entirely pure, in the sense of being innocent and incapable of behaving maliciously, like people around him. To make it clear, R.F. Brissenden has called our attention to Fielding’s own ideas about “good nature” in men:

Probably the clearest statement of what he (Fielding) understood by the term occurs in his *Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men*:

“Good-nature is that benevolent and amiable temper of mind which disposes us to feel the misfortunes, and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract contemplation on the beauty of virtue, and without the allurements or terrors of religion.”

The essential characteristic of the good-natured man is the spontaneity and generosity of his moral responses and impulses. He does not act benevolently towards his fellow-men because he thinks he ought to, but because it is in his nature to do so.⁵

In his study of *Joseph Andrews*, Martin Battestin⁶ has brilliantly shown us, by means of a careful work of reflection and research, one of the thematic lines based on which the novel was written: the concept of the good man. Battestin states that Adams’s good character has in fact been modeled according to the example of the biblical pilgrim patriarch Abraham – the father of true faith, a model for charity. Similarly, Joseph’s exemplary behavior and personality have in the equally biblical Joseph of Egypt – who rejected Potiphar’s wife’s attempts on his virtue, becoming then a model for chastity – their ultimate inspiration. This would be confirmed, among other things, by the names Fielding chose for his protagonists – Abraham and Joseph themselves – and no reference could be more explicit than this. Therefore, says Battestin, the capacity of both Parson Adams and Joseph Andrews to be moral exemplars in the novel comes truly from a Christian background.

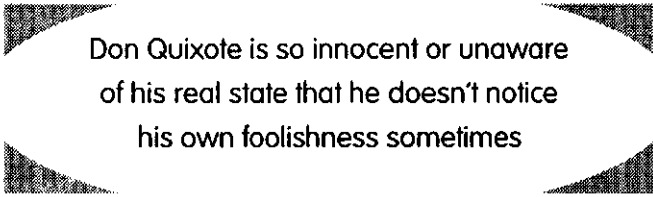
Fielding believed that men can also
behave very badly, therefore he needs
some kind of education from the cradle

This is an interesting piece of information, for the concept of the good man – the idea that man is fundamentally good and, no matter whether from a Christian background or not, the idea that a common, normal man can be a model to be followed by others – seems to have been fully adopted by the novel as a new literary genre and especially by Fielding, one of its main theoreticians. As it is already known, this idea can be detected also in other works of the novelist, such as in his masterpiece *Tom Jones*.

This is not to say that man is a perfect creature, that for being essentially good-natured he is exempt from personal defects. On the contrary, Fielding believed that men can also behave very badly, therefore he needs some kind of education from the cradle. As Fielding himself points out, Parson Adams is excessively naive, sometimes too simple-minded and rather easy to be deceived.

He is also rather vain of his ability as a schoolmaster and his sermons. He is rather an eccentric person, for his convictions of faith and justice make him insist on fighting against injustice and, in a way, trying to reform the world. In other words, just like any other human being, he has got virtues and defects, qualities and things to be disapproved of. Just like any of us, he is entirely *human*. But the point is that, for Fielding, he belongs to a specific class of men that are fundamentally “good-natured, good men.”

It happens the same to Cervantes’s Don Quixote. Or, in better words, this idea developed in Fielding’s *Joseph Andrews* apparently follows Don Quixote’s model. No one will claim that Don Quixote is not a good man. A farmer of small financial power, who has been leading a humble and simple life, Don Quixote shares with Parson Adams the benevolence of heart and the intention of meaning no harm to anyone. We immediately feel sympathy for him, in a way, we venerate him just as Sancho Panza does, for the purity of his character has touched our sensibility. Implicit in everything he does is a dignity and superiority so natural to him as it would be to a real knight. In fact, being so much involved with the reading of chivalric romances, he starts seeking for the nobleness of heart and action that really characterized knight-errantry. Don Quixote is sincere in his intentions and motives, he firmly believes in those values



Don Quixote is so innocent or unaware
of his real state that he doesn’t notice
his own foolishness sometimes

of chivalry. And he deeply and dearly loves Dulcinea. His devotion to her is simply touching, being always ready to sacrifice himself for what he believes to be her well-being

Therefore it becomes difficult for the reader not to like him, not to feel pity of him, not to cheer for him. He is truly a good man in the same sense Parson Adams is – well-intentioned, benevolent, noble, innocent. We feel

sorry for his madness, that prevents him from seeing reality as it really is, yet at the same time we forgive his idiosyncrasies because we know he doesn’t consciously mean to be so idiosyncratic. In fact, he is scarcely aware of what is really happening. Erich Auerbach says that

A idéia fixa preserva Don Quixote de se sentir responsável pelo que apronta, de tal forma, até para a sua consciência não há possibilidade de existir qualquer conflito trágico ou qualquer seriedade sombria.⁷

Don Quixote is so innocent or unaware of his real state that he doesn’t notice his own foolishness sometimes. His actions and discourse make us laugh, yet we still respect and admire him, for he preserves the essential qualities of a “good man.” He is, somehow, also a model to be followed. At this point, the similarity between Fielding’s Parson Adams and Don Quixote is obvious. Martin Battestin observes:

It was only natural that Fielding should fashion Parson Adams, the incarnation of good nature, after the model of Don Quixote. As early as *The Coffee-House Politician* (1730), Fielding tended to identify good nature and Quixotism. Consider, for instance, Constant’s soliloquy:

“I begin to be of that philosopher’s opinion, who said, that whoever will entirely consult his own happiness must be little concerned about the happiness of others. Good nature is Quixotism, and every Princess Micomicona will lead her deliverer into a cage.” (Henley ed., IX, 109-110)⁸

Moreover, Frederick Karl adds:

As a Quixote, Adams is idealistic, high-minded, a chivalric knight in his religious functions, naïve and innocent (or unmindful of realistic problems), the fool of his own imagination, a student of the past (Aeschylus, not Amadis of Gaul), the champion of the weak and the unfortunate, a staunch believer in deeds, not simply faith, but also a believer in faith when it does not preclude deeds.⁹

We are led to notice, then, that the idea of the “good man” links *Joseph Andrews* and *Don Quixote* somehow.

Having in mind that this “good man” does not mean absence of faults and imperfections, as Karl’s quotation has once again mentioned, but aware that, on the contrary, the good man may have defects as any other man, we are ready to go a step further in our study and analyze the comic element of both novels.

The comic element

In the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, Fielding develops an essay in which he defines his work as “a comic epic-poem in prose” – according to him, something quite different from the comedy. Fielding also presents his own ideas on the comic and the ridiculous. But what seems to be his major intention in writing such a preface is to try to establish some kind of connection between his novel and the classical literary tradition, which includes things like the heroic poems or epic of Homer, Virgil and others. It is already known that Fielding was much more influenced by those classical writers than his contemporary novelists. So Ian Watt¹⁰ says that, living in an age in which the epic mode was becoming less and less regarded, and the novel was beginning its rise as a literary genre, Fielding may have had difficulties to justify his definition of *Joseph Andrews* to himself and to his public. Nevertheless, what really matters here is the use of the word “comic” in that definition. Still according to Watt, the argument Fielding presents to refer *Joseph Andrews* to the classical tradition or the epic mode has its basis on this little word.

Fielding may have had difficulties to justify his definition of *Joseph Andrews* to himself and to his public

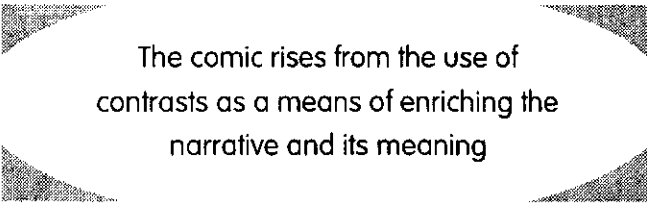
How can we identify the comic element in the novel? Where does it come from? At first sight, an immediate answer may take into account the plot itself – for few things would be more comic in their structure than the explicit satire on the plot of Richardson’s *Pamela*. The

idea of using an inverted situation – a young and virtuous footman, who is said to be Pamela’s brother, having his chastity tempted by the opposite sex – puts the protagonist in the role of the traditional heroine and exposes the ridicule of the parodic process. But, as we have seen before, Fielding little by little abandons this path to start following his own. At a certain point in the novel onwards, he shifts from mockery of Pamela to concentration on Joseph, Parson Adams, Fanny and the other characters. Then we are able to find delightful original comic episodes such as the interview between Parson Adams and Parson Trulliber (Book II, chapter 14):

Mr. Trulliber being informed that somebody wanted to speak with him, immediately slipt off his apron, and clothed himself in an old night-gown, being the dress in which he always saw his company at home. His wife who informed him of Mr. Adams’s arrival, had made a small mistake; for she had told her husband, “she believed here was a man come for some of his hogs.” This supposition made Mr. Trulliber hasten with the utmost expedition to attend his guest; he no sooner saw Adams, than not in the least doubting the cause of his errand to be what his wife had imagined, he told him “he was come in very good time; that he expected a dealer that very afternoon;” and added, “they were all pure and fat, and upwards of twenty score a piece.” Adams answered, “he believed he did not know him.” “Yes, yes,” cry’d Trulliber, “I have seen you often at fair; why, we have dealt before now mun, I warrant you; yes, yes,” cries he, “I remember thy face very well, but won’t mention a word more till you have seen them, tho’ I have never sold thee a slich of such bacon as is now in the styc.” Upon which he laid violent hands on Adams, and dragged him into the hog-stye, which was indeed but two steps from his parlour window. They were no sooner arrived there than he cry’d out, “Do but handle them, step in, friend, art welcome to handle them whether dost buy or no.” At which words opening the gate, he pushed Adams into the pig-stye, insisting on it, that he should handle them, before he would talk one word with him. Adams, whose natural complacence was beyond any artificial, was obliged to comply before he was suffered to

explain himself, and laying hold on one of their tails, the unruly beast gave such a sudden spring, that he threw poor Adams all along in the mire. Trulliber, instead of assisting him to get up, burst into a laughter, and entering the sty, said to Adams with some contempt, Why, dost not know how to handle a hog? and was going to lay hold of one himself; but Adams, who thought he had carried his complacence far enough, was no sooner on his legs, than he escaped out of the reach of the animals, and cry'd out, nihil habeo cum porcis: "I am a clergyman, sir, and am not come to buy hogs."¹¹

In this short episode we notice a series of aspects and events that help to construct the comic atmosphere of the narrative. Parson Adams, being in urgent need of money, not only for himself, but also for Joseph and Fanny, decides to have an interview with Parson Trulliber on their way home, in order to ask for some help. According to the narrative, Parson Trulliber is a large and fat man, not exactly of delicate manners and feelings. When Adams arrives at his farm, he is believed to be someone interested in buying hogs; Trulliber rushes to attend him and leads him to handle those animals, not giving Adams the opportunity to say he is a clergyman and that he is there for another reason. A kind of reciprocal illusory situation is established: eager to sell his hogs, Parson Trulliber is unable to see Adams in his real condition, that of a Parson in real material need. On the other hand, Adams is also incapable of seeing Parson Trulliber



The comic rises from the use of contrasts as a means of enriching the narrative and its meaning

as he really is, a man anxious to make some money, a rude and self-centered character who likes complaining about what his wife does or not. Evidently he is not an adequate person to count on in times of necessity. In this game between truth and appearance of truth the comic situation takes place. Fielding goes further, saying that it

is due to Adams's "natural complacence" that this situation is prolonged. That is to say, this ridiculous situation comes both from Trulliber's (and his wife's) incapability (or indisposition) to perceive reality and Adams's "excessive" benevolence. The interesting point is that it is Adams himself who becomes the exclusive victim of all this peculiar situation. As he is "forced" into the pigsty we feel that something worse is about to come. And nothing would be funnier than what actually happens to him: trying involuntarily to handle the animals he is "thrown all along in the mire." We can only laugh at this scene, which can be considered the climax of the comic in this extract. But, shortly after this, the illusory situation is then abruptly destroyed. Parson Adams shouts that he is a clergyman and means not to buy hogs. Reality is suddenly exposed. Interestingly enough, Mr. Trulliber reacts most radically, changing his treatment of poor Parson Adams from an attentive and more than solicitous reception to rudeness and indisposition to help. This is a question of an extreme irony, for Parson Trulliber, being a clergyman, is supposedly the person who advises people to be good and benevolent to others, as well as a model of "holiness" to be followed. With irony Fielding also feeds the comic atmosphere of the novel.

The episode ends up with Parson Adams being practically "expelled" from the farm by its owner, not having received the help he had asked for. Therefore the contrast between the two parsons becomes quite obvious: while one is the "embodiment" of benevolence, charity and good nature, the other is the anti-example of those virtues.

Concerning that, Battestin has affirmed that

[...] a lack of charity, indeed, is the criterion of the Ridiculous. It is remarkable how often Fielding's satiric method is to oppose, in a given situation, the selfish and social passions and to direct our critical laughter against those whose avarice or lust or ambition or vanity subduces the requirements of compassions.¹²

In fact, the comic rises from the use of contrasts as a means of enriching the narrative and its meaning. By

contrasting such opposed characters and behaviours, the author gives each one a more lively and dynamic description – for individual characteristics and peculiarities are in this way emphasized more than diminished. The use of contrasts both of character and in the plot adds an element of surprise and vividness to the narrative, and in this game between what it is and what it seems to be, the real and the ideal, or realism and romance, we find a powerful source and agent of the comic element in the novel.

By doing that Fielding was certainly introducing something new to the genre – yet he was not the first one. Again, we can find points of similitude in Cervantes too, who, centuries before, reflected upon that and even without knowing it opened new doors to novelists after him.

Whenever the knight is not possessed
by some sort of idiosyncrasy, he is really
a good-natured, benevolent,
exemplary and even wise man

The aspects we have observed in Fielding about the comic element were already observed in Cervantes by Erich Auerbach, in his essay “A Dulcinéia Encantada”¹³ – although with a different orientation. Based on the reading of the tenth chapter, second part of Cervantes’s book, he also analyses the way the comic element is developed through the narrative.

In that episode, Don Quixote has sent Sancho Panza to the Toboso village to look for his beloved Dulcinea. The intention is to announce her the knight’s arrival at the village. Sancho obeys his master, but he is trapped by previous lies and, since Dulcinea is not there, he doesn’t know what to do. Then he sees three peasant-girls riding their donkeys, and decides to deceive Don Quixote once more. He rushes to him and tells him that Dulcinea herself is coming to meet them. Don Quixote gets surprised, but when the girls arrive he sees only those three peasant-girls. Sancho quickly manages to involve him in his version of the facts, telling that is

Dulcinea herself in front of them and despite several evidences to the contrary (such as the three girls’ ugly appearance, their peasant accent and the ridiculous fall from the donkey performed by one of them), Don Quixote eventually believes Sancho and gets convinced that his incapability to see Dulcinea herself is the result of some sorcerer’s spell.

Just like Parson Adams in his meeting Parson Trulliber, Don Quixote is again unable to see reality. Yet, in an inverted situation, for this time he is not the author of the distortion, but its victim. In this simple fact, in my opinion, it is already possible to find a comic, even ironical element – he who distorts reality being the victim of someone else’s distortion. And the poor Don Quixote, as usual, is incapable to discern reality in the sense that this time he cannot perceive Sancho’s lies. He is not able to realize that he’s being deceived.

Similarly to Parson Adams, the reason for that is basically Don Quixote’s excessive benevolence and naïvety. As Auerbach mentions, whenever the knight is not possessed by some sort of idiosyncrasy, he is really a good-natured, benevolent, exemplary and even wise man. In this event, rather than trying to involve others in his vision of things, he is involved. But, despite having made some questions to Sancho, for he honestly cannot see Dulcinea, he innocently accepts at last the explanation he is given. The illusion is established in his mind.

Don Quixote’s naïvety is so stressed that
it prevents him from distinguishing
reality even before strong evidences

Once Don Quixote is convinced, the comic element fully arises. Sancho’s farce is in fact totally untenable; the contrast between his words and reality is more than evident. When one of the peasant-girls falls from her donkey, then, the comic reaches its climax.

Nevertheless, Don Quixote’s naïvety is so stressed that it prevents him from distinguishing reality even before strong evidences, such as the girl’s fall. Unlike Fielding’s

episode, the farce is maintained till the end of the scene. Apparently, Don Quixote never realizes the truth, and this emphasizes the comic aspect of the event. Therefore, just like in *Joseph Andrews*, the comic is firmly based on an interplay of contrasts. While in Fielding's novel the comic arises basically from the contrast between reality and appearance of reality, and between two opposite moral attitudes, in Cervantes's it is based especially on the contrast between Don Quixote's vision of things and reality itself. Don Quixote's insistent blindness (and blindness related to madness) guarantees the comic in the narrative.

The comic, realism and the novel

A final consideration is important. Both Henry Fielding and Cervantes had a deep knowledge of human nature. Fielding proved that through his acute and vivid descriptions of English manners and society in the eighteenth century. His "character sketches" give us an idea of his imaginative and artistic power, as well as his awareness of the reality of the age. Fielding again presents points of similitude with Cervantes's genius and work.

In all of the authors' processes of dealing with fiction, the use of the comic element was fundamental to achieve those results

The great Spaniard was the first novelist of his age to offer, by means of his art, several facets to human nature, a variety of possibilities to interpret man, his dreams and his actual world. In terms of innovation and creativity, and of importance as a model for new genres, Cervantes was (and is) unique.

In all of the authors' processes of dealing with fiction, the use of the comic element was fundamental to achieve those results. For the comic relies a lot on the ridiculous – and this, among other things, implies the introduction of roguery, the lower-class portion of society, with its language, behavior and attitudes before life,

corruption and vice as inevitable parts of man's character. In the history of the novel as a literary genre we clearly notice such an inclination. So we find Fielding referring all the time to the lack of charity and chastity that involves Joseph Andrews and Parson Adams in their

The comic element therefore emphasizes or contributes to the realistic approach in the novel

adventures; and Cervantes describing scullery-maids, peasant-girls, muleteers and the world of inns and roads with its correspondent implications. We can say, then, that in this sense the comic element in the novel is profoundly related to its realism. Frederick Karl notes that

The comic was [...] for Fielding a movement toward realism, for the comic confines itself "strictly to nature, from the just imitation of which will flow all the pleasure we can this way convey to a sensible reader." The comic writer, Fielding warns, should not deviate from nature, which is another way of saying realism is an antidote to romance.¹⁴

The comic element therefore emphasizes or contributes to the realistic approach in the novel. So both *Joseph Andrews* and *Don Quixote* are extremely realistic, its authors evidently try to build a mirror of the world as they saw and criticized it.

Yet, on the other hand, Fielding and Cervantes knew they could not be too realistic, otherwise they would spoil their art. For the novel as a work of man's art has also to deal with the mirage, the ideal, the dream, the sublime. It has also to provide alternatives. That's why we have Parson Adams's benevolence and Joseph's chastity, Don Quixote's good nature mixed with his chivalric visions and dreams. That's why we find so many contrasts and paradoxes inherent in its structure, characters and meaning; so many realistic descriptions together with a variety of metaphors.

The presence of contradiction in the novel's body

permits a number of interpretations and readings. It opens doors for a multiplicity of perspectives. It expands our imagination and therefore our creative power as readers and critics. *Don Quixote* might not be considered a novel in the strict sense of the word, yet its influence on Fielding and other English and European novelists of the eighteenth century is explicit. In the way Cervantes first dealt with two opposed worlds, in an age of deep

transformations and discoveries, we see the extension of his genius as a novelist and an artist. In the way Fielding read Cervantes and let him shape his conception of the art of fiction we see the power of his influence. And in the way both Cervantes and Fielding dealt with the opposed forces that are part of human nature and reality itself we see the origins of the novel as a literary genre.

NOTES

¹MONTELLO, Josué. *Cervantes e o moinho de vento*. Rio de Janeiro, Tupy, 1950, p. 41.

²ALLEN, Walter. The Eighteenth Century. In: *The English Novel*. London, Penguin, 1970, p. 56-7.

³BATTESTIN, Martin. *The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art – A Study of Joseph Andrews*. Middletown, Wesleyan University Press, 1959, p. 90.

⁴FIELDING, H. *Joseph Andrews*. London, Penguin, 1977, p. 43.

⁵BRISSENDEN, R.F. Introduction. In: FIELDING, op. cit., p. 7-18.

⁶BATTESTIN, op. cit., p. 26-43.

⁷AUERBACH, Erich. *Mimesis. A representação da realidade na literatura ocidental*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1971, p. 303.

⁸BATTESTIN, op. cit., Notes.

⁹KARL, Frederick. *A Reader's Guide to the Development of the English Novel in the 18th Century*. London, Thames and Hudson, 1974, p. 155.

¹⁰WATT, Ian. *A ascensão do romance*. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1990, p. 216.

¹¹FIELDING, op. cit., p. 164.

¹²BATTESTIN, op. cit., p. 103.

¹³AUERBACH, op. cit., p. 292-314.

¹⁴KARL, op. cit., p. 158.

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It is through post-colonial literature, which embodies the works produced by colonizers as well as colonized during and after the process of English colonization in Africa, that it is possible to make out the complex network that permeated the lives of people and brought so many harmful consequences to them.

The relation between colonizers and colonized had a manichean structure where the former were “the exemplary” ones and the latter “the evil” ones: all the positive qualities were characteristics of the white man as opposed to the evil qualities that were represented by the black one. In this context, the colonial society provided a strong relation between the Self and the Other: the white man needed the black one to be assured of his own existence, his superiority, whereas the latter could only see himself as inferior through the presence of the former. Roles were also exchanged, however, and the white man, by looking at the black man’s eyes, would be aware of his inferiority while the black one would be conscious of his superiority. This condition was responsible for the permanent tension between them.

In general, the self becomes clearly and fully itself, it returns to itself and recognizes its truth and the objective certainty of its own existence only through negation and mediation of the other.¹

It is in and through the revelation of my being-as-object for the Other that I must be able to apprehend the presence of his being-as-subject.²

Post-Colonial Literary Criticism and Resistance

Post-colonial literary criticism is strongly influenced by the ideas of Jacques Derrida present in the basis of Deconstruction. According to him, knowledge is simply an interpretation and we only see those things that our language and our own knowl-

The discourse of post-colonial literary criticism or “Why did things fall apart?”

ROSA MARIA LAQUÍMIA DE SOUZA

reach it, reality is always farther away. This gap between what we say and what is understood can well represent the relationship between the English and the African.

As it is well-known, every situation of conflict determines the rise of movements of resistance and that is also true for African literature. There are several critics who propose counter-discursive strategies.

Frantz Fanon, for example, sees the decolonization process as something that can only happen violently since it is a contest between two very strong forces while Jan Mohamed believes that the colonized has to regain the pre-colonial identity as a trustworthy individual and his

Engaged in the process of resistance post-colonial African writers faced another problem: the language

negative image has to be substituted by a positive and authentic one (“Guerra de Manobra”). He considers that that has to be the main purpose of post-colonial writing. Nevertheless, rather than ending the settled allegorical manichean structure produced by the oppressor, he inverts the process now creating stereotyped images of the colonizer and authentic images of the colonized. Homi Bhabha³ disregards Mohamed’s strategy suggesting that the only profitable approach would be that of creating gaps in the imperial colonial strategy through which the colonized would gain their own position (“Guerra de Posição”).

edge allow us to see. Knowledge works as a filter to reality because what we call reality is, in fact, a representation of it. Through the concept of “deferral” (*différance*, that in French combines two meanings: to differ and to defer) he explains that it is impossible to see reality as it is because, although the language tries to

Fiction
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Engaged in the process of resistance post-colonial African writers faced another problem: the language. In what language should they write? How could they write against the oppressor using the oppressor's language? On the other hand, how could they unite the African people against the English if Africa had a great number of different languages? English had to be used.

Post-colonial writing appropriates and reconstitutes the language of the centre creating new usages for it

Since language is a medium of power, post-colonial writing had to find a way of changing it and adapting it to the post-colonial necessities. That was done through two distinct processes: the first one is called *Abrogation* (or denial) of English and its privileged position as a representative of the imperial power, and the second one is called *Appropriation*. In this process post-colonial writing appropriates and reconstitutes the language of the centre creating new usages for it that represent the life, experiences and, consequently, the culture of African people. By doing this, as Rao points out, they transfer their own spirit to the language that is not their own and thus it is used to demonstrate the great differences that exist between the cultures of the two continents. This language is called "english" and it is full of pronounced forms of language variance.

Another means of showing difference is the use of native words in an "english" text. Embedded in this strategy is the intention of showing that English is not as rich as their language in the process of expressing their culture. Besides that, it is also a political act because, by being translated in the glossing, the native words and, consequently, the native culture acquire a higher status.

I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings.⁴

Things Fall Apart

x

Mr. Johnson

In *Things Fall Apart* Chinua Achebe is deeply concerned with the revival of African culture as well as its values, authenticity and pride. In addition to this it has an ideological function that is to make people aware of the various aspects of the colonial experience.

The main character of *Things Fall Apart* is Okonkwo, who was one of the lords of his clan, the Igbo. The emotions that basically formed his character were shame and pride. He was ashamed of his father's life and personality because by combining gentleness and idleness his whole life had been a failure.

And so Okonkwo was ruled by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved.⁵

But his whole life was dominated by fear, the fear of failure and of weakness.⁶

Because of his origins and the status he had achieved after years of hard work and an almost perfect personal conduct he was a proud man. Even his physical features gave him the right to feel so:

He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a severe look. He breathed heavily [...] when he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody [...] He had no patience with unsuccessful men [...]⁷

The life of Okonkwo as well as that of the members of his family and clan is shown going on smoothly in the first twelve chapters of the book. Achebe pictures the close relation that there was between agriculture, weather, beliefs, day-by-day activities and the Igbo's way of living. This description is made with a profound respect and love for the Igbo and the culture they represented.

One cannot avoid saying that they had some really savage rituals and beliefs such as the throwing away of twin babies in the forest but, on the other hand, one cannot deny that in their society there was order, peace,

respect and equality. Their laws were not written, for they were illiterate, but were followed and the ones who would dare to disobey them were severely punished. Even Okonkwo had to follow the laws of his clan when he, by accident, killed Euzedu's sixteen-year-old son.

Tradition was another element of great importance for the Igbo and the murder of Ikemefuna as a punishment for the murdering of a woman of the village is a representation of it. Although unwillingly Okonkwo helped others to kill the boy because he had to follow the tradition and, besides that, he was afraid of being thought weak. Nevertheless, this incident was a turning point for his life: he was deeply affected by it and his life would never be the same as before. He used Ikemefuna as an object and paid a high price for it.

The arrival of the English missions marks the commencement of the disintegration of the African culture and society

Nwoye was Okonkwo's eldest son. Okonkwo wanted him to be a great farmer and a great man but the boy resembled his grandfather and was the main source of Okonkwo's concern. In this sense, it may be said that Nwoye was Okonkwo's Other. He didn't believe in the same things his father did nor did he have the same strong personality Okonkwo had. He was very fond of Ikemefuna and he could neither accept the boy's death nor forgive his father for his participation in it. Throughout the novel he was in conflict with Okonkwo and in the end of it, with the arrival of the English missionaries, he was converted and became an active Christian.

The arrival of the English missions, which means the beginning of imperial colonization, marks the commencement of the disintegration of the African culture and society. They arrive and behave as the owners of the land and the natives cannot understand it.

Because of his military superiority the colonizer is able to impose his will and his entire world – his social, political, legal, and moral system – on the colonized.⁸

The last part of *Things Fall Apart*, which is composed of five chapters, is tense and profoundly sad: peace, happiness, order, equality and freedom gave place to anger, unhappiness, disorder and the feeling that something was being definitely taken away from the natives. The arrogant attitude of the colonizer towards the natives and the latter's awareness of their impotence take them to despair and culminate with Okonkwo's suicide. His death represents not only the death of the individual but also and mainly the death of the African that existed before the colonization. Obierika's words summarize the painful feeling shared by the Igbo community:

That man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia. You drove him to kill himself; and now he will be buried like a dog...⁹

On the colonialist side, we have the District Commissioner's thoughts on Okonkwo's suicide and his people and his intention to write a book about Africans whose title would be: *The Pacification of the Primitive Tribes of the Lower Niger*. Achebe couldn't have been more painfully ironical than he was here.

In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* one can find various elements of post-colonial discourse: the first one to mention is the use of the "Guerra de Manobra" strategy proposed by Jan Mohamed and mentioned previously. He makes a frontal attack against the imperial colonial society presenting it as really evil, coward, insensitive, and shows the complex tension between oral and literate cultures. His characters, mainly Okonkwo, embody the problematic of two different cultures in conflict and the resulting defeat of the weaker one.

Another element of post-colonial discourse present in the novel is the use of the language: Igbo words as well as the "english" language permeate the narrative.

His writing is political, concerned with authenticity and realism; it is angered by the ideology of the oppressor and is the counterpart of English writers like Joyce Cary and Isaac Dinesen, whose works represent the ideology of the colonial government.

The author of *Mr. Johnson*¹⁰, Joyce Cary, was not Ni-

gerian as Chinua Achebe is. He was an Englishman who joined the Nigerian political service as a district magistrate and administrative officer. His novel attempts to show the confrontation between the African culture and the English administration.

Cary's main character, Mr. Johnson, is a chief clerk of Fada in Nigeria. He is very young, irresponsible and fond of the English culture and society. He is a metaphorical character in the sense that he embodies most of the evil qualities the black man was supposed to have according to the colonizer's point of view.

The novel shows Mr. Johnson in a succession of errors and misunderstandings caused by his irresponsibility and lack of honesty. He was educated in a missionary school where he learned to love and respect England as his native country. He both sees and dresses himself as if he was an Englishman and has no African national feeling at all. On the other hand, he cultivates the natives' tradition of giving typical tribal parties with the loud sound of drums and music, lives in misery and marries a native girl – Bamu. His biggest dream is to transform Bamu into a beautiful white English lady to show to all his friends and to distinguish her from all the other native girls. Nevertheless, Bamu is not willing to change and she cannot understand Johnson's ideas either. In fact, she cannot even understand the language he speaks which is an English completely adapted to the African sounds, full of grammar mistakes. Bamu is Johnson's Other. She is a "savage" girl and is happy to be so. She thinks Johnson is a "stranger," a crazy man, and throughout the novel we see her asking someone else: "What is he saying? I don't understand him." She passes by the good and bad happenings without bothering or fully understanding them. She doesn't have a voice in the novel.

Johnson's rise and fall is permeated by the presence of English superiors who are almost as dishonest as he is. They despise him as well as the culture he represents and keep near him just because of their work relation. The last one to work with him was Mr. Rudbeck, described as a not very intelligent or honest man. In several moments he seems to be guided by Mr. Johnson towards dishonest behaviour (the negative influence of the black people)

and, in the end, it is Mr. Rudbeck who kills him when he is sentenced to death. Johnson himself asks him to do so.

Through the study of *Mr. Johnson* one can see the author's intention of justifying the colonialist dominance and ideology as well as the presence of a manichean world. In this world African people are real savages who are not treated as subjects but as objects that can be moved and placed wherever and whenever the colonizer want. They are a representation of evil which is both feared and rejected and this way the theory of the white man's burden is justified.

Cary brings to Africa and develops in his fiction the theory of the white man's burden and the rhetoric of savagery and need to civilize.¹¹

Post-colonial writing has still a long way to go until it reaches the moment of total freedom from the imperial colonial dominance and its heritage but profitable efforts have been made and show that success is just a question of time.

NOTES

¹MOHAMED, Abdul Jan. *Manichean Aesthetics: The Politics of Literature in Colonial Africa*. Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press, 1983, p. 256.

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³Interrogating Identity. In: *Post-Colonial Subjectivity*.

⁴ACHEBE, Chinua. The African Writer and the English Language. In: *Morning Yet On Creation Day*. London, 1975, p. 103.

⁵ACHEBE, Chinua. *Things Fall Apart*. London, Heinemann, 1980, p. 10.

⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 9.

⁷Id., *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸MOHAMED, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

⁹ACHEBE, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

¹⁰London, Penguin, 1965.

¹¹MOHAMED, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

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DEFOE, RICHARDSON, FIELDING, AND STERNE: the beginning of the theory of the novel

MARIA EULÁLIA RAMICELLI

Reading the prefaces, postscripts, introductory chapters written by Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, besides *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne, allows us to trace the main ideas which guided those writers when they were dealing with the new literary genre which was rising in the eighteenth century, namely, the *novel*.

Those texts contain several interesting aspects which might be focused in order to study how the theory of the novel began and was developed on the hands of these first novelists. Therefore, this paper is going to try to answer the two following questions which, in my opinion, cover central aspects concerning the formation of the novel, as a literary genre, and its difference and particularities in relation to the kind of texts which came before it,

- How was the novel conceived in relation to the literary tradition?
- Being the novel a fictional genre, how did the first novelists cope with the relation between the conceptions of *truth* and *fiction*?

These questions involve many more aspects than one could think of in a first moment. Besides, as these aspects frequently mix up, those two questions are going to be constantly correlated in our discussion.

The advantage of this sort of study is that it permits us to consider each writer's particular conceptions, beliefs, and principles in relation to several issues, and to notice how some of their ideas summed up in the process of creation of a theory of the novel.

To begin with, we should start with Defoe who knew he was doing something different in comparison to what already existed in the literary field although he was not able to name it. His knowledge about the "novelty" of his text can be found in a simple phrase of the prefaces to *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders*, and *Memoirs of a Cavalier* in which he affirmed that he was presenting the *private history of a private person*. By using the word "private," Defoe was delineating the subject of the novel and opposing it to the classical tradition. This is a central point of the "characterisation" of the novel which the other novelists maintained and developed.

Sterne intensified the subjective
approach which was developed
mainly by Richardson

Richardson, in his use of the epistolary technique, deepened the notion of particularisation of life as he drew the *domestic life of common people* by dealing with their particular thoughts and feelings. Fielding, in spite of his panoramic approach of society, did not leave aside the individuality of each character in terms of speech and manners. Finally, Sterne, by analysing minutely the characters' opinions and ideas, intensified the subjective approach which was developed mainly by Richardson.

But why did this "cult" of privacy, identified from the very beginning, remain so firmly in the four novelists? Exactly because, as Ian Watt discusses in his chap-

ter “A experiência privada e o romance,”¹ changes, which had been taking place in the English society during the late two centuries, did become the establishment in the eighteenth century. And literature could not step aside from the new social order. In opposition to the objective, social, and public values of classical tradition, the subjective, individual, and private values guided modern life in the eighteenth century. In this sense, on one hand, the novel opposed to romance because, as Fielding points out quite clearly in the prefatory chapter to book VIII of *Tom Jones*, the supernatural and the

Richardson denigrated fiction by
criticising the writers of romances
and novels

incredible creatures and events were not proper to the modern world anymore. Accordingly, the “natural world” was what mattered. On the other hand, the novel opposed to the epic because the former brought the common person’s life to the centre of our attention which, definitely, is not such a sublime subject as the marvelous deeds of the latter were. Hence the opportune criticism that Ian Watt makes to Fielding’s theory of the “comic epic in prose.”² The fact that Fielding tried to approximate his work to the epic was basically a means of trying to find roots for the “new” kind of text which he was writing notwithstanding the effect of giving an elevated treatment to the novel which was considered to be a “low” genre at the time. The problem is that Fielding made that approximation based on the correspondence between the narrative elements of both genres (fable, action, character, diction, and sentiments, only differing in metre) whereas the subject was quite diverse. In this sense, although Fielding went a step further than Defoe and Richardson in the theoretical discussion of the novel, he was not completely sure about the nature of his text yet.

The urgency of presenting what is “natural,” that is, what belongs to real life (“nature” and “real life” are words semantically linked in those novelists’ texts) leads us to

discuss what those first novelists understood and proposed about the relationship between *truth* and *fiction*.

Defoe and Richardson claimed that their books were true because they presented historical, real facts. It is important to comprehend why both novelists had such a fierce opinion against fiction.

Defoe, as Ian Watt informs us, considered History to be superior to any work which had “invention” (as romance) or, for instance, legends (as the epic) as its basis.³ Defoe was eager for historical facts because, as well as the public in the beginning of the century, he considered “fiction” to be a synonym of “lie.”

Richardson also denigrated fiction by criticising the writers of romances and novels (novel, here, means “love intrigue”) because they *only* intended to divert the reader and not instruct him too, and because these writers expressed questionable moral values such as, for instance, the ridicule. The most condescending Richardson could be in this matter was to say that he was writing a “new species of novel.” Why new? Because (and this is, from my point of view, the central point of Defoe’s and Richardson’s arguments in favour of their texts) he, like Defoe (as far as we can infer from the words of the latter), was dealing with *private life* which corresponded to *real life*. And that was the great innovation which Defoe consciously brought to literature and which was corroborated by Richardson. An innovation which even worked as a justification of the validity of their books in relation to the traditional genres.

Fielding emphasised the notion
that the text must be credible

Richardson went still further in his argument and discussed the importance of combining *verisimilitude* and *probability* in the process of characterisation. According to his moral and religious principles, sudden repentance is false, and vicious characters deserve an unhappy ending whereas virtuous characters deserve a happy ending *because* that is what happens in real life.

By explaining to the reader how verisimilitude and

probability were held in his books in order to conform the characters' deeds and endings to his conception of life, Richardson emphasises a paradox which had been already created by Defoe. The paradox consists of writing fiction denying it at the same time. Consequently, although Richardson knew (more openly than Defoe) that he was using an artifice to make his text resemble reality more closely, he was still not aware that this artifice, verisimilitude, was an aesthetic procedure and, therefore, a tool used by authors who write the kind of fictional text he was writing.

Fielding was the first one who gave a solution to that theoretical incoherence created by Richardson and Defoe. Fielding emphasised the notion that the text must be *credible* in the sense that the characters and the actions should be probable enough to be found in common life. As Fielding's argument was based on Aristotle's classical theory of *mimesis*, he assumed that he was drawing a *picture* of real life according to his personal observations and experience of it. His work, then, was a creation, an invention, or in other words, *fiction* and there was nothing shameful or reproachful about that. As it has been previously mentioned in this paper, Fielding gave a clear account of the incongruity which existed between supernatural, *incredible* creatures, and events

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and the modern world. Fielding's subject was the modern world, that is, the "private life of a private man," the concept which had been introduced by Defoe. Sterne, on his turn, followed Fielding's conception of fiction and, much more explicit than the latter did, showed the reader the process of creating a story and its characters by explaining the "logic" of the organisation of the events and ideas which he presents in *Tristram Shandy*.

Finally, we should consider the recurrent insistence of the four writers on affirming that their works intended to give *instruction* and *entertainment* to the reader, being

the latter a means of injecting the former. Defoe and Richardson, based on their rigid moral and religious values, aimed to instruct the reader to behave properly in society distinguishing what is "virtuous" from what is "vicious."

Fielding and Sterne also intended to instruct the public in relation to human nature: Fielding concentrated on the ridiculous of life because, as he says in the preface to *Joseph Andrews*, he wanted to laugh at mankind's foolishness; Sterne wanted to show how the inner thoughts and ideas work in the human spirit. However, their most important contribution to the theory of the novel in this specific aspect concerns their aim of instructing the reader *to read and deal with that new kind of text*. Both Fielding and Sterne required the common reader to be more participant in the book. Sterne, in special, stresses all the time that the reader should have

The novel basically deals with common
people focusing on their particular life

more knowledge and be more cunning in order to imagine and make inferences from the "blanks" left on purpose by him, the author. The reader's participation in search of learning is as important as the writer's skill of writing the book.

In addition, Fielding and Sterne warned the common reader and the critic about the essential links which must exist among the parts of the whole novel. Therefore, as Fielding emphatically affirms in the prefatory chapters of *Tom Jones*, the part has its proper meaning when it is seen in relation to the whole. Generalisations of small occurrences and details are, in this sense, deviations from the author's intended meaning and signs of bad reading.

In conclusion, we can notice that from Defoe to Sterne, the novel gained a much more coherent and mature technical structure thanks to the continuous self-judgement that these novelists made in relation to their own works in a time when the novel was getting stability as a genre.

As we could notice, Defoe's, Richardson's, Fielding's, and Sterne's theoretical texts present correspondences and conflicts which, when put side by side, give vent to a movement of construction of the novel in terms of its subject and narrative technique.

As for the subject, the novel basically deals with common people focusing on their particular life. Additionally, the attention which, then, begins to be given to the individual also involves the interest in studying *human nature*, or rather, human private feelings and thoughts.

Now, as for the narrative technique, the processes of characterisation and coherence among the parts of the whole text become more refined and even more conscious to the novelist himself. At the same time, the reader begins to be considered a co-participant in the existence of the novel and his/her active participation is more and more required till he/she, in Sterne, achieves the point of being a builder of the meaning and of the images together with the author.

Finally, the relation between truth and fiction reaches a reasonable balance when the novelist (as an entity) begins to notice that his text, the Novel, is based on the so-called "formal realism" which is a particular characteristic of this genre when compared with the previous narrative genres (Epic and Romance). The basis of "formal realism" is that artifice soon identified by Richardson, namely, *verisimilitude*, by which life is repre-

sented in its "real" essence, which means that the incredible and the unbelievable are left out in order to focus on the probable, that is, on what is known by every common man in his daily experience of life.

All these achievements required much effort from the novelists' part to try to understand what they were doing and how their innovation in literary writing was related to tradition. In this sense, the personal participation of each of those first novelists has its proper meaning and place in the history of the novel, mainly if it is studied in its relation with the others as their particular theoretical and practical contributions summed up in the flow of time in favour of the formation of the new and modern genre.

NOTES

¹WATT, Ian. *A ascensão do romance*. Trad. Hildegard Feist. São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1990, p. 152-80.

²Id., *ibid.*, p. 208-25.

³Id., *ibid.*

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Por trás de grandes homens, uma autora mulher: Isabel Burton e Elizabeth Agassiz

ANA LÚCIA ALMEIDA GAZOLLA

Travel Literature
Literatura de Viagem

As mulheres que escreveram relatos de viagem no século XIX construíram seus textos dentro de uma rede complexa de forças e eixos de poder, particularmente o poder patriarcal e o poder do colonialismo.

Chris Weedon sugere que o patriarcalismo seja visto como um conjunto de estruturas institucionais e práticas de representação apoiadas nas significações sociais conferidas à diferença sexual biológica, levando à naturalização da noção de inferioridade feminina legitimada pela referência à biologia¹. A lógica patriarcal, que baseia em funções biológicas a definição da categoria social da mulher, assenta-se em um dos dualismos centrais do pensamento clássico: a oposição cartesiana entre mente e corpo. Conforme indica Lois McNay,

esse dualismo privilegia um sujeito abstrato, pré-discursivo no centro do pensamento, e, em consequência, deprecia o corpo como o lugar de tudo o que se entende como oposto ao espírito e ao pensamento racional, como as emoções, paixões e necessidades. Através da priorização do primeiro termo na série de dualismos, o pensamento clássico controla então os parâmetros do que constitui o saber e regula a amplitude e o tipo de discursos cuja circulação é permitida².

A visão predominante a partir do Iluminismo era a da divisão, biologicamente determinada, das capacidades humanas, sendo a racionalidade e o intelecto características masculinas e a emoção e o sentimento, femini-

nas. Tal visão resulta em uma continuidade relativa marcando os papéis femininos e a simbolização da mulher do século XVIII a meados do século XIX. Embora as transformações sociais tenham sido imensas nesse período, a prescrição quanto a tais papéis se mantinha estável e resistente às mudanças. No caso dos Estados Unidos e da Inglaterra pode-se inclusive identificar um contínuo ideológico, estabelecendo o que alguns críticos chamam de comunidade transatlântica.

≡≡≡ *A mulher recebeu, no decorrer do*
≡≡≡ *século XIX, o impacto de uma*
≡≡≡ *legislação cada vez mais rígida no que*
≡≡≡ *dizia respeito aos papéis sexuais* ≡≡≡

Também a instabilidade política e o medo da anarquia social levaram a um maior controle do Estado quanto a atividades públicas e privadas, e a mulher recebeu, no decorrer do século XIX, de forma muito direta, o impacto de uma legislação cada vez mais rígida no que dizia respeito aos papéis sexuais. O período vitoriano nos Estados Unidos e na Inglaterra revela a obsessão com a regulamentação: do discurso médico às leis que voltavam a excluir mulheres de atividades das quais haviam começado a participar até os livros

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de conduta e manuais que regulamentavam tudo – educação dos filhos, o gerenciamento da casa e da economia doméstica, etiqueta e comportamento, atividades profissionais, e até mesmo viagens, tudo revela a compulsão vitoriana pelo controle e a imposição de uma visão reguladora da sociedade.

≡≡≡ *A representação do sujeito feminino era, assim, construída em termos da família, da propriedade e da perpetuação da espécie* ≡≡≡

O ideal feminino do período – que a crítica Barbara Welter definiu como *the cult of true womanhood* – se baseava “em quatro virtudes cardeais: piedade, pureza, submissão e domesticidade. Coloque-se tudo isso junto e se soletra mãe, filha, irmã, esposa – mulher”³. O papel feminino era, assim, definido pelo espaço da casa, o que reforçava os limites rígidos entre a esfera pública e a privada, entre a casa e o espaço externo do trabalho (divisão essa muito mais fluida no período pré-industrial). À medida que o espaço público e o privado se transformam em uma oposição binária e ocorre uma separação de esferas para a atuação do homem e da mulher, esta se torna mais isolada no universo da domesticidade prescrita socialmente.

A construção oitocentista do gênero é, portanto, uma ideologia restritiva que reforça a redução da mulher ao espaço doméstico e define sua função social de forma instrumental. A noção de *womanhood* passa a ter, ainda, uma outra importância simbólica. Ela se associa, como representação, a imagens de identidade nacional, tanto na Inglaterra como nos Estados Unidos.

A representação do sujeito feminino era, assim, construída em termos da família, da propriedade e da perpetuação da espécie. A mulher-anjo figura como representação da britanidade no projeto da expansão imperial; para a sociedade burguesa em formação nos Estados Unidos a mulher burguesa – adorno improdutivo e instrumental – simboliza sua hegemonia de classe e a nova ordem de poder.

Entretanto, a conceitualização da mulher, embora bastante resistente a mudanças, foi sendo gradualmente

desestabilizada durante o século XIX, que, nesse sentido, constitui um verdadeiro *turning point* na história da condição feminina. Como afirmam Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koong e Susan Stuart,

as normas enunciadas no início do século eram normas coletivas definindo uma função social – a de esposa e mãe –, estabelecendo os direitos da mulher como uma função de suas obrigações e definindo as mulheres como um grupo social cuja função e comportamento seriam estabelecidos de maneira *standard* e portanto idealizada. Mas essa formulação totalizadora gradualmente se desintegrou, e identidades femininas começaram a proliferar: mãe, trabalhadora, solteirona, mulher emancipada, etc.⁴

A consciência do valor intrínseco da mulher cresce no decorrer do século, apesar de seu papel predominantemente instrumental na sociedade patriarcal. Embora a ideologia dominante no período vitoriano concebesse o intelecto – e portanto a escrita – como domínio do homem, tanto na Inglaterra quanto nos Estados Unidos uma das poucas profissões consideradas adequadas a mulheres de classe média era a de escritora ou tradutora, principalmente pelo fato de que o trabalho podia ser desenvolvido na esfera privada. Neste caso, a casa podia constituir o centro de produção, e o produto era uma tradução, um livro de receita, um manual de conduta, poemas e, mais tarde, romances.

≡≡≡ *Uma das poucas profissões consideradas adequadas a mulheres de classe média era a de escritora ou tradutora* ≡≡≡

Mas, é claro, a questão da circulação das obras colocava as autoras em contato com a esfera pública e em confronto com as imagens de feminilidade que circulavam à época. A reação contra as mulheres que revertiam esse modelo era expressiva, às vezes até virulenta. Quanto mais distante da esfera doméstica fossem suas atividades, maior o repúdio social: essas mulheres, além de assumirem uma atitude *unwomanly*, ainda se atreviam

a conquistar e a dominar o mercado editorial, produzindo, na década de 50, a maior parte dos *best sellers* dos Estados Unidos!

Verifica-se, assim, que enormes tensões ideológicas caracterizaram o período, gerando contradições expressivas que marcam o pensamento vitoriano em geral e a produção feminina oitocentista em particular. A oscilação entre a afirmação e a subversão da ideologia dominante, uma das características dessa produção, vem sendo destacada por críticas como Sandra Gilbert, Susan Gubar, Elaine Showalter e Mary Kelly, entre outras.

≡≡≡ *Quanto mais distante da esfera*
≡≡≡ *doméstica fossem suas atividades,*
≡≡≡ *maior o repúdio social*

Homi Bhabba afirma que todas as formas de cultura se encontram continuamente em um processo de hibridismo: os discursos de vários grupos interagem, revisam-se mutuamente, apropriam-se e subvertem o discurso dominante e suas convenções. Particularmente no caso de textos escritos por minorias, resalta-se o que Henry Louis Gates denominou *two-toned quality*, ou o caráter “bitextual” que Naomi Schor encontra na literatura feminina. Essa bitextualidade, ou tonalidade dupla, ficará particularmente evidente na literatura de viagens escrita por mulheres. A viajante é uma figura que vive *on the edge*, deslizando nos pontos de interseção cultural. Arlequim, ora na posição masculina – aventura, perigo, deslocamento – ora na feminina, que lhe garantia a continuidade da aceitação social, reverte por um lado a ideologia dominante ao empreender a jornada mas estabelece, através dela, um espaço de poder no lugar visitado. Figura ambígua, liminar, é ao mesmo tempo centro e periferia, constituindo simultaneamente identidade e alteridade. Superior como raça, inferior como gênero, a mulher-viajante se situa em uma rede complexa de relações de dominação e subordinação, assumindo posições de sujeito contraditórias em lugares de poder (ou falta de poder) que se encontram em processo constante de deslocamento e mutação. Essa instabilidade na posição da mulher – de descentramento/

recentramento – accentua o aspecto de bitextualidade dos textos de viagem.

Pode-se, então, falar em um texto feminino de viagem, ou em um gênero paralelo de literatura de viagem? O ponto que desejo ressaltar é que há uma marca de gênero (*gender*) na significação tanto das viagens quanto dos relatos escritos por mulheres e que as pressões decorrentes da posição feminina marcam uma diferença com relação à produção masculina. Além disso, os textos se colocam em uma cadeia de produção e recepção: as mulheres escritoras têm de negociar sua inserção nessa cadeia. As pressões ideológicas e culturais e a preocupação com a recepção se tornam determinantes no ato de produção, deixando marcas discursivas visíveis em seus textos.

Os relatos de viagem tinham, no século XIX, enorme demanda, perdendo em popularidade apenas para o romance. Embora esse tipo de texto se associasse a uma atividade na esfera externa à casa, por outro lado se situava na linha da literatura confessional, considerada mais feminina. Além disso, havia, para muitos já, e cada vez mais no decorrer do século, o atrativo de serem textos escritos por mulheres. Muitas viajantes chegaram até a estabelecer sua reputação como escritoras tanto de relatos de viagens como de outros tipos de textos. Algumas delas conheceram, ainda em vida, um grande sucesso.

≡≡≡ *Figura ambígua, liminar, a viajante é ao*
≡≡≡ *mesmo tempo centro e periferia,*
≡≡≡ *constituindo simultaneamente*
≡≡≡ *identidade e alteridade*

A recepção de seus relatos pode, na falta de dados precisos na maioria dos casos, ser avaliada através de vários indicadores: resenhas e ensaios críticos sobre as obras, referências às autoras ou a seus textos em obras de outros autores, inclusão em antologias contemporâneas. Outro indicador importante é a publicação de suas biografias, como as de Isabel Burton e Elizabeth Agassiz, após seu falecimento.

A visibilidade e participação crescentes das mulheres em mais essa atividade anteriormente inacessível não podia deixar de ser reconhecida, sendo que a previsível

reação ao novo fenômeno era uma desqualificação sexista. As referências às viajantes encontradas na imprensa e publicações da época eram frequentemente hostis, com observações agressivas e satíricas. Sem dúvida, o que essas reações revelam é o desconforto com relação à transgressão dos modelos de feminilidade prescritos socialmente. De fato, as escritoras estavam cometendo uma transgressão dupla: a entrada na esfera pública pela viagem e pela escrita. Mesmo quando a forma

≡ *As escritoras estavam cometendo uma* ≡
≡ *transgressão dupla: a entrada na esfera* ≡
≡ *pública pela viagem e pela escrita* ≡

de encarar as viajantes era positiva, o que se tratava era de ressaltar sua adequação aos valores dominantes. A ênfase era sempre em sua feminilidade e na propriedade e decoro das atitudes da autora, ou seja, em sua aparência feminina e em sua virtude.

Essa tentativa de legitimar a viagem pela apropriação do discurso da ideologia sexual contemporânea indica que muitas das viajantes evitavam associar suas viagens a uma posição radical ou a um confronto direto com a visão vitoriana da mulher. Essa visão, baseada na noção de esferas separadas para homens e mulheres, nas diferenças intelectuais e emocionais entre eles e na superioridade moral da mulher, encontra eco tanto nos que criticavam como nos que defendiam as viajantes. É como se a ideologia dominante oferecesse, mais do que o confronto direto, a possibilidade de expandir os limites do patriarcalismo a partir da própria moldura patriarcal, antes que criticar as bases sexuais da opressão da mulher. Os críticos mais liberais, como já indicado, criticavam o tratamento dado à mulher mas não ofereciam alternativa a não ser a negociação de espaços mais expandidos. Para as mulheres, então, a única possibilidade era a de se apropriarem da ideologia da domesticidade, utilizando-a para repensar as esferas de atuação permitidas à mulher.

Fica visível, nos relatos de viagens e em outros textos, comentários ou atitudes das viajantes, que elas tratavam, com tenacidade, de aderir à imagem feminina prescrita socialmente. Por um lado, tanto na Inglaterra como nos

Estados Unidos, havia parâmetros já estabelecidos para a escrita feminina, incluindo a ênfase na emoção e sentimentalismo, a delicadeza da expressão, a opção pela forma confessional de cartas e diários que mantivessem uma adequada orientação doméstica ou privada, prescrições com relação a assunto e estilo, etc. As estratégias utilizadas pelas escritoras para garantir uma feminilidade aceitável variavam. Além das marcas de feminilidade utilizadas, há uma tentativa de adequação aos preceitos da era vitoriana através de justificativas socialmente aceitáveis para a viagem, o que não inclui, evidentemente, prazer ou *self-fulfillment*. Além de razões de saúde ou a obrigação primeira de acompanhar os maridos (que são as universalmente preferidas), razões adicionais fornecidas são outras obrigações familiares (inclusive a busca de soluções para problemas financeiros), motivos filantrópicos, atividades profissionais ou o trabalho missionário, a enfermagem, o magistério. A legitimação da viagem viria a ter um impacto na recepção do relato, o que, é claro, era de interesse das autoras. Outra estratégia usada pelas autoras era a indicação de que o tipo de informação apresentada ou de evento retratado em seus livros – ou seja, assuntos não sérios – mantinha-se em um nível apropriado a mulheres. Quando a inclusão de assuntos sérios ocorre, são utilizadas mediações masculinas ou apêndices, de forma a preservar o registro feminino adequado.

≡ *As viajantes tratavam, com tenacidade,* ≡
≡ *de aderir à imagem feminina prescrita* ≡
≡ *socialmente* ≡

Outra forma de colocação dos relatos escritos por mulheres em um contexto feminino apropriado é a inclusão de um prefácio legitimador escrito pelo marido ou pelo editor, chamando a atenção do público para as características “femininas” da autora e do texto e para o fato de que não há nenhuma pretensão a mérito literário ou científico – uma afirmação muitas vezes feita, na introdução ou no texto, pela própria autora.

Observe-se que as autoras se referem com frequência ao fato de estarem publicando diários ou cartas enviadas

à família e amigos, ressaltando tanto a vinculação à esfera doméstica em termos de destinatário quanto o caráter “privado” do texto original. Cartas e diários constituem formas associadas à escrita confessional considerada à época como um modo mais feminino.

Em muitos casos, as escritoras se escondem sob um pseudônimo, simplesmente assinam o nome do marido ou até mesmo lhe concedem co-autoria, ou assumem apenas a função de narradoras da vida heróica do esposo. O nome do marido funciona como fator de legitimação, ecoando a ideologia vitoriana que só conferia existência social à esposa através do esposo – uma identidade relacional, antes que individual. A questão da autoria dos textos terá, então, implicações óbvias para a constituição do sujeito feminino. Vale lembrar aqui a afirmação de Sandra Gilbert e Susan Gunbar quanto à ansiedade vivida pelas mulheres escritoras. Elas, ao contrário da ansiedade de influência vivida pelos escritores homens, vivenciam uma ansiedade de autoria, duvidando não só do que escrevem, mas de sua própria capacidade como autoras.

≡≡≡ *Cartas e diários constituem formas* ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ *associadas à escrita confessional* ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ *considerada à época como um modo* ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ *mais feminino* ≡≡≡

Dois dos exemplos mais interessantes desse tipo de autonegação da mulher ocorrem no *corpus* de textos de viagem sobre o Brasil: um é o da inglesa Isabel Burton e outro o da norte-americana Elizabeth Agassiz.

Isabel, Lady Burton, percorreu o mundo com seu marido, Sir Richard Burton, que foi cônsul da Inglaterra em Santos. Com ele, ou às vezes sozinha, traduziu várias obras (incluindo *Iracema* e *O Uruguai*). Após enviuar, dedicou-se a organizar e editar as cartas e diários do marido, publicando sua versão deles como *The Life of Sir Richard Burton*. A dedicatória – *consecration* – dispensa comentários:

A meu Mestre terreno, que espera por mim nas fronteiras do Céu. Enquanto espero encontrar-me com você, deixo como mensagem ao Mundo que habitamos o relato da vida na qual nossas duas vidas se fundiram. Quem dera

que eu pudesse escrever tão bem como posso amar, e fazê-lo a justiça e a honra que merece! Darei o melhor de mim, e depois deixarei tudo a penas mais brilhantes cujos manejadores sentirão menos – e escreverão melhor. Encontre-me logo – espero seu sinal!⁵

A própria dedicatória se encarrega de estabelecer com clareza o tipo de relação entre marido e mulher: a palavra *Master* significa Mestre e também Dono; além disso, o uso da palavra *frontier* confirma a condição de explorador de Sir Richard Burton, até depois de morto.

No prefácio, Lady Burton reitera sua posição de inferioridade com relação ao marido:

começo com humildade não fingida. Nunca precisei de ninguém que me dissesse que meu marido estava num pedestal muito acima de mim, ou de qualquer outra pessoa no mundo (p. ix).

W. H. Wilkins, editor e autor do prefácio de *The Life of Sir Richard Burton*, explica que “se Lady Burton não apresentava algumas das qualidades do biógrafo ideal, ela compensava a lacuna pelo zelo e devoção que a inspiraram em sua tarefa!” (p. iii). Colocando de forma ainda mais explícita a obra em um contexto de escrita feminina – e, portanto, limitada e insuficiente –, o editor confessa, ecoando a ideologia vitoriana,

duvidar que uma mulher pudesse fazer justiça a todos os aspectos da personalidade de Burton, pois a diferença psicológica entre homem e mulher é tão essencial como a física, e a perspectiva feminina não pode ser igual à masculina [...] mas, apesar disso, este livro representa o coroamento da vida de uma mulher devotada, que amou seu marido com um amor acima do amor de mulher (p. iv).

Na *Foreword* da obra, Isabel acrescenta um comentário que deixa ainda mais claro o preconceito contra as escritoras: uma biografia de seu marido, escrita por Mr. Hitchman ainda em vida de Richard Burton, e que foi erroneamente considerada pela imprensa como sendo de autoria dela, teve a seguinte recepção:

uma outra parte da Imprensa disse que eu fui muito ingênua e não fiz nada para colocar um verniz sobre os erros e fraquezas dos jovens Burtons; eles duvidaram da correção de minhas informações — fui informada que meu estilo era muito brusco e direto, e de todas as minhas limitações [...] os dois lados da Imprensa em suas resenhas acharam que eu tinha escrito o livro; isso encantou Richard, e ele não me deixou refutar. Nem uma palavra era minha (p.viii).

A questão da escrita se encontra, nesse texto, intimamente ligada à problemática do gênero e do estatuto social da mulher e da escritora, o que se revela pela tentativa de legitimá-la como mais uma faceta do papel de esposa assumido por Isabel Burton. Observe-se ainda que Wilkins considera que o tipo de devoção que Lady Burton tinha pelo marido constituía uma forma de amor superior à que uma mulher pode sentir. Ironicamente, para estar à altura de falar sobre o marido, ainda que de forma imperfeita, Isabel tem sua devoção absoluta e monolítica de esposa caracterizada como não-feminina.

≡ *A melhor estratégia para legitimar sua*
≡ *versão é a incorporação da voz de*
≡ *Burton* ≡

Também Isabel ressalta repetidamente a superioridade de Burton, não somente como seu marido (daí a utilização bastante freqüente de verbos e expressões de mando e obediência, como a famosa frase com que Burton lhe recomendava que resolvesse todos os negócios — “pay, pack, and follow”), mas em termos das qualidades morais e intelectuais que o distinguem. Daí sua função, como esposa, de ajudá-lo e ressaltar seu valor, expressa na metáfora do navio glorioso com velas desfraldadas, com que se refere a ele, e a do “rebocador escondido a seu lado, com seus braços leais e fortes, que se glorifica pelo navio majestoso” (p. 230), com a qual se descreve.

O livro é mais uma decorrência desse papel. Como o monumento em forma de tenda que Isabel faz construir após a morte de Sir Burton, o texto se apresenta como um tributo a sua memória e uma tentativa de

devolver-lhe o lugar que lhe fora negado por perseguição e injustiça. Trata-se de mais um complemento ao esforço de valorização do marido que sempre lhe coubera, como esposa leal. Daí a necessidade de legitimar sua fala a partir do lugar privilegiado que ocupara, ao lado de Burton, por mais de trinta anos, como “esposa e mãe, e companheira, e secretária, e ajudante de ordens, e agente” (p. 546). É a partir desse lugar que Isabel constrói sua imagem do marido e a apresenta ao leitor, desqualificando, implícita e explicitamente, qualquer outra versão sobre Richard Burton, o que, é claro, tem óbvias implicações mercadológicas. Em diferentes pontos do relato, e mais particularmente no capítulo final, intitulado “Os dois pontos contestados entre mim e um pequeno grupo de antagonistas”, Isabel se refere a seu conhecimento em primeira mão de informações sobre Burton que somente ela possuía, de documentos aos quais só ela tivera acesso, do manuscrito que queimara e do homem privado, que se diferenciava de sua face pública.

A melhor estratégia para legitimar sua versão é, além de todas as questões acima, a incorporação da voz de Burton. Isabel transcreve, assim, cartas, trechos de seus diários particulares, fragmentos de uma autobiografia iniciada em 1852 e longas citações de outras obras, “deixando-o falar por si sempre que possível” (p. vii). O narrador do texto é, digamos assim, duplo ou deslizante. Há, por exemplo, um capítulo, “Genealogia e família”, escrito “por ele mesmo. Transcrito de seus diários particulares” (p. 1), que antecede o conhecimento da autora sobre o marido. Mas há também capítulos e trechos que se referem exclusivamente a percepções de Isabel Burton, como o capítulo X, “Richard me ama”, e o capítulo XIV, “Richard e eu nos encontramos novamente”. Em outros trechos, Isabel intercala textos de Burton com suas próprias opiniões. Faz resumos, acrescenta notas explicativas, efetua transições entre eventos e fatos apresentados, além de pontuar a narrativa com suas percepções e memórias e com epígrafes e citações de poemas. Tudo isso marca a presença de seu olhar interpretativo — interpretação que é a única válida, por ser ela a esposa.

A autoria deslizante se expressa, ainda, pela inclusão de aspas e pela utilização consistente de tipos gráficos

diferentes para os textos de Burton e de Isabel Burton. Essa separação gráfica entre as duas escritas é contestada, ironicamente, pelo movimento oposto de ressaltar a imbricação entre elas. Assim, a interferência de Richard e Isabel nos escritos do outro é ressaltada de várias maneiras. Isabel se refere, por exemplo, à elaboração conjunta de cartas e traduções e a opiniões emitidas sobre o que o outro escrevia. Burton chegara até mesmo a proibir (o verbo é dela) a publicação do primeiro livro escrito por Isabel sobre Tenerife e a Ilha da Madeira, “porque pensou que não estava à altura” (p. 234). Ela destaca tanto seu papel como editora dos textos do marido, durante sua vida e após sua morte, como o dele na produção de seus textos: “assim, em um período de três anos, nós tínhamos produzido vinte e dois volumes — os dez originais, os seis suplementos, e meus seis volumes, isto é, chamados meus volumes” (p. 459, grifos meus). A própria autora justifica, em outra ocasião, a utilização da primeira pessoa do plural: “Eu sempre digo ‘nós’, porque eu entro tanto nos propósitos de meu marido, e tenho tanto orgulho de que me seja *permitido* ajudá-lo, que às vezes esqueço que eu sou *apenas* como o que aciona os foles para o organista” (p. 337, grifos meus). A grande identificação entre ambos promove, assim, uma ampliação da autoria, reforçando um deslizamento entre biografia e autobiografia e legitimando Isabel como porta-voz do marido.

Isabel Burton colocava-se
prioritariamente na posição de ajudante
do marido

Tanto é assim que só depois de terminar a biografia de Sir Richard Burton Lady Burton iniciou a preparação de seu próprio diário para publicação, mas morreu logo após o início do trabalho. O livro, concluído por um amigo seu, foi publicado sob o título *The Romance of Isabel, Lady Burton*. É irônico que ela tenha optado por registrar sua vida de maneira vicária, através da do marido, e depois não tenha tido tempo de escrever sua autobiografia. Trata-se de uma curiosa simetria, pois a tarefa foi concluída por um homem, o mesmo W. H. Wilkins

que havia prefaciado a biografia de Burton e que registrara as limitações femininas de Lady Burton como biógrafa do marido.

Isabel foi acusada de ter praticado um
ato de vingança devido a seu papel
sempre subordinado a Burton

Fairfax Downey destaca que Isabel Burton, embora tivesse brilho próprio como biógrafa, editora, linguísta e escritora de livros de viagem, colocava-se prioritariamente na posição de ajudante do marido:

Ela era seu *aide de plume*, agente literário, revisora e relações públicas. Um sonho realizado, ela era a extraordinária esposa de um autor. Só seu ato fatal e imperdoável, após a morte [de Burton], nega-lhe o título que teria, a não ser por isso, sido conferido a ela: o de esposa ideal de um autor.⁶

Foi como inventariante literária de Burton que Isabel cometeu o erro fatal a que se refere Downey: após a morte do marido, queimou sua agenda de toda a vida, todos os seus diários (com exceção de um), vários manuscritos⁷, resumos de cartas enviadas e recebidas, anotações sobre tópicos diversos relativos ao Oriente e o manuscrito de mais de mil páginas que Burton, no dia de sua morte, declarou que iria concluir na manhã seguinte, e que ele considerava sua obra magna: a tradução anotada de *O jardim dos perfumes que alegrem o coração do homem*, compêndio árabe sobre o amor escrito por El Shaykh el Nafzawih. Como havia expectativa quanto à publicação da obra, Isabel teve de confessar seu ato. A reação de parentes e amigos de Burton foi violenta, e Isabel recebeu, até sua morte, cartas anônimas insultantes. Seus críticos a acusaram, inclusive pela imprensa, de ter praticado um ato de vingança devido a seu papel sempre subordinado a Burton; foi chamada de histérica e inculta e acusada de praticar um moralismo católico retrógrado; seu gesto foi considerado um dos piores crimes literários já cometidos. Isabel se defendeu em cartas a jornais e no final de sua biografia do marido com o argumento de que, embora Burton nunca tivesse escrito nada de forma impu-

ra, a maioria dos leitores leria a obra “for filth’s sake”; o mal seria incalculável, pois os leitores poderiam passar o livros a jovens e mulheres... Além disso, estando morto, Burton não poderia controlar nem contestar a opinião dos outros sobre o livro, e sua reputação seria atacada.

≡ *Isabel se vê finalmente na posição de*
≡ *censora, podendo mutilar e destruir*
≡ *textos*

O supremo argumento, porém (ao qual se acrescentava o sonho que tivera com o marido, em que ele lhe pedia que queimasse o manuscrito...), era o de que ela tinha a obrigação de proteger a alma de Burton contra a danação eterna, pois ele teria de prestar contas a Deus por essa obra. Quaisquer que tenham sido os motivos, eles eram fortes o suficiente para levá-la a recusar, apesar de se encontrar em uma situação financeira bastante precária, os seis mil guinéus que um editor lhe oferecera pelo manuscrito. Esta foi, sem dúvida, a intervenção mais decisiva de Isabel na obra de Burton – um verdadeiro auto-de-fé no momento em que ela, e somente ela, adquiriu poder absoluto sobre sua obra. Isabel, que sempre obedecera às ordens de Burton, inclusive quanto ao que devia publicar ou não, mas nunca conseguira influenciá-lo a mudar seus textos ou a abandonar certos tópicos, se vê finalmente na posição de censora, podendo mutilar e destruir textos. É a situação com a qual ela parece ter sonhado desde a edição das *Mil e uma noites*, quando havia pontuado o manuscrito de Burton com sugestões moralistas, sem conseguir que ele a atendesse. A edição sem cortes de Burton obteve enorme sucesso; Isabel teve que contentar-se em preparar uma edição para “leitura doméstica”, que foi um total fracasso editorial⁸. Teria a queima dos manuscritos sido sua resposta final a Burton? Paradoxalmente, ou talvez para preencher o vazio das obras destruídas, Isabel se dedicou posteriormente a compor a biografia de Burton e a organizar a *memorial edition* de suas obras já publicadas, escrevendo inclusive todos os prefácios⁹. Isabel constrói, nesses textos, o Richard Burton que quer deixar para a posteridade. Supremo poder o de destruir parte tão importante

de sua produção e registros pessoais, destruir, enfim, os registros que ele fez de si mesmo, substituindo-os pelo simulacro produzido por ela. Dupla morte, a de Richard Burton. É impossível ignorar a ironia da dedicatória de Isabel a seu mestre e dono e de seus protestos de humildade e inferioridade com relação ao marido, em texto publicado após seu gesto de violência contra ele. Revolta de escravo após a morte do amo?

≡ *Elizabeth Agassiz se dedicou, como*
≡ *Isabel Burton, a escrever a biografia e a*
≡ *organizar a correspondência do marido*

Também a obra de Elizabeth Agassiz evidencia o processo de legitimação da escrita feminina pelo nome do homem: o diário *A Journey to Brazil*, publicado sob seu nome e o do marido (o dele primeiro, e ela no papel de esposa – *by Professor and Mrs. Louis Agassiz*), foi, na verdade, escrito por ela, embora apresentando notas de pé de página escritas por ele e, entre aspas, cartas e trechos de palestras de sua autoria¹⁰. A co-autoria, portanto, não se justifica.

Natural de Boston, Massachusetts (1822-1907), Elizabeth casou-se em 1850 com o naturalista suíço Jean Louis Agassiz, que se naturalizou norte-americano em 1863. Agassiz foi aluno e amigo de Spix (baseou na coleção de Spix e de Martius o seu livro *The Fishes of Brazil*, 1829, ilustrado por sua primeira mulher) e amigo de Humboldt. Em 1846 Agassiz, já viúvo, foi convidado a lecionar no Lowell Institute de Boston, onde conheceu Elizabeth Cabot Cary, com a qual se casou em 1850. Após o casamento, ambos colaboraram em inúmeros projetos, incluindo uma viagem científica à Sullivan’s Island, na Carolina do Sul. Para custear as despesas crescentes com os trabalhos de pesquisa – o que, aliás, constitui, em termos do papel feminino e dos deveres conjugais da mulher, uma justificativa adequada para legitimar seu próprio trabalho profissional –, Elizabeth abriu, em 1855, a Agassiz School para meninas, em nível de escola secundária, mantendo-a até 1863. Em 1865, com financiamento de Nathaniel Thayer, um magnata de Boston, Louis Agassiz organizou a Thayer Expedition

ao Brasil, da qual Elizabeth participou ativamente. Após o retorno aos Estados Unidos, ela foi, em 1878-79, uma de sete mulheres com quem o casal Arthur Gilman discutiu a implantação de um programa de educação superior para mulheres, que veio a se chamar Harvard Annex. Quando esse programa se transformou na Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women em 1882, Elizabeth Agassiz foi sua primeira reitora. Mais tarde, de 1893 a 1899, foi fundadora e primeira reitora do Radcliffe College e de 1900 a 1902 sua Honorary President.

≡≡≡ Elizabeth, cujo prenome sequer é ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ mencionado em várias edições, só é ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ nomeada como apêndice conjugal do ≡≡≡
≡≡≡ nome do esposo ≡≡≡

Em 1859, ela havia publicado, sob o pseudônimo de Actinea, *First Lesson in Natural History*, que teve nove edições até 1899. Partes de seu relato da Thayer Expedition ao Brasil (abril 1865-agosto 1866) foram publicadas em jornais, antes da publicação de *A Journey to Brazil* (1867). Em 1868, houve mais três edições de *Journey*, seguidas por várias outras em 1871, 1875 (uma “nona edição”) e 1895. Em 1869 foi publicada a tradução francesa, seguida de uma edição resumida em 1872. A tradução portuguesa só foi publicada em 1938. A obra continua despertando interesse, tanto nos Estados Unidos como no Brasil, com edições datadas, respectivamente, de 1969 e 1975. Mais tarde, após a morte do marido, Elizabeth Agassiz se dedicou, como Isabel Burton, a escrever sua biografia e a organizar sua correspondência e publicou *Louis Agassiz, His Life and Correspondence* (1885). Elizabeth morreu em 1907. Sua biografia, *The Life of Elizabeth Agassiz*, foi publicada por Lucy Allen Paton em 1919.

E é justamente esse tipo de mulher – claramente um protótipo da New Woman norte-americana – que vai “conceder” co-autoria de seu diário ao marido. Ele escreve o prefácio (manifestando-se aqui, bem dentro da tradição, a voz legitimadora do homem), as notas científicas, alguns apêndices e um último capítulo (curto) intitulado “Impressões gerais” (em suma, os trechos “sérios” do diário), mas assina o texto em superioridade de condições:

Professor and Mrs. Louis Agassiz! Elizabeth, cujo prenome sequer é mencionado em várias edições, só é nomeada como apêndice conjugal do nome do esposo.

Já no prefácio, Agassiz considera o diário um precursor das futuras obras, de caráter científico, que ele planeja publicar sobre o Brasil. Comentando a forma de produção do livro, afirma que *Journey*

é produto mais das circunstâncias que de um propósito premeditado. *Um pouco para satisfação de seus amigos, um pouco pela idéia de que me seria útil ligar umas às outras as minhas observações científicas por alguma narrativa, a sra. Agassiz registrou dia a dia as nossas aventuras. Habituei-me logo a fornecer-lhe uma nota cotidiana do resultado dos meus trabalhos, bem certo de que ela nada deixaria perder-se do que merecesse ser conservado. Devido a esse sistema de trabalho, nossas contribuições mútuas para o “Diário” tanto se confundiram que nos foi mais ou menos impossível separar a parte de cada qual (p. 12, grifos meus).*

Como no texto de Lady Burton, a referência é a uma escrita imbricada, em que as vozes de marido e mulher se confundem. Mas isso não corresponde à verdade: Elizabeth coloca aspas e o nome do marido em todos os seus textos; além disso, as mudanças de registro identificam perfeitamente a autoria de cada trecho. Isso sem contar que Agassiz assina o prefácio e deixa clara a autoria do último capítulo. Como não há nenhuma dúvida quanto aos textos produzidos por ele, estaria Agassiz indicando que a parte escrita pela esposa é que não pode ser identificada?¹¹ Note-se também a valoração diferente das partes do relato, sendo que a de autoria de Elizabeth, além de pretender agradar aos amigos, tem a função meramente instrumental – útil – e claramente subsidiária de articular, “com alguma narrativa”, as observações científicas do marido. No capítulo final, Agassiz conclui: “Não devo encerrar este livro, em grande parte escrito por outra mão que não a minha, sem dizer algumas palavras das minhas impressões gerais sobre o Brasil” (p. 289). É interessante notar a oposição entre a primeira pessoa e a “posse” do texto que ele tem o poder de encerrar e o reconhecimento da participação menor como autor, o que entra

em contradição com a apropriação que efetua em outras ocasiões, como na nota 7 do Capítulo XII, na qual também se evidencia a maior importância social que confere a si mesmo em comparação a sua mulher: “Concluindo esta narração de *nossa* viagem pelo Amazonas, devo agradecer as atenções que para *comigo* tiveram vários amigos” (p. 236, grifos meus). É também interessante que, na apresentação de Mário Guimarães Ferri à edição brasileira, as referências a Elizabeth sejam mínimas, sem nenhum destaque a seu papel de autora.

≡≡≡ *A posição de Elizabeth é totalmente*
≡≡≡ *subsidiária, sendo seu papel apenas o*
≡≡≡ *de colaborar com o marido em suas*
≡≡≡ *grandes realizações*

Elizabeth, entretanto, assume, no texto, a autoria. Ela se refere com frequência a “meu diário” (p. 21 e p. 233, por exemplo), usa a terceira pessoa para mencionar o marido e, às vezes, refere-se a ele com bastante ironia:

nem por isso deixamos de ter a nossa conferência habitual, embora seja dito que, com o balanço do navio, o orador bata na mesa com o nariz muito mais do que convém à majestade da ciência (p. 29).

Entretanto, não há referência a seu trabalho como educadora e autora de livro científico de grande sucesso: Elizabeth, no aspecto do conhecimento, se mantém no *background* do marido, como se não tivesse carreira independente. Sua posição é totalmente subsidiária, sendo seu papel apenas o de colaborar com o marido em suas grandes realizações.

Confirmando a posição de sujeito feminina, de acordo com a visão vitoriana, uma estrofe de Longfellow foi incluída como epígrafe da primeira edição, destacando o papel de apoio emocional da mulher:

And whenever the way seemed long,
or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
Or tell a more marvellous tale.

Note-se o caráter maternal das formas de apoio mencionadas, que parecem evocar canções de ninar e narração de histórias infantis. A partir dessa epígrafe, fica totalmente excluída a contribuição intelectual de Elizabeth durante a viagem.

Uma avaliação do texto bastante reveladora foi feita por William James, outro dos participantes da expedição na qualidade de pesquisador e desenhista. James comenta que, ao ler o livro, ficou “agradavelmente desapontado”, pois havia “temido encontrar descrições excessivas de pores-do-sol” mas considerava que “Elizabeth Agassiz havia variado habilmente o conteúdo [...] de forma a entreter e interessar o leitor”¹². Em outras palavras, o texto é interessante porque Elizabeth não escreve como se espera que uma mulher escreva...

Pois é exatamente a parte do texto escrita por Elizabeth que assegura a recepção contemporânea do livro. Há outras obras de Agassiz em que o leitor em busca de informações científicas encontraria tratamento mais organizado de assuntos de seu interesse. Mas apenas em *A Journey to Brazil* se dão, pela voz e pena de Elizabeth, o registro de elementos da vida de índios e negros, a discussão comparativa de aspectos das experiências brasileira e norte-americana (escravidão, vida urbana, formas de comportamento), a representação do espaço doméstico e de atividades a ele relacionadas, a avaliação do trabalho desenvolvido em escolas e estabelecimentos de assistência e, principalmente, os comentários sobre a condição feminina no Brasil. Nesse último aspecto, o texto de Elizabeth Agassiz apresenta uma contribuição ímpar entre os viajantes, pois, agora, não pode deixar de falar como a educadora que era na Agassiz School para moças. Embora sem mencionar sua experiência na área, ela focaliza a questão da educação da mulher de maneira detalhada, ressaltando o baixo nível de ensino nas escolas femininas, o pequeno tempo de permanência das alunas nesses estabelecimentos, a ausência de educação doméstica, os péssimos hábitos de leitura dos brasileiros e o caráter retrógrado da literatura a que as mulheres tinham acesso. Mesmo que fossem retirados de *A Journey in Brazil* os textos científicos, o livro sustentaria sem nenhuma dúvida o interesse do leitor de hoje.

Mas nem por isso Elizabeth deixa de conceder ao marido o capítulo final “Impressões gerais”, ficando ele, portanto, com a última palavra. É interessante notar que a crítica contemporânea aos Agassiz não captou a ironia da observação feita sobre o caráter afortunado do cientista, cujas duas mulheres se dedicaram a ajudá-lo em sua obra – a primeira, ilustrando seus livros, e a segunda, entre outras atividades, registrando suas viagens!

Parece que se trata, então, de negociar o equilíbrio possível entre a escrita feminina tradicional e a escrita da nova mulher. Embora Isabel Burton e Elizabeth Agassiz se mantenham ainda ancoradas na visão vitoriana da mulher, não chegando a contestar o sistema patriarcal anglo-americano nem a problematizar sua própria posição, a questão da autoria de seus textos indicia os limites e pressões a que se encontram submetidas. Sua escrita é construída

como dependente e subsidiária e expressa o estatuto da voz feminina que desliza em um espaço textual emprestado, roubado, mas também dele se apropria. Tensa e fragmentada, a escrita feminina nesses dois textos se apresenta como subordinada e periférica, cortada e recortada pela voz do homem, mas ao mesmo tempo contém em si mesma a possibilidade de reversão de seu estatuto secundário.

Toda viagem envolve um remapeamento, uma redefinição de fronteiras, uma negociação entre a casa e o lugar distante, entre a própria cultura e a cultura outra, entre posições de sujeito deslizantes. A viagem e a escrita representam para a mulher, apesar das necessárias negociações, uma forma de dissidência. Nesse lugar híbrido, liminar, fronteiro, o olhar feminino desliza, ao mesmo tempo cúmplice e resistente, ancorado e à deriva, enraizado e deslocado, “estrangeiro a si mesmo”.

NOTAS

¹WEDON, Chris. *Feminist Practice and Post-Structuralist Thought*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1987, p. 2. Minha tradução.

²MCCRAY, Lois. *Foucault and Feminism. Power, Gender and the Self*. Boston, Northeastern University Press, 1993, p. 13. Minha tradução.

³WELTER, Barbara. *The Cult of True Womanhood, 1820-1860*. *American Quarterly*, v. 18, n. 2, part 1, p. 152. Minha tradução.

⁴BRIDENTHAL, Renate, KOONG, Claudia & STUART, Susan. *Becoming Visible. Women in European History*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1978, p. 4. Minha tradução.

⁵BURTON, Isabel Arundell. *The Life of Sir Richard Burton, K.C.M.G., by His Wife*. London, Chapman and Hall, 1893, p. iii. Minha tradução. As páginas das demais citações desta obra estarão indicadas, no texto, entre parênteses.

⁶DOWNNEY, Fairfax. *Lady Isabel Burton: Author's Wife Extraordinary*. *The Colophon*, New York, n. 10, part 16, p. 1, 1934.

⁷Em *Tres mujeres: la vida de Simone Weil, Isabel Burton y Karoline von Günderode* (Madrid, Alfaguara, 1983, p. 109), Frederik Hetmann lista os manuscritos queimados por Lady Burton: *More Notes on Paraguay, Personal Experiences in Syria, Lowlands of Brazil, South America, North America, Central America, A Book of Istria more Castellieri, Materials for Four More Books on Camoens, Slavonic proverbs, Dr. Wetstein's Hawaiian, Ausonius Epigrams, A Study of the Wali, A Trip up the Congo (1863), Ober Ammergau, Vichy,*

Lectures and Poetry, The Eunuch Trade in Egypt, The Adelsburg Caves, The Neapolitan Muses, Syrian Proverbs e Four Cantos of Ariosto.

⁸Trata-se de *Arabian Nights: Lady Burton's Edition of her Husband's Arabian Nights* [...] Prepared for Household Reading by J.H. McCarthy. London, Waterlow & Sons, 1886.

⁹Esta edição foi publicada em Londres em 1893 e 1894.

¹⁰Utilizei a edição norte-americana de 1867 (Boston/New York, Houghton Mifflin) e a tradução brasileira de João Etienne Filho (*Viagem ao Brasil, 1865-1866*. Belo Horizonte/São Paulo, Itatiaia/Edusp, 1975). As citações foram tiradas da edição brasileira, sendo as páginas indicadas entre parênteses.

¹¹Comprova-se a incorreção dessa avaliação de Agassiz em *A margem do livro de Agassiz*, de Raimundo Morais (São Paulo, Melhoramentos, 1939). Embora o título do livro mantenha a atribuição exclusiva de autoria a Louis Agassiz, o que se confirma no capítulo introdutório, “Rio sem História”, toda a leitura feita por Morais, que pontua e comenta passo a passo o texto de *Journey*, distingue explicitamente os trechos escritos por ele e por Elizabeth Agassiz.

¹²Citação de L.H. Thorp em *Adventurous Alliance: The Story of the Agassiz Family of Boston*, 1959, apud SUTTON, Susan. Elizabeth Agassiz. In: MANINIERO, Lina (ed.). *American Women Writers*. New York, Frederick Ungar, 1979. v. 1, p. 24.

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Nos últimos anos, tem crescido o reconhecimento da importância das chamadas questões coloniais e imperiais no estudo da literatura inglesa, tanto aquela escrita durante o período colonial em si quanto a que é produzida mais tarde, por ocasião do surgimento do que veio a se chamar “novas literaturas em língua inglesa”. Paralelamente, surgiu uma teoria e práxis crítica que se autodenomina “pós-colonial”.

Apesar da relevância da obra de Frantz Fanon, escrita na década de 60, para fins pedagógicos, costuma-se considerar *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978), de autoria de Edward W. Said, o ponto de partida da teoria pós-colonial. Em retrospectiva, *Orientalism* é frequentemente apontado como texto-chave, a partir do qual a noção de discurso colonialista, em toda a sua complexidade, envolvendo ao mesmo tempo o colonizador e o colonizado, torna-se objeto central de estudo. *Orientalism* defende a tese de que o pensamento ocidental produziu uma simplificação histórica e cultural do Oriente, chegando, erroneamente, a uma idéia estereotipada, generalizada e reducionista de “Oriente”, algo que, na sua dimensão real, em termos geográficos, representa cerca de um terço da superfície do planeta, com história e cultura milenares¹.

Costuma-se considerar *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* o ponto de partida da teoria pós-colonial

A partir da sensibilidade crítica de Fanon, Said e outros, surge uma nova disciplina, que passa por diferentes denominações até chegar à atual. Enquanto o Império Britânico se desintegra e, ao mesmo tempo, procura preservar uma ilusão de unidade através do eufemismo “Comunidade”, surge nas periferias dos departamentos de Inglês de universidades localizadas em países de língua inglesa um novo “produto”: “Commonwealth Literature” (literatura da Comunidade Britânica), na verdade um eufemismo que, além de encerrar uma

Shakespeare além do estético: *A tempestade* e o pós(-)colonial

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ambigüidade política, contém fortes implicações ideológicas que logo o comprometem². Sendo assim, a disciplina recebe da crítica uma nova denominação – “Post-colonial Literature” –, que apresenta vantagens com relação à anterior, na medida em que sugere uma política de oposição e luta e problematiza a relação crucial entre centro e periferia. Além disso, a denominação “literatura pós-colonial” tem contribuído para desestabilizar as barreiras que cercam a “literatura inglesa”, barreiras essas que protegem o conjunto de obras canônicas e os valores estéticos que as consagraram³.

Para se consolidar no currículo, a nova disciplina carecia de um livro-texto. Com a publicação, em 1989, de *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, organizado por Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths e Helen Tiffin, tal necessidade foi atendida. O tema central de *The Empire Writes Back* é a relação entre a periferia e o centro metropolitano, no contexto da literatura pós-colonial. No entanto, como seria de esperar, o “livro-texto” da teoria pós-colonial foi objeto de crítica. Alguns acharam ter a obra uma visão excessivamente globalizante. Com efeito, os autores afirmam que empregam o termo “pós-colonialismo [...] para cobrir as culturas afetadas pelo processo imperialista, desde o momento da colonização até o presente”⁴. Alguns críticos entendem que tal propósito seja, ao mesmo tempo, simplista e ambicioso demais. Mishra e Hodge, por exemplo, queixam-se de que em *The Empire Writes Back* “particularidades são homogeneizadas” (p. 278). Do ponto de vista sociopolítico, a crítica mais contundente seria a de que o livro apresenta o discurso, isto é, o contradiscurso, como o único meio de se formularem reivindicações. Segundo Mishra e Hodge, “o perigo aqui é que o pós-colonialismo fica reduzido a um fenômeno estritamente

textual, como se o poder fosse, simplesmente, uma questão de discurso” (p. 278).

Mishra e Hodge argumentam, também, que o livro deixa de assinalar diferenças importantes entre “settler” e “non-settler colonies”, em que, respectivamente, observou-se a predominância de colonizadores brancos e não-brancos. Ao contrário das “non-settler colonies”, as “settler colonies”, até certo ponto, apoiaram o desenvolvimento do colonialismo (p. 286). Portanto, há que se observar as diferenças entre os processos de colonização de “settler” e “non-settler colonies”, visto que não seria o pós-colonialismo uma categoria homogênea a todas as sociedades pós-coloniais, ou mesmo dentro de uma mesma sociedade pós-colonial (p. 288)⁵.

A denominação “literatura pós-colonial” tem contribuído para desestabilizar as barreiras que cercam a “literatura inglesa”

Apesar das críticas, *The Empire Writes Back* continua a ser, no entender de Peter Hulme e outros, o “livro-texto” da teoria pós-colonial, principalmente por tratar de pontos centrais dela: primeiro, “uma crítica a falsas alegações de universalidade (política, cultural e histórica), aqui entendida como uma posição à margem da história a partir da qual tudo é julgado”; segundo, a questão de que

em termos literários, a teoria pós-colonial denuncia o fato de que literaturas periféricas têm sido, tradicionalmente, avaliadas de acordo com padrões estéticos de uma norma que há muito permanece não-marcada: a literatura inglesa canônica⁶.

Juntamente com seu livro-texto, a nova disciplina não pode prescindir de definições para seus conceitos básicos, ainda que seja preciso cuidar para que a busca da definição não leve à reificação, ou seja, à atribuição de forma material a conceitos abstratos, reduzindo-se a verdadeiros bens de consumo questões profundas, que dizem respeito a pessoas e idéias.

Anne McClintock define *colonização* como

apropriação territorial direta de uma entidade geopolítica, combinada com a exploração evidente de seus recursos e força de trabalho, e com sistemática interferência na capacidade de a cultura apropriada [...] gerir suas próprias delegações de poder⁷.

Ainda na tentativa de definir o fenômeno, estudiosos identificam determinadas características típicas à estratégia colonialista. Meredith Skura⁸, por exemplo, assinala uma das menos óbvias: a “dissimulação do poder” (*effacement of power*), fruto de uma motivação exploradora e de uma retórica de autojustificativa⁹.

McClintock estabelece a diferença entre colonização interna e colonização imperialista. A primeira ocorre “quando a região dominante de um país trata uma parte da população, ou uma outra região desse mesmo país, como se fosse uma colônia estrangeira”; a segunda se caracteriza por

amplo domínio territorial, do tipo que concedeu à Grã-Bretanha e aos ‘lordes europeus da humanidade’ o controle de 85% da terra no século XIX, e à União Soviética comando totalitário sobre a Hungria, a Polônia e a Tchecoslováquia no século XX (p. 257).

Já descolonização, para Fanon¹⁰, seria o período em que os povos das regiões oprimidas, há muito alimentados à força com uma dieta à base de valores estrangeiros, já não conseguem digeri-los. “No período de descolonização”, argumenta Fanon, “as massas colonizadas fazem troça desses mesmos valores [dos colonizadores], insultando-os, vomitando-os”¹¹.

Vejam, agora, as noções de *interpretação*, *adaptação* e *apropriação*, as quais devem ser pensadas em termos de inter-relações. Em seu sentido mais amplo, interpretação seria um ato eminentemente crítico, básico tanto a uma adaptação quanto a uma apropriação. Trata-se de uma leitura feita a partir da íntegra ou de trechos do texto original, a qual, ainda que necessariamente subjetiva e reveladora da ideologia do intérprete, não chega a alterar, a produzir uma re-escritura do texto interpretado. Em termos de teatro, por exemplo, cada nova montagem

teatral de *A tempestade* ensejará, necessariamente, uma interpretação, mesmo que se atenha “fielmente” ao texto e à estrutura original da peça interpretada.

A idéia de *apropriação* sugere uma prática interpretativa e artística radical

As noções de *adaptação* e *apropriação* seriam bastante próximas entre si. A rigor, caso a montagem teatral não siga à risca o texto ou a estrutura dramática do original, suprimindo cenas ou alterando a sua ordem, retirando personagens, falas, etc., sem, contudo, alterar radicalmente o enredo, a hierarquia dos personagens ou mesmo o desfecho previstos no original, teríamos uma *adaptação*. Entre dezenas de outros, um exemplo de adaptação seria a montagem de *Macbeth* (1992), de Ulysses Cruz, que apresenta apenas uma (um) feiticeira(o), em lugar de três, e suprime da primeira cena do quarto ato o desfile fantástico de oito reis que haveriam de governar a Escócia depois de Banquo.

A idéia de *apropriação*, ainda que envolvendo, necessariamente, tanto interpretação quanto adaptação, sugere uma prática interpretativa e artística radical; no entender de Hulme, *apropriação* vem a ser uma re-escritura do texto original, abertamente servindo aos propósitos ideológicos do apropriador. Mishra e Hodge argumentam que *apropriação* acarreta “um amplo e diversificado conjunto de estratégias envolvendo, a um só tempo, acomodação e concessão, e cujo sentido político dependerá, em grande parte, de circunstâncias históricas específicas” (p. 278)¹².

Chegamos, então, ao termo central: *pós-colonialismo*. Vários teóricos comentam a respeito dos riscos de propor definições simplistas. Em princípio, seria útil distinguir pelo menos dois tipos de pós-colonialismo, aqui entendidos no sentido de orientação ideológica e não, necessariamente, como fases históricas. O primeiro, mais facilmente reconhecível, poderia ser denominado “pós-colonialismo de oposição” (com hífen), na verdade, encontrado em sua expressão mais clara no momento pós-colonial em ex-colônias que alcançaram a independência. O segundo poderia ser chamado “pós(-)colo-

nialismo de cumplicidade” (sem hífen), uma configuração menos óbvia, ainda que sempre presente, e inerente ao próprio processo de colonização¹³. Em outras palavras, não haveria apenas uma modalidade de pós-colonialismo, mas diversas. Mishra e Hodge argumentam que o termo deve ser empregado sem o hífen, de modo a sugerir “uma tendência sempre presente em qualquer literatura periférica, marcada por um processo sistemático de dominação cultural levada a cabo através da imposição de estruturas imperialistas de poder” (p. 284).

Explorado de uma maneira simplista, o termo expressaria nada mais que uma oposição binária: colonialismo/pós-colonialismo, reduzindo a história a uma série de estágios ao longo de uma linha temporal, partindo do “pré-colonialismo”, passando pelo “colonialismo” e chegando ao “pós-colonialismo”, obedecendo, de forma descabida, a uma visão iluminista de tempo seqüencial, linear, de “desenvolvimento” e “progresso”¹⁴.

Na prática das “literaturas pós-coloniais”, foram identificadas duas características básicas

Tal visão produziria a reorganização da história em função de um parâmetro único e eurocêntrico de tempo. Ou seja, as diversas culturas do mundo não ficariam destacadas por aquilo que, de positivo, as distingue, mas por uma noção eurocêntrica, subordinativa e linear de tempo¹⁵.

Devidamente problematizado, “pós(-)colonialismo” (sem hífen) não seria um fenômeno “pós” isso, ou “pós” aquilo, e sim algo implícito no próprio discurso do colonialismo¹⁶.

No processo de definição do termo “pós-colonialismo”, ou melhor, na prática das “literaturas pós-coloniais”, foram identificadas duas características básicas, entre outras:

1. Para o escritor pós-colonial, o que importa é a maneira em que uma outra “narrativa-fundadora” (*master-narrative*) é utilizada para libertar o colonizado.
2. Uma leitura pós-colonial enfatiza o significado de palavras não traduzidas, bem como as ressonâncias culturais específicas do texto.

Qualquer tentativa de definição de pós-colonialismo passa pela noção de “irmão” e “estranho”, de “self” e “outro”, isto é, de alteridade. Dando, ainda que indiretamente, seguimento às idéias de W. H. Auden expressas no ensaio “Irmãos e estranhos”¹⁷, de 1948, Skura explica que no momento em que o “irmão” demonstra não ser idêntico ao “self”, por conseguinte deixando de corresponder aos desejos narcisísticos do “self”, torna-se, então, o “outro” e, simultaneamente, incita no “self” um sentimento de oposição (op. cit., p. 66). Para Sérgio Bellei, o “conceito de alteridade é normalmente marcado pelo negativo: o outro é escuro em relação ao claro, o inferno em relação ao céu, o doente em relação ao sadio”, sendo que, no caso específico das literaturas (e das culturas) pós-coloniais, o “outro” sciria a “América em relação ao centro europeu que se afirma como mesmo [self] apontando para o outro do qual, paradoxalmente, depende para constituir-se”¹⁸. Ficam relativamente claras as posições colonizador/self-colonizado/outro, que marcam as obras literárias coloniais e pós-coloniais.

Qualquer tentativa de definição de pós-colonialismo passa pela noção de alteridade

Tendo colocado essas breves reflexões teóricas, podemos proceder, então, com comentários sobre *A tempestade*, de Shakespeare (escrita em 1611 e publicada em 1623), conforme afirmado acima, texto representativo e paradigmático, que codifica, de forma complexa, a relação colonial e que veio a ser objeto de re-leituras pós-coloniais, gerando uma série de apropriações.

Durante muitos anos, leituras idealistas de *A tempestade* ignoraram a temática imperialista e promoveram uma interpretação dos personagens principais que viria corroborar a relação colonialista. Próspero costuma ser apresentado como um “exemplo vivo” de valores humanos “universais”. Seus poderes “mágicos”, obtidos através de árduo estudo, capacitariam-no a dar uma lição nos naufragos italianos, a pôr um fim à guerra civil e, o que sciria mais importante, a triunfar sobre seu próprio

desejo de vingança, levando-o a perdoar os inimigos¹⁹. Ademais, a diferença, enfatizada por diversas gerações de críticos, entre a “magia branca” de Próspero e a “magia negra” de Sycorax reiterava a visão hegemônica de Próspero com respeito à questão colonial²⁰.

Nos teatros, montagens e interpretações tradicionais apresentam *A tempestade* como uma peça que fala de perdão, paciência, ingratidão e magia

A análise feita por Frank Kermode²¹ na década de 1950 tipifica a leitura idealista de *A tempestade*. Considerando que na lista de personagens que segue a peça no texto do Fôlio de 1623 Caliban é apresentado como “um escravo selvagem e deformado”, ainda que não se saiba com certeza se a descrição é genuinamente de Shakespeare ou fruto de interpolação de Ralph Crane, escrivão contratado pela King’s Men, Kermode vê em Caliban um exemplo do “escravo” ou “servo natural”, incapaz de ser civilizado, de que fala Aristóteles na *Política*, livro I. Para Kermode, se Aristóteles está certo ao argumentar que determinados indivíduos, naturalmente inferiores a outros, assim como o corpo é inferior a alma, são “escravos por natureza”, e que seria vantajoso para tais indivíduos estar sempre sob o comando de alguém, então “o canibal negro e mutilado seria o escravo natural do nobre europeu, e portanto, Caliban, selvagem e deformado, seria escravo do erudito Próspero” (p. xliii). Nessa leitura, Caliban é uma criatura inferior e um mal-graduado.

O que se observa então é que, nos teatros, montagens e interpretações tradicionais apresentam *A tempestade* como uma peça que fala de perdão, paciência, ingratidão e magia – “a branca prevalecendo” – e que em muitas salas de aula alunos são levados a estudar a peça apenas como elemento integrante da *romance tradition* na literatura inglesa, ou por sua “dimensão universal”, ou por seus inegáveis valores estéticos, em detrimento da questão política, colonialista, evidente na peça e priorizada na maioria das apropriações²².

Não é necessário pesquisar exaustivamente as apropriações que *A tempestade* gerou na literatura ocidental para constatar o interesse provocado pelo texto shakespeariano. Na verdade, vale lembrar que não somente escritores das “colônias” se apropriaram da peça. A mascarada (*masque*) *Comus*, de John Milton, publicada em 1637, por exemplo, seria uma re-escritura de *A tempestade*, cujo “impulso libertário” teria apelado a Milton²³. No início do século XIX, Shelley encontraria em *A tempestade* um exemplo central da força utópica inerente à poesia que “faz com que objetos conhecidos pareçam novos”²⁴. Além disso, Shelley parece ter consciência da situação de Caliban, conforme sugere o paralelo estabelecido entre *Frankenstein* e a peça de Shakespeare no prefácio escrito pelo próprio Shelley, em 1817, para o romance de autoria de Mary²⁵.

No “continente”, Ernest Renan publica, em 1878, a peça *Caliban: Suite de “La Tempête”*, apropriação na qual a conspiração de Caliban contra Próspero é bem-sucedida, levando Caliban ao poder, ainda que a incompetência somada à corrupção impeçam-no de deter tal poder²⁶.

Não é tarefa simples categorizar as diversas relações entre *A tempestade* e o discurso colonialista

Na América do Sul, o uruguaio José Enrique Rodó publica, em 1900, aos 29 anos, uma das obras mais famosas sobre cultura latino-americana, *Ariel*, ensaio escrito em resposta à intervenção norte-americana em Cuba em 1898. Em Rodó, a civilização norte-americana aparece implicitamente representada na figura de Caliban, enquanto Ariel representaria, ou deveria representar, o que Rodó, mais de uma vez, chamaria “nossa civilização”, isto é, a América Latina²⁷.

Mais recentemente, a partir do início da segunda metade do século XX, no contexto de desafios lançados a um colonialismo europeu cada vez mais desacreditado, diversos intelectuais se apropriam de *A tempestade* como um “meio de amplificar reivindicações de descolonização diante de culturas dominantes”²⁸. Com efeito, no caso de *A tempestade*, observa-se que as apropriações

ensejaram, invariavelmente, “uma amplificação das vozes anti-colonialistas presentes no texto”²⁹.

Não é tarefa simples categorizar as diversas relações entre *A tempestade* e o discurso colonialista. Em primeiro lugar, temos a questão da falta de paradigmas. É preciso considerar que, em 1611, não havia na Inglaterra retratos *ficcionais* de habitantes do Novo Mundo e, muito menos, relatos *ficcionais* de discurso colonialista. Uma vez que trata de um encontro com um “nativo” do Novo Mundo,

Para Mannoni, a importância de *A tempestade* estaria contida na dramatização da temática

A tempestade seria a primeira obra ficcional a fazê-lo. Shakespeare seria o primeiro contador de histórias a mostrar um nativo sendo maltratado pelo colonizador, o primeiro a apresentar empatia com o nativo, o primeiro a permitir que um nativo fizesse reivindicações no palco, o primeiro a problematizar o encontro colonial³⁰.

A nova leitura da peça surge à época em que países de colonização inglesa no Caribe começam a se inquietar, de acordo com Retamar, a partir do final da Segunda Guerra Mundial. Logo após, em 1950, aparece em Paris um livro, de autoria de Octave Mannoni³¹, que apresenta uma interpretação de *A tempestade* destinada a gerar grande controvérsia. Trata-se de *Psychologie de la colonisation*, cujo título, na tradução para língua inglesa, publicada em 1956, é *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. Analisando o clima psicológico do colonialismo em Madagascar, Mannoni chega a uma oposição entre os chamados “complexo de Próspero” (ou de inferioridade) e “complexo de Caliban” (ou de dependência). O primeiro, na paráfrase de Retamar, é definido como a totalização de tendências neuróticas inconscientes que fazem surgir, ao mesmo tempo, a “figura” do colonizador paternalista e o “retrato” do racista cuja filha é vítima de um estupro imaginário nas mãos de um ser inferior (p. 12). O segundo configuraria uma dependência de autoridade, supostamente característica de um povo que, ao deixar de ser colonizado, se vê forçado a

abandonar uma sociedade “tribal” para ingressar nas hierarquias competitivas da cultura ocidental³².

Para Mannoni, a importância de *A tempestade* estaria contida na dramatização da temática – a traição de confiança mútua entre duas culturas – proposta por Shakespeare. No entender de Mannoni, Próspero é um dissimulado e Caliban um ingrato que não se queixa de ser explorado e sim de ter sido traído, abandonado. Nessa ótica, a conspiração de Caliban “não seria um ato para torná-lo independente, pois ele não seria capaz de sobreviver como tal, mas para conseguir um novo senhor [Estéfano] a quem pudesse bajular”³³.

No final da década de 60, as leituras revisionistas de *A tempestade* tornam-se hegemônicas no chamado “Terceiro Mundo”

Naturalmente, as teorias de Mannoni são refutadas por intelectuais africanos e caribenhos que, ainda na década de 50, percebem a iminência da descolonização em suas regiões. O período que vai do final da década de 50 ao início dos anos 70 é marcado, na África e no Caribe, por um forte sentimento anticolonialista ligado à crescente consciência negra internacional e a movimentos nacionalistas localizados. Entre 1957 e 1973, a maioria de colônias africanas, bem como as maiores colônias caribenhas, tornam-se independentes. Nesse período, intelectuais africanos e caribenhos conclamam a renúncia de padrões ocidentais e a recusa dos valores herdados das potências colonizadoras³⁴.

Em muitos desses intelectuais, as noções de que Caliban seria incapaz de sobreviver às suas próprias custas e de sequer almejar independência causam um impacto considerável. Observa-se, então, o surgimento de críticas que recusam as leituras tradicionais da peça e de apropriações que promovem uma crescente identificação com Caliban, reabilitando-o a uma posição heróica³⁵.

O primeiro a refutar Mannoni seria Frantz Fanon, especificamente no que toca à questão dos “complexos”. O cerne dessa crítica encontra-se em *Black Skins, White*

Masks, publicado em 1952, cujo quarto capítulo vai merecer o título, “The So-Called Dependence Complex of Colonized Peoples”, em si uma textualização clara da refutação. Fanon e outros (e.g. Césaire) consideram problemática a desatenção de Mannoni com respeito à flagrante exploração econômica por parte do colonizador e o acusam de reduzir colonialismo a um encontro entre dois tipos psicológicos de disposições complementares que, pelo menos durante algum tempo, satisfazem necessidades mútuas³⁶.

No final da década de 60, as leituras revisionistas de *A tempestade* tornam-se hegemônicas no chamado “Terceiro Mundo”. Em 1969, três escritores das Antilhas, expressando-se nos três idiomas coloniais do Caribe, defendem Caliban como símbolo da América Latina. Naquele ano, Aimé Césaire, natural da Martinica, publica a peça *Une Tempête: d’après “La Tempête” de Shakespeare — adaptation pour un théâtre nègre*, Edward Brathwaite, de Barbados, publica seu livro de poesias *Islands*; e Roberto Fernández Retamar publica o ensaio “Cuba hasta Fidel”³⁷.

Enquanto para os críticos o trabalho de Césaire seria uma apropriação, para o próprio Césaire trata-se de uma “adaptation”

Perceberemos, claramente, a linha tênue que divide adaptação de apropriação ao constarmos que enquanto para os críticos o trabalho de Césaire seria uma apropriação, para o próprio Césaire trata-se de uma “adaptation”. No entanto, a classificação feita por Césaire é por demais sóbria; na verdade, é fácil constatar que sua re-leitura de *A tempestade* e a re-escritura em *Une Tempête* são radicais. Os personagens principais de Césaire, por exemplo, são radicalmente polarizados com relação aos de Shakespeare. Próspero é um déspota, Ariel é um escravo mulato e Caliban, um escravo negro, havendo, ainda, a presença de Exu, descrito como “dieudiable nègre”³⁸.

Tipicamente, nas apropriações, a evocação da cultura nativa merece grande destaque; com efeito, o Cali-

ban de Césaire tem suas raízes na religião e na cultura africana, que se alimenta de tradições não contaminadas pelo colonialismo³⁹. Perdão e reconciliação cedem lugar a diferenças irreconciliáveis. Os papéis de Ferdinando e Miranda são diminuídos, e a dimensão social da peça é enfatizada. Antônio e Alonso competem com Próspero pelo controle das novas terras; Próspero é desmitificado e tornado mundano, ao mesmo tempo, menos praticante de “magia branca” e mais mestre da tecnologia da opressão, um autocrata cuja força, nada inescrutável, apoia-se em um arsenal de truques⁴⁰. Ariel evita a violência e, diante do arsenal bem-equipado de Próspero, vê maior possibilidade de obter liberdade por meio de conciliação do que de rebeldia.

Ao apropriar-se de *A tempestade*, Césaire iria além da “adaptation” por ele mesmo anunciada

Na visão de Caliban, Ariel é um colaboracionista, um entreguista, que ao pretender, a um só tempo, livrar-se de Próspero por meios não violentos e assimilar seus valores, acaba obrigado a negociar sua liberdade a partir de uma posição enfraquecida⁴¹. O desafio lançado por Caliban é expresso, principalmente, através das homenagens prestadas às entidades Yorubá: Xangô e Exu. Dois dos quatro hinos de libertação cantados por Caliban celebram Xangô. Além disso, a primeira fala de Caliban na peça é “Uhuru!” (p. 24), palavra suaíli que significa “liberdade”. E mais, o escravo negro deixa de responder ao nome “Caliban”, construção colonialista degradante, derivada de “canibal”. O rei cativo da ilha se batiza com o nome “X”, num gesto negro-muçulmano celebratório de seu nome original, perdido com o advento da cultura colonialista. O sucesso da estratégia de não-concessão adotada por Caliban é iminente no final da peça. Quando os outros europeus regressam para a Itália, Próspero não pode acompanhá-los, pois está preso em uma luta psicológica com seu escravo, gritando “Je défendrai la civilisation!”, mas reconhecendo “le climat a changé” (p. 92)⁴². Em suma, ao apropriar-se de *A tem-*

pestade, Césaire iria além da “adaptation” por ele mesmo anunciada, promovendo re-leitura e re-escritura radicais, de acordo com as circunstâncias históricas, políticas e culturais de seu tempo e lugar. Para Césaire, o valor de *A tempestade* advém do potencial que a peça lhe apresenta para dramatizar a evolução do colonialismo no Caribe.

Além da revisão temática presente nas re-leituras e re-escrituras encontradas nas apropriações feitas por poetas, romancistas e dramaturgos, em nível crítico-interpretativo, diversos estudiosos têm, recentemente, articulado objeções às leituras tradicionais. A maioria dos revisionistas conclama, em primeiro lugar, a necessidade de contrapor “leituras profundamente a-históricas de *A tempestade*”⁴³. Hoje em dia, a peça é vista por muitos não apenas como uma alegoria da experiência universal, mas como um fenômeno cultural que tem as suas origens – e efeitos – em eventos históricos, especificamente, o colonialismo inglês. A ênfase agora recai sobre o estudo de um conjunto de práticas, ficcionais ou não, conhecidas como “colonialismo inglês”, que, segundo o novo argumento, fornece à *Tempestade* um “contexto discursivo dominante”⁴⁴. O ponto fundamental seria o de que *A tempestade* é um ato político.

Diversos estudiosos têm, recentemente, articulado objeções às leituras tradicionais

O impulso revisionista é salutar por diversas razões. Primeiramente, ele corrige a miopia da nova crítica com relação a implicações de história e ideologia na literatura⁴⁵. Próspero passa a ser visto como o colonizador que busca consolidação de poder – especificamente branco, “probo” e masculino – e cujo discurso constrói Sycorax, seu “outro” – negra, perversa, mulher – precisamente, para se autolegitimar⁴⁶. Sycorax, por sua vez, além de ser “o outro” de Próspero, e justificativa dos direitos territoriais de Caliban sobre a ilha, passa a ser entendida em termos de um eloquente contraste com a passiva Miranda. A “passiva” Miranda, por sua vez, é vista como integrante do “projeto” colonialista, parte da legitimação ideoló-

gica da maioria das ações de Próspero, e o famoso trecho “Abhorred slave...” (I.ii.351), que tanta indignação causa em Caliban, fica definitivamente atribuído a ela⁴⁷.

O impulso revisionista corrige a miopia da nova crítica com relação a implicações de história e ideologia na literatura

Na leitura revisionista, pós-colonial, Caliban assume oposição clara à cultura dominante. As palavras iniciais da fala em que Caliban apresenta o seu lado da história da ocupação da ilha por parte de Próspero,

Esta ilha é minha, herdada de Sycorax,
Minha mãe, e tu de mim a queres tirar
(I.ii.331-2),

passam a constituir evidência central de invasão e exploração.

De fato, para Retamar, “nosso símbolo não seria Ariel, conforme pensava Rodó, mas Caliban. É o que nós, habitantes mestiços dessas terras em que Caliban teria vivido, podemos ver com grande clareza”. E, num momento de inspiração e – por que não dizer – indignação, Retamar lista 37 nomes de célebres “Calibans” latino-americanos, indo desde Tiradentes e Aleijadinho a Simón Bolívar, Fidel Castro, Rubén Darío, Villa-Lobos, Aimé Césaire, Pablo Neruda e Violeta Parra (p. 14).

Assim sendo, enquanto leituras tradicionais de *A tempestade*, ainda que reconhecendo Caliban como o centro da peça, corroboravam a visão de Próspero de que Caliban era um ser inferior que jamais se civilizaria (IV.i.188-9), as apropriações artísticas pós-coloniais e a revisão crítica voltam-se para Caliban com o propósito de articular questões de domínio e rebelião.

Concluindo, uma breve reflexão sobre a hipótese do grau de consciência observável no dramaturgo William Shakespeare com relação ao tema imperial. De modo geral, os estudiosos relutam em admitir que Shakespeare, homem de teatro, preocupado com questões práticas de seu trabalho, pudesse se interessar pelo debate político-intelectual europeu. O entendimento predomi-

nante é o de que Shakespeare não estaria ciente das “aberturas” constantes do texto de *A tempestade* que vieram permitir as recentes leituras radicais. Tais “aberturas” seriam apenas efeitos inerentes à ambivalência do discurso e da linguagem, ao passo que Shakespeare e sua platéia estariam “do lado” de Próspero e veriam na peça apenas a celebração da restauração do governante legítimo, do retorno à “ordem natural” das coisas⁴⁸. Como agente, o escritor, especialmente os bem-sucedidos em termos de auto-suficiência financeira – conforme era o caso de Shakespeare em 1611 –, tem condições de alcançar um certo grau de independência das estruturas predominantes de discurso e poder que o cercam⁴⁹.

De modo geral, os estudiosos têm relutado em admitir que Shakespeare pudesse se interessar pelo debate político-intelectual europeu

Portanto, ainda que o limitemos a um contexto local, Shakespeare poderia, perfeitamente, estar a par da ideologia da colonização. É verdade que a peça reproduz a visão colonialista de Próspero com relação à ilha e a seu “rei”, mas a ênfase não está na justificativa dessa visão e sim na sua análise⁵⁰. Com efeito, *A tempestade* expressa uma consciência aguda e sofisticada das relações entre linguagem e poder. A peça pode não ser abertamente de oposição, ou mesmo subversiva, mas submete instituições tradicionais a um questionamento crítico sistemático. Principalmente, a peça não propõe linguagem e poder como elementos absolutos, à margem do tempo; antes, trata de tais assuntos dentro de um contexto social específico⁵¹. Afinal, apesar do “rótulo” real, os King’s Men, ao contrário dos poetas da corte, por exemplo, obtinham a maior parte da sua receita não por meio do subsídio real, mas através de apresentações públicas; vale dizer, as circunstâncias profissionais de Shakespeare lhe permitiam incluir em suas peças uma variedade maior de discursos, e com maior liberdade, do que a literatura inteiramente subvencionada pela corte.

¹No texto do “New Afterword”, escrito para a edição Penguin de *Orientalism* publicada em 1995, Said reitera os pontos centrais do argumento apresentado em 1978, dizendo-se firme no propósito de estudar o orientalismo como fenômeno cultural e, principalmente, político.

²MISHRA, Vijay & HODGE, Bob. What is Post(-)Colonialism? In: WILLIAMS, Patrick & CHRISMAN, Laura (eds.). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*. New York, Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 276.

³Id., *ibid.*, p. 276.

⁴ASHCROFT, Bill, GRIFFITHS, Gareth & TIFFIN, Helen. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. London, Routledge, 1989, p. 2.

⁵Mishra e Hodge comentam ainda que, nos termos da definição de Ashcroft, Griffiths e Tiffin, literatura pós-colonial seria questionável, pelo menos na prática de escritores que se utilizam do idioma do “Império”, “traidores” da causa do pós-colonialismo reconstrutivista (op. cit., p. 277). No entanto, os autores de *The Empire Writes Back* parecem ter consciência do paradoxo, pois apontam os “perigos” do emprego do idioma inglês.

⁶Explicação feita durante o curso “Writing and Colonialism”, ministrado em agosto de 1994 dentro do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras – Inglês, na Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.

⁷MCCCLINTOCK, Anne. The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term “Postcolonialism”. In: BARKER, Francis, HULME, Peter & IVERSEN, Margaret (eds.). *Colonial Discourse / Postcolonial Theory*. Manchester/New York, Manchester University Press, 1994, p. 257.

⁸SKURA, Meredith Anne. Discourse and the Individual: the Case of Colonialism in *The Tempest*. *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 40, p. 42-69, 1989.

⁹Viz. Próspero, cuja retórica de boas intenções estará invariavelmente acompanhada de atos coercitivos (LOOMBA, Annia. Seizing the Book. In: —. *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*. Manchester/New York, Manchester University Press, 1989, p. 145.

¹⁰FANON, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth* [1961]. Trans. Constance Farrington. New York, 1968, p. 43.

¹¹Com efeito, na cena final de *Une Tempête*, de autoria de Aimé Césaire, no momento em que Próspero pergunta o que haverá de fazer, quando se vir só na ilha, Caliban, rebelde e irado, verbaliza textualmente a repulsa sugerida

por Fanon: “D’abord me débarrasser de toi... Te vomit. Toi, tes pompes, tes ocuvres! Ta blanche Toxine!” (p. 87).

¹²Annia Loomba enfatiza a complexidade das relações entre apropriações e a crítica anticolonialista. Ela afirma que o conflito colonial não pode ser pensado à parte dos conflitos de classe, gênero, casta e etnicidade e alerta que o “sujeito colonialista não tem nada de ‘simples’” (op. cit., p. 156-7).

¹³MISHRA & HODGE, op. cit., p. 284.

¹⁴MCCCLINTOCK, op. cit., p. 254.

¹⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 255.

¹⁶A propósito, para McClintock, a recorrente “quase ritualística” presença entre nós do prefixo “pós” (pós-estruturalismo, pós-marxismo, pós-feminismo, pós-nacional, pós-histórico e até pós-contemporâneo) seria um sintoma de uma crise global nas ideologias do futuro, principalmente a ideologia do “progresso” (op. cit., p. 254, 262).

¹⁷AUDEN, W. A. Irmãos e estranhos. In: —. *A mão do artista*. Trad. José Roberto O’Shea. São Paulo, Siciliano, 1993, p. 169-82.

¹⁸BELLEI, Sérgio Luiz Prado. *Nacionalidade e literatura: os caminhos da alteridade*. Florianópolis, Ed. da UFSC, 1992, p. 113.

¹⁹SKURA, op. cit., p. 42.

²⁰LOOMBA, op. cit., p. 152.

²¹KERMODE, Frank (ed.). Introduction [1954]. In: SHAKESPEARE, William. *The Tempest*. New Arden Shakespeare, reprinted with corrections. London/New York, Methuen, 1987, p. xi-xciii.

²²LOOMBA, op. cit., p. 148.

²³NORBROOK, David. “What cares these roarers for the name of King?”: Language and Utopia in *The Tempest*. In: McMULLAN, GORDON & HOPE, Jonathan (eds.). *The Politics of Tragicomedy*. London, Routledge, 1992, p. 21.

²⁴CLARCK, David Lee (ed.). A Defense of Poetry. In: *Shelley’s Prose or the Trumpet of a Prophecy*, London, Fourth State, 1988, p. 282.

²⁵NORBROOK, op. cit., p. 22.

²⁶RETAMAR, Roberto Fernández. Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America. In: *Caliban and Other Essays*. Trans. Edward Baker. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 9.

²⁷Id., *ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁸NIXON, Rob. Caribbean and African Appropriations of *The Tempest*. *Critical Inquiry*, n. 13, p. 557-8, 1987.

²⁹LOOMBA, op. cit., p. 148.

³⁰SKURA, op. cit., p. 57.

³¹MANNONI, Dominique O. *Psychologie de la colonisation* [1950]. Trans. Pamela Powesland. *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization*. New York, 1964.

³²NIXON, op. cit., p. 563.

³³MANNONI, op. cit., p. 106-7. Apud NIXON, op. cit., p. 562-3.

³⁴NIXON, op. cit., p. 558.

³⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 560-4.

³⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 564.

³⁷RETAMAR, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁸CÉSAIRE, Aimé. *Une Tempête: D'après "La Tempête" de Shakespeare. Adaption pour un théâtre nègre*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1969, p. 13.

³⁹LOOMBA, op. cit., p. 156.

⁴⁰NIXON, op. cit., p. 571.

⁴¹Id., *ibid.*, p. 527.

⁴²Viz. "Complexo de Próspero", na definição de Mannoni.

⁴³HULME, Peter. Prospero and Caliban. In: *Colonial*

Encounters: Europe and the Native Caribbean 1492-1797. London, Methuen, 1986, p. 94.

⁴⁴BARKER, Francis & HULME, Peter. Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish: The Discursive Con-texts of *The Tempest*. In: DRAKAKIS, John (ed.). *Alternative Shakespeares*. London, 1985, p. 198.

⁴⁵SKURA, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴⁶LOOMBA, op. cit., p. 152.

⁴⁷Curiosamente, o trecho, apesar de atribuído a Miranda no Fólio de 1623, aparece, em muitas edições, atribuído a Próspero, como se Miranda fosse incapaz de tal vilipêndio. Trata-se de imperdoável corrupção de texto. Para uma acirrada crítica a esse célebre "lapso", veja LOOMBA, op. cit., especialmente a página 154.

⁴⁸NORBROOK, op. cit., p. 23.

⁴⁹Id., *ibid.*, p. 25, 39.

⁵⁰SKURA, op. cit., p. 66. Para um estudo detalhado da maneira em que a *masque* do ato V, ao contrário do que seria de esperar em uma *masque*, contém um questionamento – e não uma justificativa – da questão da legitimidade, veja NORBROOK, op. cit., p. 36, 45 e 51.

⁵¹NORBROOK, op. cit., p. 25.

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THE COLONIAL AND POST-COLONIAL MOMENTS IN IRISH DRAMA: a comparison of Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* (1904) with O'Casey's *Juno and the Paycock* (1924)

PETER JAMES HARRIS

Post-colonial literary criticism tends to concentrate upon writing produced in those societies outside Europe which have been subjected to the power of European colonisation, principally those in the regions of Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent.

However, in this article I wish to examine two texts produced in a former colony *within* Europe – the republic of Ireland. Ireland's history as a British colony is a very long one, going back to 1171, when Henry II and his army landed near Waterford and he received the homage of all the kings of Ireland except those of Connaught and Ulster, and coming to a partial close with the creation of the Irish Free State after the Treaty of 1921. For the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland the final chapter in Ireland's colonial history remains to be written.

John Bull's Other Island (1904) may seem to be a curious choice of text to represent the colonial period since it was actually written by an Irishman. (For a whole-hearted endorsement of the imperial position Jonson's *Irish Masque*, performed by members of the English court for King James I in 1613, would have been a more appropriate choice.) However, at the time of the play's composition, George Bernard Shaw had already been living in London for twenty-eight years, having moved there from Dublin at the age of 20 in 1876. He was thus well-positioned to understand the perspectives of both colonised and coloniser. Commissioned by W.B. Yeats to commemorate the move of the Irish Literary Theatre Society to its permanent home at the Abbey The-

atre in 1904 (although not actually performed there until 1916) the play is a comic dramatisation of the Home Rule question, although it is as an analysis of the English late colonial mentality that it is most subversive.

In fact the play is much more representative of post-colonial preoccupations than colonial ones. Beginning with its very title, *John Bull's Other Island* declares the play's concern with such concepts as stereotypes and the process of othering. John Bull is, of course, the English national self-image, just as Uncle Sam is that of the United States. Typically represented as an elderly, somewhat belligerent-looking gentleman, normally accompanied

Shaw uses the structuring device of a journey to establish the geographical separation between Self and Other

by a bulldog on a leash, John Bull, in his Union Jack waistcoat, top hat and bright red coat, is as powerful a symbol of England's imperial self-confidence as Britannia herself, ruling the waves with her trident. The "Other" of the title makes it clear that we are to expect an analysis of difference rather than equivalence, alterity

and not identity. Ireland is referred to anonymously as a site of binary opposition which reminds us of the diminutive Lilliput in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), that classic treatise upon the notion of the Other which, like *John Bull's Other Island*, was the result of a privileged Anglo-Irish overview of two cultures co-existing in a state of colonial tension. Just as Swift had done before him, Shaw uses the structuring device of a journey to establish the geographical separation between Self and Other, the concept itself being introduced as the curtain rises by the iconic images of a large map of South America and a pictorial advertisement of a steamship company which adorn the walls of Broadbent and Doyle's Westminster office. (Shaw's location of the office in Westminster rather than in any other London borough clearly associates Broadbent from the outset with the very seat of imperial power – any journey he undertakes must therefore necessarily be away from the centre and towards the margin.) other iconic images establish an ideological state-

Shaw's principle discursive mode in the play is that of irony

ment about the occupants of the offices – “an impressive portrait” of Mr. Gladstone, the architect of the policy of Home Rule for Ireland, contrasts with “caricatures” of Balfour, Prime Minister from 1902-1905, and an implacable opponent of Home Rule, and Chamberlain, a minister in the Conservative government of the day and an unswerving champion of imperial unity and the principle of supremacy of the Imperial Parliament.

Both the play's title and its opening setting thus combine to create expectations in the mind of the audience about the themes and ideological content that are to be analysed in the course of the play. It soon becomes clear that Shaw's principle discursive mode in the play is that irony; he is concerned to challenge expectations by demonstrating, through comic reversal, that “reality” is frequently the inverse of what people believe and expect it to be. The play's opening scene hinges on a series of ironic tropes which challenge the very concept of na-

tional stereotypes and quickly eliminate race as a site of cultural difference between the Irish and the English. (In his lengthy preface to the play Shaw declares that, “There is no Irish race any more than there is an English race or a Yankee race. There is an Irish climate...”¹) As the play begins, Broadbent is preparing for his forthcoming journey to Ireland, and his preconceptions about the nature of the Irish are made abundantly clear when he instructs his valet to pack his revolver and a packet of cartridges. The pragmatic Hodson suggests that it would be more to the point to pack his india-rubber overalls. Another of Broadbent's preparatory steps has been to invite Tim Haffigan to his offices with the intention of persuading him to accompany him on the trip to Ireland to “help to break the ice.” When Haffigan makes his appearance he does so as the very epitome of the stage Irishman, speaking in a “rollicking stage brogue” and displaying a marked propensity for “the national weakness,” an excessive fondness for whisky. Although he has never been to Ireland before this doesn't prevent Broadbent from seeing Haffigan as the “typical” Irishman:

[...] I saw at once that you are a thorough Irishman, with all the faults and all the qualities of your race: rash and improvident but brave and goodnatured; not likely to succeed in business on your own account perhaps, but eloquent, humorous, a lover of freedom, and a true follower of that great Englishman Gladstone.²

The irony of Broadbent's blithe othering of the Irish and his readiness to perceive individuals as national stereotypes is revealed in the first of the play's comic reversals when Broadbent's business partner, Doyle, arrives at the office. Doyle is a genuine Irishman, although he has lived outside Ireland for half of his 36 years. In Doyle's presence Haffigan's Irish brogue decays “into a common would-be genteel accent with an unexpected strain of Glasgow in it,” but even this isn't enough to alert Broadbent to the fact that his archetypal Irishman is an impostor. This is the first of a number of scenes in the play when Shaw uses the signifier of accent to reveal the gap between signifier and signified, a theme that he

was to return to nine years later in his most famous play, *Pygmalion* (1913).

The device of the phoney or assumed accent is, of course, a manifestation of the play's principal discursive mode. The root of irony, *eirōn*, means "dissembler," and irony is essentially a dissembling that is meant to be seen through. The relative capacity of characters to "see through" the dissembling of others is a useful indicator of their folly.

Broadbent is thus consistently depicted as being more foolish than any of the Irishmen and women that he meets in the course of his trip to Ireland since he takes everything that is said to him at "face value," being incapable of discerning any alternative meaning. The greatest irony of all, which Shaw depicts as lying at the very heart of the colonial situation, is that, despite his manifest folly, Broadbent is ultimately victorious, returning to England at the end of the play having been chosen by the Irish community of Roscullen as their parliamentary candidate who, if elected, would "represent" them in Westminster. Indeed, it is precisely his skill at representing that provides the play's central ironic trope, which occurs at the beginning of the fourth act.

**Irony is essentially a dissembling
that is meant to be seen through**

At the end of the previous act, Broadbent, already in electioneering mood, had offered a ride home in his car to the peasant farmer, Matthew Haffigan. Haffigan had explained that he also needed to transport the pig that he had just bought. Broadbent, in his chameleon-like anxiety to minimise all signs of difference between himself and his potential electors, agrees enthusiastically:

[...] it will be quite delightful to drive with a pig in the car: I shall feel quite like an Irishman.³

When Haffigan discovers that he is being offered a ride in a car rather than a horse-drawn carriage he runs away in distress, leaving the pig behind him. Nothing

daunted, Broadbent resolves to take the pig without the farmer:

Left the pig! Then it's all right. The pig's the thing: the pig will win over every Irish heart to me.⁴

Not surprisingly, the frightened pig causes Broadbent to lose control of his car, which crashes, injuring the villagers, destroying their property and running over the pig itself. At the beginning of the fourth act two versions of these events are given to the audience, the first by the local mill-owner, Doran, and the second by Broadbent

**It is precisely Broadbent's skill at
representing that provides the play's
central ironic trope**

himself. Doran's mock-epic re-telling is the source of immense amusement both to himself and his audience (with the exception of Keegan the visionary mystic, who offers the detached observation that defines and separates the two narratives: "It is hell: it is hell. Nowhere else could such a scene be a burst of happiness for the people.") and culminates in a reflective description of the accident's aftermath:

He has the divil's own luck, that Englishman, annyway; for hwen they picked him up he hadnt a scratch on him, barrn hwat the pig did to his cloes. Patsy had two fingers out o jynt; but the smith pulled them sthraight for him. Oh, you never heard such a hullabaloo as there was. There was Molly cryin Me chaney, me beautiful chaney! n oul Matt shoutin Me pig, me pig! n the polus takin the number o the car, n not a man in the town able to speak for laughin.⁵

Having been made the laughing-stock of the entire community it seems almost inevitable that Broadbent will have lost any chance he might have had of being elected by the people of Roscullen. However, Broadbent's own version of the events, delivered in the formal,

bureaucratic discourse of the patronising politician, transforms his own rôle from that of buffoon to hero and minimises the importance of the others in what he represents as the story of his heroism and magnanimity:

[...] I was astonished at the steadiness of my nerves when death stared me in the face today... We have had a somewhat agitating day: a valuable and innocent animal has lost its life: a public building has been wrecked: an aged and infirm lady has suffered an impact for which I feel personally responsible, though my old friend Mr Laurence Doyle unfortunately incurred the first effects of her natural resentment. I greatly regret the damage to Mr Patrick Farrell's fingers: and I have of course taken care that he shall not suffer pecuniarily by his mishap. I am glad to say that Patsy took it like an Irishman, and, far from expressing any vindictive feeling, declared his willingness to break all his fingers and toes for me on the same terms.⁶

Broadbent's narration makes it only too obvious that, however much he may seek to pass himself off as an Irishman, the Irish themselves are inescapably a distant and impersonal other for him. His listing of the impact of the accident makes the hierarchy of his values abundantly clear: himself, the pig, property, the old woman whose crockery stall and source of livelihood have been

Whereas the principal trope of *John Bull's Other Island* is irony, that of *Juno and the Paycock* is metaphor

destroyed, and finally the dislocation of the farm labourer's fingers. Such a cool dismissal of the significance of those affected by his actions is a foretaste of the chilling plans he makes at the end of the play as he considers how he will develop the land of Roscullen on behalf of the Syndicate he represents. As tenant-farming is no longer profitable he envisages encouraging the small land-owners to over-mortgage their land, taking on financial commitments which will be foreclosed in order to capitalise upon the region's historic and religious past

and aesthetic attractions by constructing golf courses and hotels. Doran and Haffigan will be sent to the workhouse or to America, whilst Keegan will be kept on to provide authentic local colour. As Richard Allen Cave makes clear in his article, "Staging the Irishman":

The comedy is a devastating analysis of the latter-day colonial mind as never more dangerous than when it sets out to laugh at itself [and its] lasting image is of total dispossession.⁷

Notwithstanding the chilling edge to his satirical portrait of Anglo-Irish colonial relations as they stood in 1904, twenty-two years later, in his programme note to the London production in 1926, Shaw was to look back to that period as a "state of innocence and false security."⁸ The intervening years had witnessed the First World War, the Easter Rising of 1916, and the Anglo-Irish guerilla war which led to the establishment of the Irish Free State only to inaugurate a purely Irish civil war in which, in Shaw's words, "every bridge in Ireland was broken." In the light of these events, *John Bull's Other Island* may certainly be seen as portraying a world which, if not exactly innocent, was at least simpler than its post-Independence counterpart. This relative simplicity was due in part, ironically enough, to the British presence as a colonising power which, as Richard Allen Cave explains, fed the manichean politics of the growing nationalist movement at the turn of the century:

The colonisers had willy-nilly created a situation over the centuries where they were now *necessary* to the impulse towards nationalism, since the rhetoric of nationalism and rebellion tends in effect to be a mirror-image of the rhetoric of imperialism, each asserting its values by denigrating the opposition and reducing it to the status of dreaded Other.⁹

The departure of the colonising power from Irish soil in 1922 thus created a vacuum, leaving the erstwhile colonised in a state of limbo, compounded by a civil war between the Free State Forces and the Diehard Republican faction of the IRA, who wanted an independent

thirty-two county Irish Republic as opposed to the fuzzy status of Dominion of the British Empire of the twenty-six southern counties of the Irish Free State. It is precisely this post-colonial limbo that Sean O'Casey explores in *Juno and the Paycock*, a tragedy set in a Dublin tenement house in 1922. In O'Casey's play the Other no longer comes from across the Irish Sea: the Other is now within.

It is at the implicit level that the central metaphor of *Juno and the Paycock* works most interestingly

Whereas the principal trope of *John Bull's Other Island* is irony, that of *Juno and the Paycock* is metaphor. The tension between the colonised and coloniser is the result of a state of opposition, and the fact of opposition is central to the ironic experience, as characters and audience alike discern the "reality" lying behind the dissembling Metaphor, on the other hand, is a figure of speech which asserts the identity of its component parts, the literal and the figurative, or "tenor" and "vehicle," to use the terminology suggested by I.A. Richards. In *Juno and the Paycock* the dissensions, struggles and eventual disintegration of the family of "Captain" Jack and Mrs. Juno Boyle parallel the national situation. The metaphor operates at both the explicit and implicit levels. At its most obvious the unemployed Boyle brags to his layabout friend, Joxer, of his intention of showing his hard-working wife who really "wears the trousers" in his household:

'Today, Joxer, there's going to be issued a proclamation be me, establishin' an independent Republic, an' Juno'll have to take an oath of allegiance.¹⁰

In just the same way that Ireland's independent status was questioned by the Diehards in 1922 (and, indeed, Ireland was only to become a fully independent republic in 1938), so "Captain" Boyle's "independence" from his wife could never exist in anything more than name as long as he continued to shirk work and thus remain dependent on her income. It is, however, at the

implicit level that the central metaphor of *Juno and the Paycock* works most interestingly.

At the beginning of the play the Boyles' twenty-two year-old daughter, Mary, is looking into a mirror, seeking to choose between a blue and a green ribbon for her hair. Her choice of the green ribbon (Ireland's national colour) identifies her firmly with Ireland itself, but her hesitancy, and her reliance upon the mirror in order to be able to see herself as an other, represent her need to discover her true identity, just as Ireland itself, finding its feet in its first post-colonial months, needed to discover its own identity no longer as England's Other. (It is interesting to conjecture that the metaphorical statement made by Mary's choice of the green ribbon for her hair may have been suggested to O'Casey by his reading of *John Bull's Other Island*. In the third volume of his autobiography O'Casey recalls his reaction to the Home Rule edition of Shaw's play, published in 1912:

Shaw showed an Ireland very different from the lady Yeats made her out to be, peasants dancing round her to the sound of tabor and drum, their homespun shirts buttoned up with stars. Shaw's was rather grimy, almost naked, save for the green flag draped around her middle [...] she stood in front of what was the most powerful part of England, Broadbent, in the shape of a breezy mountain of bombast, dressed in a motor-coat, goggles and gauntlet gloves, a fat purse dripping largesse, golf-sticks on his back; full of pomp enduring confidence, ready to take away even the green flag around Ireland's middle and turn it into a gilt-edged security.¹¹

Influence is, of course, impossible to prove in literature, but O'Casey's metaphorical reading of Shaw's play, which might be better described as a symbolist reading, does at least open up a line of interpretation of *Juno and the Paycock*. Mary's doubt about the best colour of ribbon for her hair arises again at the beginning of the second act, on which occasion it is not her mother but her fiancé, Bentham, that she consults in order to make up her mind; Bentham simply ignores her question, making it clear, just as her mother did, that definition of her identity is purely her own responsibility.

If Mary's metaphorical association with Ireland itself is rendered clear by means of such unambiguous signifiers as the symbolism of the national colour, the

It is precisely "character's" status as a "category of closure or resolution" that O'Casey resists in *Juno and the Paycock*

literal "meaning" of the other characters in the play resists any such ready decodification. Indeed, the very characteristic of identity between the component parts of the trope of metaphor is shown by O'Casey to be subject to erasure. Homi Bhabha describes this characteristic of identity as a principle of equivalence:

To "metaphorize" the production of meaning is to introduce a principle of equivalence whereby the work of the narrative – the transformation of differential narrative and ideological codes into the textual system and mode of address – is concealed within a set of categories of closure and resolution, such as "character," or "mimetic irony."¹²

It is precisely "character's" status as a "category of closure or resolution" that O'Casey resists in *Juno and the Paycock*. Just as Shaw uses the discursive mode of irony to resist any facile stereotyping of colonised and coloniser, so O'Casey reveals an underlying ambiguity in the equivalence of his central metaphor in order to resist any simplistic definition of Ireland's post-colonial identity. The reliability of "character" as a signifier is questioned as the identity of each character in turn is shown to be either assumed or in some way unstable. Thus, the Boyles' son, Johnny, who is represented throughout the play as a hero of the Republican resistance, is ultimately revealed to have been a traitor and is taken away to be executed by his former comrades in arms. Similarly, Mary's two "principled" boyfriends, the ardent trade unionist, Jerry Devine, and the Theosophist schoolteacher, Charles Bentham, are both shown to be lacking in any kind of moral fibre as they abandon her upon discovering that she is pregnant. The play's central character is also re-

sistant to any kind of closure or resolution. Indeed, "Captain" Boyle's very name is based upon a fantasy about his past which bears no relation to the reality of somebody whose only experience of the sea has been a trip in a collier between Dublin and Liverpool. The supposed inheritance that Jack Boyle believes to be his leads him to assume the airs and graces of a man of money, talking knowledgeably about share prices, belittling his wife's ignorance of the world of power represented by the shares that he himself doesn't actually possess:

[...] oh, there's no use tellin' women what Consols is – th' wouldn't undherstand.¹³

Although it is apparent that he himself knows no better than his wife does what Consols are, the reference to the Government Securities of Great Britain consolidated into a single stock in 1751 is an example of what Bhabha describes as the "discourse of colonial promise." The presence of such a discourse in one of the most abject victims of the colonial process is one of the indicators used by O'Casey to demonstrate the extent to which the identity of his characters is no more than a construct for which they themselves are not even

O'Casey's play is a portrait of the agonised impotence of dispossession

responsible. By the end of the play, with his house emptied of the vulgar furniture he'd bought on the credit of his supposed inheritance, his son shot as a traitor, his wife and daughter departed in search of a better future for Mary's unborn baby, "Captain" Jack Boyle is reduced to a state of drunken incoherence, with no clearer sense of his own identity than he had in the first act.

Like *John Bull's Other Island*, O'Casey's play is a portrait of the agonised impotence of dispossession. Not only are the characters in *Juno and the Paycock* alienated from their own identity as individuals, but they are also dispossessed of any national identity or sense of cultural inheritance. England, as the former colonial power, is

conspicuous by its absence from the play. It is mentioned twice as the destination of the fugitive father of Mary's child, thus acquiring a clear connotative link with such negative qualities as treachery and unscrupulous irresponsibility, and it is also remembered as the dominating power which created the model for the Irish Free State's hated police force. However, the colonial power's very absence is transformed into a ghostly presence throughout the play as we see the characters struggling with the broken images of a language and culture that has long since been deprived of any real significance. Jack Boyle's attempt to speak Irish is a grotesque phonetic caricature of a phrase which doesn't even have the meaning he imagines it to have:

Requiescat in pace... or, usin' our oul' tongue like St Patrick or St Bridget, **Guh sayeree jeea ayera!**¹⁴

When his daughter points out to him that the phrase he's just attempted to enunciate (Go Saoraidh Dia Éire) actually means God save Ireland, and not what he intended it to mean, Rest in Peace, his response is to dismiss the importance not only of the signifier but of the signified itself: "U-u-ugh, it's all the same – isn't it a prayer?"¹⁵

Boyle's alienation is such that signifier and signified are not even like the two sides of the same coin, they are the sides of any two coins in the same currency!

Although the discourse of all the characters, even the pedantic Bentham, is characterised to a greater or lesser extent by malapropisms, misquotations, mispronunciations and non sequiturs, it is Boyle whose ignorance and trivialisation of his own language, culture and history are most all-pervasive. Nonetheless, for all his ignorance, he shares a common perception of Ireland with the most perspicacious of the characters in *John Bull's Other Island*. As he blearily registers the fact that even the chairs have been taken from his tenement room he slurs the drunken observation that: "The country'll have to steady itself... it's goin'... to hell..."¹⁶

Moments earlier the votive light which had burnt steadily beneath the picture of the Virgin beside the dresser throughout the play had flickered and gone out.

Mary, in the anguish of the impact of the news of her brother's execution, had abandoned the faith that had sustained her up until that point:

[...] there isn't a God, there isn't a God; if there was He wouldn't let these things happen!¹⁷

Representing colonial and post-colonial moments in Ireland's history, both *John Bull's Other Island*, in its comic irony, and *Juno and the Paycock*, with its sustained elegiac metaphor, reach the same devastating conclusion: "This is Hell, nor are we out of it."

NOTES

¹SHAW, George Bernard. *John Bull's Other Island*. In: —. *The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw: Collected Plays with their Prefaces*. London, Max Reinhardt, 1971, p. 814.

²Id., *ibid.*, p. 900.

³Id., *ibid.*, p. 973.

⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 977.

⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 983.

⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 984-5.

⁷CAVE, Richard Allen. *Staging the Irishman*. In: BRATTON, J.S. (ed.). *Acts of Supremacy: The British Empire and the Stage 1790-1930*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1991, p. 121.

⁸SHAW, *op. cit.*, p. 1.026.

⁹CAVE, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

¹⁰O'CASEY, Sean. *Juno and the Paycock*. In: AYLING, Ronald (ed.). *Seven Plays by Sean O'Casey: a Student's Edition*. Basing-Stoke, Macmillan, 1985, p. 62.

¹¹O'CASEY, Sean. *Drums under the windows*. In: —. *Autobiographies: I*. London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 559-60.

¹²BHABHA, Homi. *Representation and the Colonial Text: a Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism*. In: GLOVERSMITH, F. (ed.). *The Theory of Reading*. Sussex, Harvester Press, 1984, p. 115.

¹³O'CASEY, Sean. *Juno and the Paycock*, *cit.*, p. 71.

¹⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 67.

¹⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁷Id., *ibid.*, p. 99.

Peter James Harris é doutorando na área de LILINA-USP

The politics of misogyny and the quest for male identity in *Troilus and Cressida*

Drama
Teatro

AMANDA JANE BROOKFIELD

She's bitter to her country: hear me, Paris –
For every false drop in her bawdy veins
A Grecian's life has sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight
A Trojan hath been slain.

Diomedes

My spritely brethren, I propend to you
In resolution to keep Helen still
For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence
Upon our joint and several dignities

Hector

Troilus and Cressida is one of Shakespeare's most difficult, most "modern" plays, to be qualified as neither tragedy nor comedy. A bitter, despairing play, it gives a bleak vision of love and war, the twin axes of the plot, in a particularly ironic reworking of part of Homer's story of the siege of Troy. There are no characters who are truly admirable, no characters with whom we may identify. The love-story of *Troilus and Cressida*, feeding on the ironic tensions between passionate declarations of love, and the echoes of legendary betrayal, plays itself out against the long-drawn-out siege of Troy. The renowned romantic couple, Helen and Paris, appear in the brief vignette of a sordid love-nest in the Trojan court. Petty skirmishes and political machinations direct the war (in)action. Shakespeare's use of the original sources has created an iconoclastic play where the keynote is one of cynicism.

One of the most striking aspects of the play is the tension between the conflicting, even contradictory, ways in which the female characters are perceived. They are "constructed" by the male characters in accordance with male fears and desires; they are effectively denied any autonomy of action. Such "construction" results in archetypes based on different forms of feminine sexual behaviour or deviant feminine behaviour: Femme Fatale, Madonna and Whore, Chaste Wife and Madwoman. These archetypes all stem from the male need to control and dominate the feminine libido that is threatening, not only in itself, but also in the male responses that it arouses. The male characters are seeking to circumscribe and restrict the power of the women around them, and also to dominate and subjugate certain aspects of their own nature. By thus "constructing" and controlling the women around them, they seek to consolidate a sense of their own identity.

One of the most striking aspects of the tension between the conflicting ways in which the female characters are perceived

In the characters of Helen and Cressida, one can see the classic, male-constructed dichotomy of woman as Madonna and as Whore. Helen is worshipped and despised. The men, "fools on both sides," fight a war, fired by motives of chivalry and romance, for a woman who is the sexual property of Paris, but who should fall

under the patriarchal authority of her legitimate husband, Menelaus. Cressida is pure before she falls prey to Diomedes to her own sexual appetite (at least in Troilus' opinion). In the words of Michele Barrett:

twin images of woman as, on the one hand, the sexual property of men and, on the other, the chaste mothers of their children [are] the means whereby men [...] ensure both the sanctity and the inheritance of their families and their extra-familial sexual pleasure.¹

This dichotomy becomes apparent in *Troilus and Cressida* insofar as men mask their desires in order to legitimise positions that would otherwise be unacceptable.

Male archetypes of the feminine: the Femme Fatale, Helen of Troy

Clear evidence of this dichotomy between Madonna and Whore resides in the ways in which Helen is interpreted by the male characters and in the way she behaves. She is simultaneously "love's visible soul" and "a deadly theme." Thousands of men have died for her. She has bewitched Paris; she uses her sexuality and her femininity to ensnare other men around her. She is seductive and destructive, a veritable Siren, a fatal toy for Troy to have and to hold.

As the Greeks debate the running of the war, ironically never mentioning Helen, so the Trojans analyse the reasons for the war. Paris and Troilus defend the Keeping of Helen, but in terms that introduce a discordant note of mercantile values, as though Helen is an object to be traded, according to the value attributed to her, in an argument ostensibly devoted to the defence of the chivalrous motives of the war. Hector wishes to release Helen to the Greeks; the cost in human life has been too high: "She is not worth what she doth cost the keeping." He finally changes his mind, however, and insists that they keep Helen for the simple honour of fighting.

The tone of Hector's final comments suggests that he recognises the futility of a doomed war, fighting ostensibly to secure the honour of a woman that neither side

accepts as worthy, and yet forced, by an impasse built on a fragile structure of honour, to fight to the bitter end. The siege of Troy has thus become a skirmish of male egos, played out among men who recognise that there is a huge abyss between their ideals and the perceived "reality" around them.

One might question why Shakespeare chose to represent Helen in such a way, distorting the popular image of Paris' legendary queen, and exposing thus the folly of the war. Why does he unmask to such a cruel extent the way Helen has been cynically "constructed" as a theme for chivalrous behaviour? Perhaps such a representation of Helen is a means of demonstrating the folly of appropriating the female image to justify and rationalise irrational male behaviour. The war is foolish, not because Helen is unworthy, but because men are capable of erecting fantasies around women, fantasies that they are prepared to die for, even when they themselves perceive the hollowness of it all.

Male archetypes of the feminine: Cressida – Madonna and Whore

The story of Troilus and Cressida is the parallel love theme in the play, ironically reflecting the Helen-Paris love story. Shakespeare was working here with original sources and a story that was well-known, of the faithless Cressida who later became a leper as a punishment for her infidelity. Thus he was able to exploit to the full the dramatic irony of the declarations of undying love by the two lovers.

Cressida is a rather more complex character than Helen. She appears more often, interacts with more people, speaks her fears and strategies in love more directly, and presents a seemingly contradictory character. In the scenes where she appears, Cressida reveals herself to be lively and quick-witted, perhaps rather too well-versed in the ways of the world and in the ways of men to satisfy us a the ideal woman, an innocent Madonna, for Troilus. However, she is candid and loving towards Troilus, revealing her innermost thoughts with reckless naivety at times.

An urgent question presents itself: how does the girl who is passionately in love with Troilus, desperately keen to be faithful to Troilus, come to dally with Diomedes and to flirt with the whole Greek camp? Cressida, once removed from her context by patriarchal manoeuvrings over which she has no power, is forced to rely on herself for survival. Already "constructed" as the Whore by the Greek soldiers, and no longer a virgin, she has the sense to find herself a champion who may help her to avoid becoming in reality what she has already been classified as: the Whore or the Trojan strumpet.

Cressida, once removed from her context by patriarchal manoeuvrings over which she has no power, is forced to rely on herself for survival

To what extent do we really see Cressida? She is portrayed in two different contexts, each portrayal depending upon the male gaze for existence. In both of these "constructions" of Cressida, we can see the traditional male archetypes of women at play. She is the beloved Madonna of Troilus, put on a pedestal and idealised; she is also the Whore of the Greek camp, identified and condemned by Ulysses as the Greek soldiers kiss her one by one.

Once again, we see the abyss between shifting levels of male psychological realities. Here, masculine ways of interpreting war and love, both of which are portrayed as male activities (war is to be fought, love is to be conquered through the medium of a woman) are the cornerstones of the construction of male identity. In the case of this play, those two themes are interdependent: the war is fought for love; the development of love is shaped by war. Male identity shapes itself with reference to these activities, activities that should reflect honour and glory, but in reality reflect sexual failure and political humiliation.

Troilus, too, comes to see Cressida as a whore, because she fails conform to the image he had projected onto her as being desirable. She is not the faithful woman

who would confirm his identity to Troilus himself and to others. Having betrayed Troilus' ideal, she is no longer Cressida, or at least no longer *his* Cressida, worthy of his love. Particularly interesting is the denial he makes of her very identity. "This is, and is not, Cressida," as though it is only through male recognition that the woman acquires her identity. One could say, dialectically speaking, that once Cressida no longer has her identity in Troilus' eyes, he also comes to have a crisis of identity – in his own eyes and in those of other men.

For Troilus, the lack of a stable and stabilising, perception of a woman means that his world falls to pieces. He returns to the battlefield, motivated by a burning desire for revenge against the world at large, Diomedes in particular, as the scapegoat for his fury at Cressida's betrayal. This thirst for revenge can be seen as a desire to reconstruct aspects of his shattered identity. In love he was undone, in war he will undo someone else, thereby salvaging his dignity and self-respect.

Male archetypes of the feminine: Madwoman and Chaste Wife

Priam's daughter, the prophetess Cassandra has been condemned, by the gods, to have her true visions of the downfall of Troy derided as utter nonsense. In *Troilus and Cressida*, her horrific predictions fall on deaf ears during the Trojan council-of-war scene, dismissed as "brain-sick raptures" by Troilus. Both Hector and Troilus attempt to turn Cassandra's words to their own purpose, seeking to incorporate her discredited discourse into their own, albeit in different ways and to very different ends.

Hector's wife, Andromache, the dutiful and chaste, shaken by visions, begs her husband to disarm and to desist from the battle. Hector rejects her warnings roughly: "You train me to offend you; get you in." Later, he says, "Andromache, I am offended with you: / Upon the love you bear me get you in," whereupon the obedient wife, takes her last look at the man she loves, and leaves his side for ever. The one woman he may dismiss because she is mad; the other, because she is his property and owes him her submission.

The characters of Cassandra and Andromache are cameos of feminine archetypes, submissive to the men around them. Neither of them is allowed any power to change events. The dismissal of female wisdom as madness is a very powerful way of discrediting feminine discourse, and has its roots in the way women are “constructed” as the “Other,”² the secondary and lesser part of the dichotomies that range masculine qualities against feminine qualities: head/heart; intelligence/sensitivity; activity/passivity; culture/nature, and so on. Woman has been traditionally associated with nature – her organic functions of menstruation, gestation and lactation have been associated with nature, untamed and irrational, while man has come to associate himself with culture and with logic. The words of Cassandra and Andromache are discarded as women’s words, fruit of foolishness and superstition.

Reception of the feminine

It is interesting to examine these archetypal representations of the feminine in the wider context of the whole play, identifying the general attitudes towards the feminine. The feminine is represented in the universe of the play as a debilitating, disarming, unmanning force.

One might argue that it is the feminine principle that brings about the whole of the war: the romantic siege of Troy fought for the love of the peerless Helen. However, the feminine principle is a source of weakness, for the male characters, rather than a source of strength. The war is at an impasse – men are incapable of decisive action, honourable and heroic actions have long since evaporated in a cloud of inertia.

The inspiration drawn from the feminine principle is hollow. The men, Trojans and Greeks, know the war is futile, yet they stubbornly invoke Helen as a

Theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valiant and magnanimous deeds
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame in time to come canonize us.

They persist in their petty little war for reasons very different from the professed desire to retrieve Helen,

assure her honour and “wipe off the soil of her fair rape in honourable keeping of her.” Those reasons are tied up with conflicting motives of fear and desire – in relation to woman and, more importantly, self-image, the need to construct an identity in the eyes of other men, the desperate fear of losing face in front of those men, be they enemies or companions.

The feminine principle is a source of weakness, for the male characters, rather than a source of strength

The attitudes and behaviour of the male characters sit aside a fundamental contradiction, aspiring to idealise the feminine principle while at the same time despising and fearing it as something that weakens and undermines. It is this fault, this shift, between the idealising of woman and the dethroning of her, that generates much of the tone of the play, unheroic, cynical, iconoclastic, revealing the worthlessness of war and of the fragility of the foundations of male identity.

There is, then, a clear distrust, even dislike, of women in the play. This is manifest in the way the male characters “construct” the female characters and (mis)interpret the feminine; it is also visible in the motives behind the political activity in the play. I would argue that the action of the play is generated largely by male misogyny, and that the ostensibly romantic motives only loosely mask this misogyny, rather than providing genuine reasons for the continuing of the war. It is hatred rather than love that creates the “love” conflicts, individual and collective, in *Troilus and Cressida*, male-constructed feminine archetypes and the aggressive manoeuvrings in the political sphere are two sides of the same coin, misogyny.

Aspects of male misogyny in the quest for male identity

I would also like to suggest that this male misogyny, in both love and war, is indissolubly linked to the prob-

lem of the construction and definition of male identity. The male characters in the play construct their identity in two mirrors: that of their action in war and that of their action in love. In war, we see that the male characters aspire to heroism and fame, to glorious military conquest and honour; however, time and again we see the opposite, military inaction, useless political wrangling and serious doubts as to the value of the war. Similarly, in the sphere of love, we see the same doubling reflection: the idealised object of love and passion in contrast with the dissembling image of disillusion and sexual jealousy. Both these mirrors reflect and re-reflect, in a claustrophobic vista of reflected images, the contradiction between that which is idealised and that which is really perceived.

*Sexual jealousy, and its repercussions,
is the driving force behind much of
the action*

Male identity is seated precariously on fragile fantasies, chimeras. The male characters seem to be viscerally aware of their "double vision," of the terrible tension between this impulse towards the noble and the sublime, and the plunge towards the grotesque and the sordid. As Troilus says, "This is, and is not, Cressida," a clear example of the double vision, the self-delusion on which the male characters construct their identity.

Troilus' moment of crisis turns, thus, around a crucial question of identity. His struggle with his incapacity to reconcile his Madonna with Diomedes' "Whore" generates intolerable tensions within him; what is at stake is not in fact Cressida's identity, but his very own identity, rudely jarred by what he sees as an instance of the betrayal and worthlessness of that which he had idealised.

Sexual jealousy, and its repercussions, is the driving force behind much of the action. Troilus possesses Cressida and she is one thing, his Madonna; he loses her and she becomes a whore. Menelaus and Paris are

fighting for possessions of a woman. It doesn't matter that Helen is worthless; she is interpreted as the theme of greatness – the war boils down to a question of reputation, of identity.

As far as the interpenetration of love and war themes is concerned, it is instructive to note that both Helen and Cressida betray their men not only sexually, but also politically. Through no fault of their own, both women are removed from their context and their men – by men: in Helen's case by her lover, Paris, with illegitimate male authority; in Cressida's case by her father, wielding legitimate male authority. They thus pass to inhabit the enemy camp, to behave in accordance with the norms and expectations of the Other Man. Such betrayal, with its implications of sexual and political jealousy, provokes a global crisis of identity, resulting in the stubborn continuation of the war.

The weapon that Ulysses uses against the refractory Achilles, reluctant hero, grown effeminate through inaction, also has much to do with questions of identity. Recognition, reputation, one's very identity... are fleeting and transitory, constructed socially, through deeds and interaction, constantly renewed to satisfy the fickleness of man's opinion:

for men, like butterflies,
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer,
And not a man, for being simply man,
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours
That are without him – as place, riches, and favour.
Individual and collective identity must thus be constructed dialectically.

Misogyny and "mad idolatry"

The war drags on, weary and stale, perpetuated by the inertia of men who cannot lose face and withdraw. Helen, soiled and frivolous as she is, is still taken to be a "theme of honour and renown." For the Greeks to abandon Helen to Paris, would be for Menelaus to accept willingly the label "cuckold," already being bandied around the Greek camp. For the Trojans to deliver her

up to the Greeks would be to recognise that they were in the wrong all the time. Rather than being a question of honour, the continuation of the war is a necessity, so that both Greeks and Trojans can save face.

It seems that the question of misogyny as it relates to the quest for male identity is central to our understanding of the play. The male characters are trapped in a war that goes nowhere and achieves nothing. Their desires are sublimated and rationalised into highflown ideals of chivalry (Trojans) or political manoeuvrings (Greeks), ideals that are acceptable to the rational mind, whereas their real motives are to do with preserving their identity and saving face in the eyes of other men, whether enemies or companions.

The tenacity with which the male characters cling to their ideals can only be explained in connection with their sense of worth, their sense of identity. Men construct their identity in relation to others, in this case in relation to the men they fight with and the women they "love" or possess. If one or both of these touchstones are shown to be worthless, as both are in *Troilus and Cressida*, then all reference points are distorted, "mad idolatry" reigns and male identity is founded on unstable ground.

Women, far from being a source of romantic inspiration, are perceived as threatening, and are "constructed" in such a way as to contain their power and guarantee male supremacy: woman as Whore, Madonna, Madwoman, Femme Fatale and Chaste Wife. The male characters can, therefore, create fictions of their own behaviour, fictions that deceive themselves and their peers. The problem arises in that the deception is incomplete. Most of the male characters are aware, ei-

ther explicitly or implicitly, of the farce that the war has become, of the futility of fighting for a woman like Helen and of the mechanisms that men mobilise to deceive themselves.

The ways in which the female characters are presented as archetypes of particular kinds of sexual behaviour are less interesting than the reasons behind these representations: male fear of the female, and consequent longing to control and dominate, together with a quest to construct the male identity. It is this desire for identity (and, ultimately, for meaning in an absurd and amoral world), originating in profound desires and fears, that creates the archetypes of female characters, justifies misogyny and perpetuates a war that is futile. At the end the play resolves nothing, the war drags on, man is bitter and so, to his way of thinking, is woman. There is an atmosphere of cynicism and sexual despair that speaks from Shakespeare's day to our own times.

NOTES

¹BARRETT, Michele. Quoted in: GREENE, Gayle & KAHN, Coppelia (eds.). *Making a Difference: Feminist Literary Criticism*. London, Methuen, 1985.

²DE BEAUVOIR, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London, Penguin, 1972.

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GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

and the emancipation of women

ROSALIE RAHAL HADDAD

It is possible to say that Shaw's attitude towards Victorian morality was highly unorthodox and that he responded in a permanent iconoclastic manner to the social issues that began to arise in England during the last decade of the nineteenth century. By many Shaw is called an unprecedented crusader in his defense of women's rights both at home and at work, and in this sense a pioneer warrior against a problem considered relevant up to the contemporary times.

Social problems, women's among them, had always been personally witnessed by Shaw from his early days in Dublin, Ireland, as a child and later on as an adolescent. Shaw's mother suffered severe maltreatment from her alcoholic husband mostly based on financial neglect. There was barely enough to eat and Shaw together with his three sisters had to survive on Mrs. Shaw's earning as a music teacher. Shaw's mother was highly gifted as a concert and operatic singer, had a rare gift for arranging orchestral parts, and became a reputable musician. A distinguished teacher of music, George John Vandaleur Lee, became acquainted with the Shaws and came to live with them. The Shaws could not afford to lose this welcome tenant and later on Mrs. Shaw sought refuge from her domestic disappointment in music. In the process Mrs. Shaw disregarded her household chores and children care and was, according to her prodigious son, a very neglecting mother whose main concern was to work with her teacher. Lee taught Lucinda Shaw to sing and in exchange she kept house for him by setting up a joint household – a sort of what Shaw calls a “blameless ménage à trois.” But, still according to Shaw, she was the sort of woman who never troubled herself about gossip, and consequently gave no importance to her neighbors' disapproval. Therefore, in Shaw's opinion his mother was the first unwomanly woman¹ he had met, a trait and social status in women he was to admire throughout his life and relentlessly campaign for.

Shaw has always stood up for the intellectual capacity of women because he liked to see the combative spirit in them, however, his was one of the few voices to propagate this idea. But this requires some explanation. All through the nineteenth century men had put women

on a pedestal of purity – women were by definition, holier, purer than men. The woman's place was in the home, as an angel of the house, preserving the values of civilization. Traditionalists argued that because woman was refined, she was excused the burden of labor; but Shaw and later on the suffragettes began to claim that because she was acquiescent, woman was denied the right to work and vote in public affairs.

Shaw has always stood up for
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combative spirit in them

Hence, in 1890 when Shaw was at the height of his Fabian socialist utterances he came across the literary sensation of the day which was *The Diary of Marie Bashkirtseff* (1859-1884), Russian artist and diarist whose *Journal de Marie Bashkirtseff*, written in French and posthumously published in 1887, was translated into several languages. In England the English translation was processed in 1890 by Mathilde Blind. An outline and commentary of this diary was given in the *Review of Reviews* (June 1890) by the editor, the late William Stead (1849-1912), who was assistant editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1880 and during his editorship (1883-1888) initiated new and influential political and social movements. Stead achieved wide notoriety for his “Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” (1885) exposing sexual vice, later on founded the *Review of Reviews* in 1890 and continued his work for peace, friendship with Russia, and spiritual-

ism, for which he was much ridiculed. In 1912 Stead was drowned in the *Titanic* disaster.²

Taking under consideration Bernard Shaw's collected letters, where he exchanged relevant ideas concerning women's rights, it can be said that Shaw's criticism of Stead's review may be considered a very important feminist debate of the nineteenth century insofar as women's emancipation is concerned. It is thought of as having influenced women's movements yet to materialize, suffrage among them, equalized for men and women in England only in 1928. To my surprise, Shaw's response

Stead was engaged in a campaign with the purpose of establishing the ideal of sexual "purity" as a condition of public life

to Stead's review has not been mentioned in the extensive criticism I have read so far on Shaw, a fact which encouraged me to propagate his feminist ideas in this paper. At this time Shaw had not begun to write for the theater but was widely reputed for his performance as music and drama critic. As a Fabian socialist he was always revolting against the *status quo* and was given an opportunity by Stead to become the world-wide feminist he was to be known.

William Stead, in Shaw's point of view, was engaged in a campaign with the purpose of establishing the ideal of sexual "purity" as a condition of public life. He had certain Ibsenist qualities: faith in himself, "conscientious unscrupulousness, and could always make himself heard."³ High in his ideals was an "ideal of womanliness," in other words, the quality of passiveness which made women irresistible in the nineteenth century. Therefore, in order to support such an ideal, Stead would make and believe any statement, disregarding the fact that it might be either grotesque or unreal. When he found Marie Bashkirtseff's report of herself thoroughly incompatible with the picture of a woman's mind idealized by him Stead was faced with the dilemma that either Marie was not a woman or else his ideal was a false

one. Stead chose to believe in the former alternative. "Of the distinctively womanly," he says, "there is in her but little trace. She was the very antithesis of a true woman."⁴

Nevertheless Stead had to accept the fact that Marie, voluntarily, made herself a highly skilled artist by working ten hours a day for six years, a fact which proved beyond words her capacity for discipline, which led her to conquer, professionally, a space in society. However, Stead's verdict was "No self-control." Notwithstanding, his fundamental dispute with Marie came out in the following lines. "Marie," he said, "was artist, musician, wit, philosopher, student, anything you like but a natural woman with a heart to love, and a soul to find its supreme satisfaction in sacrifice for lover or for child." Shaw's response was that of all the idealist abominations that corrupted society, he doubted if there were any so mean as that of forcing self-sacrifice on a woman under the excuse that she liked it and, if she dared contradict this opinion, declaring her no true woman. In India such an ideal was carried so far that women were forced to die together with the husband under the pretense that they liked it. Such concept, Shaw condemns, still flourishes with Stead, who condemns women who write in diaries, as Marie Bashkirtseff did, "I love myself." Or this, "I swear solemnly – by the Gospels, by the passion of Christ, by myself – that in four years I will be famous." No wonder he was led to exclaim, "She was very clever, no doubt; but woman she was not."⁵

In India women were forced to die together with the husband under the pretense that they liked it

Stead was not able to evaluate the outcome of his declarations. Many conventional citizens, some belonging to literary circles, applauded him. However, a remarkable result occurred. Marie Bashkirtseff, instead of becoming a less likable person than the ordinary female conformed to the ideal of womanliness, was most strongly the opposite. Stead himself wrote as one aggra-

vated by her diary, and pleased himself by “denigrating” her as a person who fascinated everybody, and was a source of delight to all because of her rich and enlightening personality. He did not realize that by portraying her under such positive light, he made her agreeable to all those who were no longer satisfied with the Victorian ideal of womanliness. The truth is that in real life, Shaw contested, a self-sacrificing woman, or as Stead would have put it, a womanly woman, is not only exploited but disliked in her pseudo-satisfaction in self-sacrifice. The self-sacrifice is always a drag, a responsibility, a perennial trouble with which no really strong person can live. Only those who have helped themselves know how to help others, and to respect their right to help themselves.

According to Shaw, love as a practical factor in society is still a “mere appetite”

Love loses its charm when it is not free; the desire to give, Shaw adds in his response to Stead, inspires no affection unless there is also the power to withhold; the compulsory character of the legalized conjugal relation, condemned by Shaw in all its lights, leads first to the idealization of marriage while it remains indispensable as a means of perpetuating society. Home life is unnaturally sustained by false social pretenses which deprive women from a natural right to become a “self” independent from a sociobiological function which limits them to be solely wives and mothers. According to Shaw, love as a practical factor in society is still a “mere appetite.” As an example, he mentions that Dante deeply loved Beatrice but neither during her life nor after her death was he “faithful” to her or to the woman he actually married. Tannhäuser when he died may have shared the conviction that the one moment of the emotion he felt with St Elizabeth was fuller and happier than all the hours of passion he spent with Venus; but that does not alter the fact that love began for him with Venus. In other words, passion is the germ of the more perfect

love and society should not obstruct the dissolution of unhappy and inconvenient marriages.

Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that the Victorian society, being directly dominated by men, comes to regard Woman, not as an end in herself like Man, but solely as a means of satisfying his appetite. The ideal wife is one who does everything that the

Shaw defends the idea that women have become economic slaves to the husbands because marriage is their only form of subsistence

ideal husband likes and nothing else. Now, Shaw tries to explain to Stead and to the public at large who read his review on Marie’s diary that to treat a person as a means instead of an end is to deny that person’s right to live. Woman, if she dares face the fact that she is being so treated, must either detest herself or else rebel. Bearing Shaw’s words in mind, the domestic career is no more natural to all women than the military career is natural to all men; if we have to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural habitat of a woman, we have done so exactly as “English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot; because they have never seen one anywhere else.”⁶

Shaw portrayed his feminist ideas in many of his works, and the Preface of the play *Getting Married* is another example of his campaign to emancipate women from domestic bondage. In it Shaw defends the idea that women have become economic slaves to the husbands because marriage is their only form of subsistence. In other words, to a woman without financial income a husband is a necessary commodity without which she will have to turn to undignified jobs which will extenuate her both physically and morally. More than often Shaw has reprehended the Victorian society for not allowing women to enjoy an academic education which would make them fitter to find profitable work away from home as lawyers or physicians, for example, thereby becoming equal to men.

In many of his plays Shaw has referred to the fact that women have turned to prostitution as a sole means of survival in the Victorian society. And the playwright shocked his audience because he defended the prostitute who chose to survive as an owner of brothels than to kill herself working intolerable hours in factories. For that matter, Shaw defends votes for women stating that they will judicially try to change obsolete laws which entitle a husband to take possession of his wife's property after marriage and defend men's impunity upon contamination of women through venereal diseases.

Shaw emphasizes the fact that women are hard to convince to become professionals

Shaw's collected letters further express his opinions on "unwomanly women." In a letter addressed to an unidentified young American woman in 1895 Shaw praises his correspondent as she calls herself an "undomestic woman." He encourages her to pursue a profession regardless of how improper that may be viewed by men who do not accept the idea that women are productive workers. However, it is interesting to notice that Shaw emphasizes the fact that women are hard to convince to become professionals, perhaps because they do many things and do them in such an amateur way that they do not do them well and, therefore, have no belief in themselves. He is therefore strongly of the opinion that the undomestic woman, one she has secured her position by escaping from domestic slavery, must master a trade or profession and *master it well* in order to maintain her own individuality to the full extent of her own strength. So, by fighting "ill paid, ill organized, ill recognized, and consequently ill executed industry," women will probably emancipate themselves.⁷

The sum of the matter of Shaw's ideas on the issue of Marie's diary and his own works is that unless woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself. Therefore woman has to repudiate duty altogether if she wants to achieve freedom because she is in direct bondage to duty more so than to man. And in claiming these ideas in 1890 Shaw paved the path to woman's militancy as this new specimen was increasingly becoming frustrated by the prevailing social and political stalemate.

NOTES

¹An Ibsenite concept which praised the independent woman who left behind her the Victorian cult of the "angel of the house."

²DRABBLE, Margaret (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 71, 933.

³SHAW, Bernard. *Major Critical Essays*. London, Penguin Books, 1986, p. 54.

⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 54.

⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶Id. *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism*. London, Penguin Books, 1937, p. 60.

⁷LAURENCE, Dan H. *Bernard Shaw: Collected Letters, 1874-1897*. New York, Dodd, Mead and Company, 1965, p. 474-5.

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NAVIGATING IN SMOKE

(while reading some Bakhtin and the film *Smoke*)¹

GISELE GIANDONI WOLKOFF

“writing constitutes a test and something like a touchstone in bringing to light the movements of thought it dissipates the shadow where the enemy’s plots are woven.”²

The art of telling stories is escorted by its (not always) immediate effect: the verisimilitude of facts; how truths are accomplished as such and the inseparable dissociation between truth and lie.

Smoke may be a story about stories of how to tell stories. *Smoke* attempts an almost unperceptible exactness of weight... its own weight, the difference between an unsmoked cigar and its ashes... Therefore, *Smoke*, even though being “autonomous” and “exact,” puffs... it is a *process*, in which there is inhaling and exhaling of air. If *Smoke* itself, on the one hand, connotes uncountably diverse shapes that hover around the *environment*, if it connotes a certain lack of linearity in discourse, on the other, it reflects an “uninterrupted interrelationship” amongst the chains of breath, of solitude in life... that might be death itself coming out of the closet.

These chains of breath that navigate throughout the universal space of existence may be linked by their own edges, which are at least two: the prow and the stern. It is these two edges that steer the boat to unrevolving strolls around the waters of discourse. The dialogue braced within these two corners imply a multiply sonorous coming and going of tides, a *heteroglot dialogism*.

Tracing a parallel between this idea/dream of idea – which seems to be present in Bakhtin’s “Discourse in

Novel”³ – and the film *Smoke*, we can pleasantly smell some still damp airs present in the whole mist of smoking. For there are inevitably two simultaneous (or not!) possibilities: that of smoking and enjoying it (in all senses and by all means: even through pain and guilt...) or/ and that of (“simply”) measuring the weight of smoke. Indeed, these two attitudes, actions, choices may be excluding/exclusive in rationality, in practical illusions, but not in wider, more complex readings and/of life’s “epiphanies,” since there are always uncountably imperceptive pulsations enlightening/obscuring the dance of discourse.

There are always uncountably imperceptive pulsations enlightening/obscuring the dance of discourse

Smoke attempts the clouds with its (also) bleaky wings: it is a metalinguistic film that shows us the reflections of our own everlasting *only* possibilities. Whatever we choose as our *own* feathers, whatever we authorise ourselves “by a magical pass” to bring up as truths, it is all lie. It actually (?) does not matter if it is true or untrue, lie or truth, for the boundaries that separate/unite reality from/to

irreality are extremely tenuous. There is always, however, our human filthy, inevitable need to reduce all permissions/possibilities to one single verisimilitude, that of making believe that we all and, yet, as individuals, live by/for something, the desire for *unity in diversity*. The moment we appropriate words as our favourite weapons, beautifully well-wrought masks that we try on/keep on trying/keep trying on time and time over, we soothe our consciousness that we are *individuals* who constantly “invent” the Other, the resonant image that we attempt to catch and grasp, eventually, possess it. This Other is objectified, it is words.

words are acts of religious thought [...] and discourse
[...] the dream and the fantasy that replace life [...]⁴

The queen-lie, the mother-lie, the one who prepares its sons for the terrible crusade in search for the golden ring of resurrection... relies on the dreamy-neutrality of speech, the never-possible, the *never-always/toujours-déjà*. Yet, “discourse lives [...] in a living impulse toward the object [...]”⁵ – it implies at least itself and an alien (not to say a whole bunch of aliens!). Whenever we get into trances while we dance with our masks... (eternal Venice’s carnival) we make our minds and souls wade into sparkles of verisimilitude, where even the when is at a loss, for everything else is a gain much more complex than a game of chess. However, as Rashi, or Thomas Jefferson Cole, in *Smoke* reminds us “all good things must

*We are individuals who constantly
“invent” the Other*

come to an end,” therefore, our trance is broken by a strongly intense rhythm of water dropping... The illusionary waters of *monoglossia* navigate... for, later, let be pleasantly/painfully embezzled by the misty/overcrowded river of *heteroglossia*. And there, the sour and sweet are one (?), the crusade gets tired and stops for awhile till it un-dis-covers the faults it has made, like a bandit’s inner flashback, like a bandit’s redemption.

The secret of this most terrible weapon (words) in a battlefield (which is that of discourse) is the silence of acknowledging that the truth lies where and when the belief is made concrete by not leaving a single doubt. Another multiple contradiction! But this is Bakhtin’s accent. For while, talking about poetic works, he says that it ought to be “as something about which there can be no doubt” just like “...the monologue that lasts a whole life,”⁶ from/out of which our voices become... they exist... they are made audible, they are given life. When(ever) the endlessly uncountable paths (of our discourse) come into a cross, it is to remind us that we have appropriated language as our own, with our own intentions, pretensions, lies... that, eventually, turn out to be truths. We contaminate the *never-always*, pollute it, we constitute the never pure abuse (?) of speaking. Our ears and tongues

*In the film Smoke, all characters are
“entities” in both senses (as narrators
and as “things” being narrated),
according to the situation*

are soon socially taught the terrible, dangerous art of living/dying, of slaying/giving birth again... being borne in different shapes and colours this (which/when) time. In logical discontinuity, then, utterances are beyond the dialectical waves of monoglossia, of monologism. Utterances surpass the storms of plausibility, for this latter never seems to take a practical form – “except” for the need to feed desire... Therefore, our voices are given life, since

truth itself does not seek words; she is afraid to entangle herself in the word, to soil herself in verbal pathos.⁷

This generated life grows... by the illusionary art of lying and/or by a stronger one: that of believing in lies. There seems to be a simultaneity in lying and taking something on trust, which is somehow connected to the manner of telling the lie/story, to the matter of “focusing” on the narrator or on the “element” being narrated.

The bridge between these two gaps is established for the sake of the ground, the soil, the earth, “mother nature:” both the narrator/entity telling the story and the story/entity being told/narrated can be a multiple singularity. In the film *Smoke*, all characters are “entities” in both senses (as narrators and as “things” being narrated), according to the situation.

We make the world our novel, where we are heroes and anti-heroes, subjects and objects of value. “The world is our oyster... whatever that means...” as Rashi, or Thomas Jefferson Cole, reminds us (?) in the movie. Rashi, the boy who saves (?) Paul from getting into an accident, comes up with new stories every other possibility, as if to flee from the (his/our own) condition of having to become a hero – in Bakhtinian terms. The hero of a novel is intrinsically committed to nothing but the entire cosmos that surrounds him and in which he inhabits, pollutes, constitutes. He does not owe anything to anyone but the entities of all divinities, the master of weaving, the concrete cosmos as we know it, the world of words, the speaking/listening atmosphere.

We make the world our novel, where we are heroes and anti-heroes, subjects and objects of value

This heroism that is so much ourselves – we are all Rashis... in search for identities, in search for a final loss that might save us... – “stumbles” – the moment we acknowledge the very *process* of its making, the awareness of (re)creation, as is the case of Auggie. The “ordinary man behind the counter” who sells cigars and takes pictures every morning of the “same” corner may be potentially a hero over the art of storytelling, for he is very much aware of the fact that he does not have to go on vacations. This “perception” has to do with time... timing. When Rashi is cornered by Paul Benjamin and Auggie to reveal his real (?) identity to Cyrus, he attempts an ultimate defense: “I was gonna say it on my own time, my own time.”

But, *the earth revolves around the sun...* and, after all, there

is the sun-shine that pushes him (Rashi)/us to it or/and out of it. Just that the sun-shine varies in hue, and this might be quite an overwhelming preciousness about ourselves in/and the Other. The *time* we perceive this, it looks at us and smiles in comic admiration, sarcastic grimaces even... for this realisation that the sun-shine changes in hue is of a precious importance.

Auggie, who has not got any books published, is the master of “situations.” He advises Paul Benjamin that he should keep his pace and that he (Paul) ought to “*slow down*,” so that he can appreciate the differences in the sameness. His buddie, however, is capable of experiencing this (“... it is only through experience that we can know what is given in experience does come from objects...”⁸) when he sees his own image reflected down the river of his epiphany... down the river of solitude, where the other’s universe is an eternal intermingledness with one’s own... a plausibly comic hell! It is only when he sees his dead wife’s picture amongst all the other “same” pictures that he stops to think that they are not all the same; at least, if they are the same, they have the chance of being different.

Paul Benjamin is Rashi’s son and vice-versa – Rashi turns out to be Paul’s father:

the father is younger than the son now, the boy has become a man, turns out that he’s older than his father.

Within this foggy due there lies the strength of the hero, the delicate strength of a hero whose weapons are the most harmful to *ci-vi-li-ty* – whatever this may have attempted to mean – words. When Rashi starts working

This realisation that the sun-shine changes in hue is of a precious importance

for Auggie and there is the accident with the Cuban cigars, Auggie, in his rageously tender force to accept the boy’s (financial?) retreat, points out to *credibility*, the entanglement to it, a basic principle in storytelling. None

of the three (Paul, Rashi or Auggie) (shall) care for where the money comes from... it is all a matter of credibility.

Heroes, then, are in everlasting betrayal towards everything and everyone. Paul, eventually, feels deep in his flesh that "Bullshit is a real talent... to make up a good story you have to know how to push all the right buttons...". So, Aggie still plays his favourite (?) trick: "if you can't share your secrets with your friends, what kind of friend are you?"

Since we all *buy* the truth there is one single unity that bounds us all and permits us to be individuals/individualised, even though we might at times wonder "what makes of you such an authority to think of what I know and what I don't?" (as Paul Benjamin does once with his father/son Rashi) for we know that the projects in Boerum Hill, Brooklyn are "another galaxy.. black is black and white is white.. and never the two shall meet...". we make believe that, yes, we (black and white) meet, we (pretend to?) play games and decide not to discuss their rules. After all, living without this – in or out of it – *would not be worth living... would it?*

And I guarantee every word of it is true!⁹

– still warning that

I don't know. She might be and, then, she might not...¹⁰

NOTES

¹*Smoke*, USA, 1995. Directed by Wayne Wang, written by Paul Auster, interpreted amongst others by William Hurt and Harvey Keitel.

²FOUCAULT, Michel. *On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress*. In: *The Foucault Reader*. New York, Pantheon Books, 1984, p. 366-7.

³BAKHTIN, M.M. *Discourse in the Novel*. In: *The Dialogic Imagination*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981.

⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 412.

⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 293.

⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁷Id., *ibid.*, p. 309.

⁸MACDONELL, Diane. *Theories of Discourse: An Introduction*. New York, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 65.

⁹This is how Auggie tries to convince Paul Benjamin that he's got a "nice" Christmas story to tell...

¹⁰This is what Ruby replies to Auggie, when he inquires her about Felicity, the eighteen-year-old girl, being his daughter or not... Another instance – of many throughout the movie – that explicits the *process* of making up realities: it is always up to the audience/us to "choose"...

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Language
Linguagem

Crop 3 / dez. 96

LANGUAGE CONFLICTS IN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

MARINA MACRAE

Just as illness teaches us about health [...] so the problems of endangered languages teach us about the extreme delicacy of language policy and the extreme complexity of language spread.¹

The rapid economic unification of Europe, with the recent implementation of the European Community, has brought, in its wake, an increase in interest and discussion on the fate of the many different peoples that constitute it. This is a complex issue, not only due to the large number of countries comprised, the wide range of political, social and economic aspects involved and the changing patterns of migration and immigration within its borders, but also because of the multiplicity of distinct ethnic groups and the resurgence of language loyalties in these countries. This leads to the questioning of the language policies already adopted and to debates on the features that must be taken into account in the planning of future policies.

Nation-states, language and power

Along the centuries, cultural and linguistically different groups, inside a same country, have tended to have conflicting interests and, in places as distant and diverse

as the old Soviet Union, South Africa or even Australia, these have generated the same kind of desire on the part of the central governments: that of controlling these groups successfully.

It is, however, almost always impossible to translate this aspiration into a policy aimed at the operative control and the cohesion of these groups. According to Reid & Reich,² in order to reach this goal, the governments, many a time, resort to the adoption of only one language.³ By doing this, they are putting at risk the survival of the minority languages in their countries. Laponce⁴ states that "the modern state [...] does not willingly put up with multilingualism" although it is sometimes forced to accept it, be it for ideological or political reasons, i.e. when groups are able to put pressure over the central government efficiently.

There are, however, instances where the people in power realise the need to recognise the rights of regional or ethnic groups as a means of reinforcing supranational links. By doing this, they also strengthen regional au-

tonomy. This seems to be one of the aims of the European Community, that is, to mint a supranational identity, and one of the possible outcomes of the process may well be the empowering of the regional identities.

In his analysis of the situation, Coulmas⁵ reminds us that one of the distinctive features of the political and economic conjuncture, this "fin de siècle," is the loss of power of the nation-state in the context of a process of global integration which has privileged both bigger and smaller units than national systems. This follows the lines of a previous article, where Coulmas⁶ talks about the emergence of the "Europe of regions," where the nation-states will tend to lose their status as the technological advances are leaving the road open for power coming from small centres or regions. In other words, centrifugal and centripetal forces are in full swing, and for Coulmas the latter have been more active in the Europe of today. At a global level and from a linguistic point of view these conflicting forces can clearly be seen, and he mentions the widespread use of languages such as English, Malay, Kiswahili and Hausa, on the one hand, and the revitalisation of regional languages such as Frisian, Basque, Catalan and Macedonian on the other.

Nevertheless, not all regional languages will be allowed to become stronger in Europe, which explains why it is that not all specialists have Coulmas' positive outlook. Reid and Reich,⁷ for instance, remind one that in many communities people are concerned about the reduced role their minority languages are going to play within the official context at federation level.

Not all regional languages will be allowed to become stronger in Europe

As is to be expected, conflicting positions, the centralising on the one hand and the regionalist on the other, tend to produce tension within the European Community (EC), as new nations join in, in the years to come. For the time being there are twelve countries and, while many others await their turn to be admitted. As

was pointed out above, this may well have negative implications with regard to minority languages of the member countries, new and old. One must bear in mind that the problem affects a large portion of the population: 40 million EC citizens – out of the 320 million inhabitants – have mother tongues which are different from the official languages of the countries they live in.⁸ Fifteen million are EC nationals living in other countries of the Community and the other 25 million are from outside the EC, the biggest groups of foreign speakers coming from Algeria, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, West Africa, Switzerland and the United States.

The languages in Europe today: political aspects of a linguistic issue

Another relevant issue must be considered: the difficulty in defining and establishing the exact number of languages spoken in Europe today. The *Dictionnaire de Noms Propres*⁹ talks of 120, while the European Bureau of Lesser Used languages only mentions 37. Some national varieties are considered languages, while others, which do not have the same status, are relegated to the position of dialects of that language, even if they are considerably different from the former. The characterisation of a variety as a language may bring about internal friction directly related to issues of identity, such as what recently occurred in Spain regarding Catalan. After Franco died in 1972, the official ban on the other languages in the country was lifted. With the reestablishment of the autonomy of Catalonia, Catalan regained its status, and was even used as one of the official languages of the Olympic Games in Barcelona. However, according to Strubell-Trueta,¹⁰ not every Catalan speaker was content with the new situation. Many speakers of Catalan who live in other areas, especially Valencia, refused to be included as members of the Catalan linguistic community: they think of themselves as speakers of Valencian. This must be seen within that specific political context, since there is strong resentment among Valencians against the Catalans, and the right-wing

groups go as far as terrorising the Catalans. The issue was taken to the courts and, as of 1986, the language spoken in Valencia cannot be referred to as Catalan any longer but as Valencian.

Coulmas¹¹ mentions two other important cases in Europe, involving the conflicting positions between regionalists and those defending the unity of the nation-state. The first is Belgium: after the political crisis which flared because of the defiance of a French-speaking mayor (of an also French-speaking village) in a Dutch-speaking province to administer his village in Dutch, the country now has three autonomous regions (bilingual Brussels, Dutch speaking Flanders, and French speaking Wallonia). The other case is Italy where different regional groups are gaining strength and giving concern to the central government. These are examples which reinforce the idea that linguistic groups can become politically mobilised and bring about problems for the maintenance of the national symbolic unity of the countries involved, which, of course, has direct repercussions on the EC.

We know that most of the European countries are multilingual¹² for two main reasons: it was either because the minority groups who were in the territories did not abandon their mother tongues when the state was founded or because they received different groups of immigrants who retained their languages.

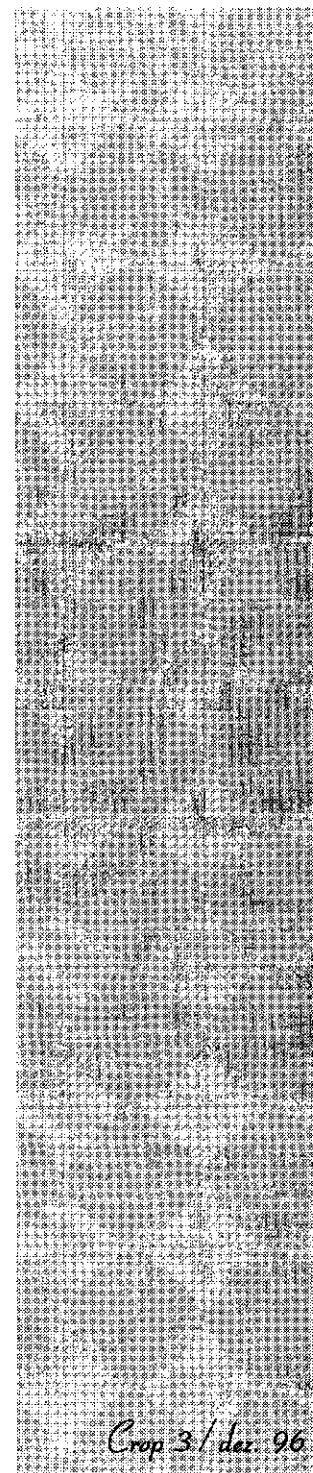
The movements for the recognition of linguistic identities would be part of this cultural process of creation of a necessary diversification

Multilingualism produces a series of issues. The first has to do with the political and cultural option the groups are presented with: should they or should they not preserve their diversity? Preserving their difference may generate a possible ghettoization of the minority group, whereas assimilation may lead to the change in identity and culture of the people in question. This assimilation

need not be total, however. Lévi-Strauss¹³ stresses that there is a limit to this process of convergence and homogenisation. A limit imposed by a tendency which is exactly opposed to that one, a product of forces which direct towards "the maintenance and even towards the emphasising of the particularities."¹⁴ Basing his thoughts on linguistic phenomena, the author asks himself whether human cultures cannot be defined "in view of their mutual relations, by a specific *optimum* of diversity beyond which they could not go, but below which they cannot descend without running any danger" of disintegrating.¹⁵ In this sense, the movements for the recognition of linguistic identities, which act in the political scene, would be part of this cultural process of creation of a *necessary* diversification. These thoughts help one to look at the amount of multilingual countries in the world today, and, especially those in Europe, in a more optimistic manner, suggesting that linguistic varieties will carry on being reproduced.¹⁶

Minority languages are usually those of subordinate ethnic groups

Another fundamental point for the understanding of the issue regarding language and politics in the EC has to do with the definition of majority and minority language: Wright & Ager¹⁷ wonder whether the term "majority language" should refer to the official language of a country, to the language spoken by the majority of the population or to one of the "world languages" which have status and are used beyond their national frontiers. As we have seen above, most of the official languages of the EC are not the mother tongues of the majority of the population; neither do they have this "world language" status; their prestige simply derives from the fact that they are the official languages of these countries and not from the number of their mother-tongue speakers. To emphasise this point, the authors contrast Danish, with its 5 million speakers, with Catalan, which is not an official language in the EC but is spoken by 6 million people.



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Wright and Ager also raise the question of the political aspects implicit in the categories with which linguistics thinks its own object of study: they bring up the issue of the value inherent in the "majority" and "minority" categorisation, i.e. the "worth more" or "worth less" connotation that can be attributed to language in social, economic and cultural terms. Minority languages are usually those of subordinate ethnic groups who are also excluded from any kind of power at a national level. The extent to which they may be left out may vary, but the concept is always employed to refer to the language of refugees and immigrants (such as Arabic in France or Turkish in Germany) as well as to that of autochthonous groups (such as Irish in Great Britain).

Most of the official languages of the European Community are not the mother tongues of the majority of the population

As we have seen, there are many aspects involved in the issue, which explains why it is that the EC has not yet established an official linguistic policy. It is true to say that, in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty changed the emphasis of the previous treaty (Treaty of Rome, 1956) which set the foundation stone for the Union and which basically envisaged economic unity. The latest one is concerned with broader issues such as a greater coordination of the cultural, educational and linguistic developments of the member states. However, in spite of considering diversity as one of the most precious assets of the Community, the delicate situation of the linguistic minorities is recognised. According to the optimistic viewpoint voiced by Baetens Beardsmore,¹⁸ the idea is to make EC members more educationally mobile; the positive aspect of this is that it has generated a tendency, in the various states, to stimulate an increase in the number of different languages their citizens are familiar with. However, speakers rarely chose languages spoken by the minorities within their own member states. As a result,

people tend to become bilingual (two or more languages): one of the languages will be the "major" language in the country concerned, an official community language – which is not necessarily the mother tongue of the speaker in question, and the other(s) will probably be (a) Community foreign language(s). An example of this already occurs in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: the government, even before it became a member state, encouraged its citizens to acquire three languages. This was necessary because higher education was not available in the country, and students were forced to learn French or German if they wanted to go to University. The population speaks Luxemburger, which belongs to the Germanic family¹⁹ and is not one of the EC official languages, but is spoken by the entire population of the Duchy.²⁰

As was mentioned above, the main treaties establishing the European Community fostered with the mobility of the population. This has many implications for language policies because an enhancement on educational mobility does not necessarily imply that the linguistic rights of these citizens are going to be preserved. The issues regarding the dimension of linguistic rights involve two positions: should they be individual or should they follow the principles of territoriality? The first hypothesis establishes that the speaker should have rights irrespective of where she may find herself and it derives from the fact that the linguistic rights of a group should

The main treaties establishing the European Community fostered with the mobility of the population

not be restricted to the territories they originally came from; the second recognises the right a language has of being the dominant one in a specific territory, no matter who the inhabitants may be. Linguistic rights acquire international dimensions when a language is spoken in more than one country, as is the case of Turkish and Arabic, for instance, so-called "migrant languages"²¹: due to the mass migration of labourers and

refugees²² these languages are now spoken by millions of people in Western Europe. Other large linguistic units include Bengali, Urdu and Chinese mother-tongue speakers, not to mention Yiddish and Gypsy communities, which have always existed in Europe and have always been ignored or oppressed in the countries they chose to establish themselves in. It is important to remember that these foreign speakers do not always live in compact communities and this makes it even more politically and educationally relevant and complicated for the host countries.

In Europe, the territoriality principle rules, and both Belgium and Switzerland, for instance, are well succeeded examples of the enforcing of such a principle. The rigidity in the enforcement of these principles may lead to linguistic apartheid, according to Mar-Molinero & Stevenson.²³ They remind us that the freedom of movement for all members of the EC, guaranteed by the Treaty of Rome, allows for people to become detached from their original linguistic communities, which, in turn, separates them from their territorial rights. So that the linguistic problems faced by immigrants from countries outside the EC also affect EC citizens living outside their countries of origin.

The status given to these languages involves maintaining linguistic services at very high costs

The present agreement, in the EC, establishes nine official working languages²⁴ which can be used in the institutions of the EC.²⁵ The status given to these languages involves maintaining linguistic services at very high costs.²⁶

The other languages are only really recognised within the Bureau of Lesser Languages,²⁷ which was started by the European Parliament, in 1983, with the duty to enforce the Charter of regional languages and cultures and rights of ethnic minorities. The existence of the Charter, however, does not ensure the survival of the so-called minority languages, since, from the time of its adoption,

the European Council has allowed the member states to determine the measures to be adopted regarding these languages. In many of those countries, the idea of promoting mother-tongue education has not yet been implemented. Nevertheless, this situation may change with the recently established Committee of the Regions (1994), in charge of giving them its support at a supranational level. The Committee must be consulted regarding policies in key areas such as education and public health. There are high hopes that the status of the autochthonous languages and cultures will be affected in a positive way, but there are doubts about what will become of the linguistic rights of the migrants and immigrants in the Community.

The strengthening of language loyalties contributes to the questioning of policies adopted and challenges power relationships in Europe

The answer to the problems regarding language and identity of the people living in the European Community depends on a change in the power relations of the groups involved: the importance given to national languages contrasts with the omission shown by many of the governments of the nation-states regarding the complex linguistic situation of their autochthonous, their immigrant and refugee population. The strengthening of language loyalties contributes to the questioning of policies adopted and challenges power relationships in Europe. At the same time, linguistic nationalism obstructs the possibility of abandoning any of the nine working languages in the Community. However, radical solutions such as those suggested by some scholars,²⁸ whereby only English and French should be used, bring back the phantom of linguistic imperialism, putting into jeopardy most of the other languages spoken in the European Community today. All these different centrifugal and centripetal forces at play fuel the debate which must continue until reasonable solutions are encountered.

NOTES

¹FISHMAN, J. *Language and ethnicity in minority sociolinguistic perspective*. 1989, p. 402.

²REID, E. & REICH, H. Language Policies in Multilingual Societies: Introduction. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, v. 5, n. 3, 1994.

³It was only after the French Revolution that the idea that a language should be national become strong: a national identity was attributed to French and this notion later spread to England (GRILLO, R.D. *Dominant Languages*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁴LAPONCE, J. A. *Languages and Their Territories*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1987, p. 200.

⁵COULMAS, F. Language Policy and Planning: Political Perspectives. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, n. 14, p. 34-52, 1994.

⁶COULMAS, F. *A Language Policy for the European Community: Prospects and Quandaries*. Berlin, Mouton de Gruyter, 1991.

⁷Id., *ibid.*

⁸WILLIAMS, C. (ed.). *Linguistic Minorities, Society and Territory*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 1991.

⁹ANON, Europe. In: *Dictionnaire de Noms Propres*. Paris, Hachette, 1992.

¹⁰STRUBELL-TRUETA, M. *Standardisation and National Identity: The Conflict in Valencia*. Paper presented at the international symposium "Eléments pour une théorie de la standardisation linguistique." Académie Suisse des Sciences Humaines, 1991. Apud MAR-MOLINERO, 1994.

¹¹COULMAS, F. Language Policy and Planning: Political Perspectives, *art. cit.*

¹²Iceland and maybe Portugal, with its very small number of immigrants but many different regional varieties, are the only real monolingual countries in Europe.

¹³LÉVI-STRAUSS, C. *Raça e história*. São Paulo, Abril Cultural, 1980. Col. Os Pensadores.

¹⁴Id., *ibid.*, p. 50 (my translation).

¹⁵Id., *ibid.*

¹⁶How this will occur in specific linguistic terms is the subject for another paper.

¹⁷WRIGHT, S. & AGER, D. Major and Minor Languages in Europe: The Evolution of Practice and Policy in the European Union. *European Journal of Intercultural Studies*, v. 5, n. 3, 1995.

¹⁸BAETENS BEARDSMORE, H. Language Policy and Plann-

ing in Western European Countries. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, v. 14, p. 93-110, 1994.

¹⁹Here we have an example of the difficulty involved in categorising languages and their varieties. Letzeburgesh (as it is called there) is, in reality, a variety of German, but since Luxembourg is an independent country, the language is thought of as a separate language.

²⁰BAETENS BEARDSMORE, *op. cit.*

²¹DE BOT, K. & FASE, W. (eds.). Migrant Languages in Western Europe. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, n. 90, 1991. Special Issue.

²²After the military coup in Turkey, in 1980, there was a massive inflow into Germany of asylum seekers; in France, since the withdrawal from Algeria there have been great amounts of Arabic speaking refugees entering the country; nationals from other countries, and in smaller numbers, have also been seeking asylum; in Italy, at the beginning of this decade, scores of Albanian refugees arrived at the ports, while thousands of East Africans, Chileans and Vietnamese (some of them "boat people") went to Britain. Most of the European countries have recently started a clampdown on immigration from non-EC countries and have imposed heavy restrictive policies against asylum-seekers.

²³MAR-MOLINERO, C. & STEVENSON, P. Language, Geography and Politics: The "Territorial Imperative" Debate in the European Context. *Language Problems and Language Planning*, v. 15, n. 2, p. 162-77, 1991.

²⁴WRIGHT & AGER, 1994.

²⁵Irish and Luxemburger are the national languages left out.

²⁶According to Coulmas 40% of the administration costs of the Union are spent on linguistic provisions, such as translation and interpretation (*A Language Policy for the European Community*, *cit.*).

²⁷These include Gaelic and Catalan, which after decades of forced decline are now in full bloom.

²⁸HAARMANN, H. Language Politics and the New European Identity. In: COULMAS, *A Language Policy for the European Community*, *cit.*; and MELIÀ, A. La importancia de l'anglès en el món actual. In: BAÑERES, J. (ed.). *El repté (socio)lingüístic de l'Acta Umca: les llengües comunitàries a Catalunya* (1). Barcelona, Generalitat de Catalunya, 1990.

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READING AND RESPONSIBILITY

KANAVILLIL RAJAGOPALAN

Nietzsche's signature does not take place when he writes. He says clearly that it will take place posthumously, pursuant to the infinite line of credit he has opened for himself, when the other comes to sign with him, to join with him in alliance and, in order to do so, to hear and understand him. To hear him, one must have a keen ear. In other words, to abbreviate my remarks in a very lapidary fashion, it is the ear of the other that signs. [...] Nor is it just Nietzsche's text or Nietzsche's signature that we are responsible for, since the borderless text itself is involved along with the signature and also since, given the questions we have asked about the border, the signature is not only a word or a proper name at the end of a text, but the operation as a whole, the text as a whole, the whole of the active interpretation which has left a trace or a remainder. It is in this respect that we have a political responsibility. (Jacques Derrida)

At any time in intellectual history we are, all of us, working within certain traditions that make certain questions seem the right ones to ask and certain answers the only possible answers. (John Searle)

As linguists and philosophers of language have for long been aware, a question is in order pragmatically just in case there is a set of possible answers to it (at the very least two, as in the case of the so-called "yes-or-no" type of question). In other words, one can be said to have asked a question in the strict sense of the term, if and only if one can also reasonably be believed to hold in advance that there is some uncertainty as to its possible answer.¹ If, on the other hand, one happens to be absolutely certain about what to expect by way of an answer, the utterance one makes will not count as a ques-

tion in the full-blooded sense, even though it may happen to have the syntactically impeccable structure of an interrogative sentence. Instead, it usually comes out as a "rhetorical question," which is, if you come to think of it, a misnomer, being not a question at all, but rather a categorical assertion to all intents and purposes.

The one point about all the platitudes from the linguist's stock-in-trade contained in the foregoing paragraph that I would like to underscore is that *all* questions are historically located. For, as a moment's reflection should convince anyone, a question which was at

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one moment in history invariably understood rhetorically may, with the passage of time, well begin to be interpreted in the strict sense of a request for an answer and, needless to say, *vice versa*. Examples are not far to seek. To cite one with a local colouring, any one who has kept track of recent Brazilian history should readily concede that the utterance "Is there anybody in this country who doubts that the petroleum buried beneath our vast territorial limits should be a matter of our monopoly?" was, until not very long ago, heard and interpreted as a rhetorical question and indeed frequently employed as such by both aspiring politicians and veteran firebrands, whereas, with all this ongoing talk about the globalization of world's economies and all the rest of the neoliberal jargon in the air, it is one of the most acrimoniously debated issues today, that is to say, it is currently being understood as a question capable of being answered in at least two and possibly more ways.

With these preliminary remarks out of the way, the first claim I want to make in relation to the topic of this essay *viz.*, the question (or, maybe, a whole set of questions) concerning the issue of responsibility in reading, is that the very question is symptomatic of something distinctive about our contemporary literary or, more broadly speaking, cultural scenario. I want to claim, in other words, that the question of responsibility was hardly ever raised at those moments in the history of literary or cultural studies, when we were, or at least thought we were, relatively sure about what reading and such kindred activities as understanding, interpreting, appreciating, judging, evaluating etc. were all about. Evidently, as I would argue, a full appreciation of the historical character of our question(s) would go a long way toward delimiting the set of answers we are looking for.

As is usually the case, a good starting point for building up our case is the O.E.D. were we read that the word "responsibility" is to be understood with reference

The very question concerning the issue of responsibility in reading is symptomatic of something distinctive about our cultural scenario

to such concepts as "duty" and "obligation" which in turn, we are further told, are to be understood by specifying what or who the ultimate authority is agreed to be in these matters (to wit: morality, the law, trade, calling, conscience and the like). So responsibility is always responsibility to something or someone. Once the concept of responsibility is defined in terms of duty and obligation, the question that immediately crops up is: "Responsibility to who?" or "Who or what are we being called upon to be responsible to?"

Depending on who we take to be the ultimate arbiter, several answers suggest themselves. Here are some possible candidates: the man-in-the-street, some instance of higher morality, validity, transcendental truth, a radical change in the status quo, commitment to an all-out revolution, annihilation of the bourgeoisie, the Dooms-day, return to the Noble Savage, the adoption of the Woodstock mode of living. The list may be extended much farther than my imagination has succeeded in stretching it.

There was a time, for instance, when the literary critic was widely looked upon as a privileged reader, whose responsibility was, therefore, to teach the not-so-gifted lay public how to read. What made the critic a privileged reader in those days were the twin attributes of (a) scholarship and (b) sensibility. There were some poets too who looked upon themselves as persons invested with a mission to teach. "I want to be a teacher," declared William Wordsworth,² "or nothing." The Lake poet, a devotee of pantheism, looked upon Nature as a sort of a pedagogue *par excellence*. He wrote:³

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of Man
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

Wordsworth is a good example of a major literary figure who thought of himself as somehow responsible

to the man-in-the-street and made a point of writing in a language “really spoken by men.”⁴ In an altogether different sphere of activity, Adolph Hitler was another. He too, believe it nor not, felt an irresistible didactic itch, and confessed in his *Mein Kampf*⁵ to a deep-seated urge to teach the German public of his days how to read properly – it was, as a matter of fact, his principal grievance against the German schools of his times that they did not teach the pupils how to read properly. The following lines taken from the section entitled “The Art of Reading” from Chapter II of his book⁶ should suffice to lay to rest the lingering doubts of the incredulous reader:

I know people who endlessly “read” a lot, book after book; letter for letter, yet I would not call them “well read.” Of course, they possess a wide “knowledge,” but their intellect does not know how to distribute and register the material gathered. They lack the ability to distinguish in a book that which is of value and that which is of no value to them; to keep the one in mind forever, and to overlook, if possible, the other; instead of carrying it with them as so much ballast.

The passage goes on and on. I do not mean to probe further into the theory of reading elaborated by Hitler.

We may note in passing, though, that unfortunately the author failed to recognise the important fact that the ballast, no matter how useless or “unnecessary” it might appear to be, is what helps keep the ship steady and ultimately prevents it from capsizing.

Notice that, of the two attributes of the poet/critic as a teacher (the case of the dictator is best consigned to the archives, to be retrieved only as a reminder of our own responsibility as readers to be suspicious of even our best teachers and to take their teachings with a grain of salt), as someone who has

There was a time when the literary critic was widely looked upon as a privileged reader

a mission to teach others how to read, the first *viz.*, scholarship has what might call a *facilitatory* function. The compilation of an annotated edition of a work of, say,

Euripedes or Shakespeare is a case in point. It calls for a great amount of scholarship or erudition and is designed to help the uninitiated reader plough through a wealth of background information deemed (rightly or wrongly) to be minimally necessary to make sense of the work of art.

The second attribute *viz.*, sensibility has, on the other hand, a *recommendatory* function. By exercising it, the talented critic makes the work in question, say, a poem, look so beautiful as to create in the mind of the reader a desire or a disposition to read it or, alternatively, she makes it look so hopelessly dull and insipid as to discourage all potential readers. The attribute of scholarship, it is generally believed, sets the critic apart from the one who produces or creates the work of art, who in turn presumably does whatever she does “spontaneously” (Recall George Bernard Shaw’s celebrated remark: “He who can, does; he who cannot, teaches”⁷). By contrast, one would be inclined to think that the attribute of literary sensibility brings the two – the poet and the critic – together. A critic, when overwhelmed – nay, “swept off her feet” – by those “ecstatic moments of poetic sensibility” is, or so most of us would like to believe, in fact re-living those

very same moments that the poet or the artist supposedly went through at the time of creating the work of art.

It should by now be fairly clear that the question of responsibility arises primarily and in a most telling manner in relation to what we have been referring to as the recommendatory role of the critic-cum-poet (sensibility, in the light of our earlier considerations, has already

unified them – the poet and the critic – into a single, composite being). One must, however, hasten to add that the question of responsibility is not altogether ab-

By exercising sensibility, the talented critic makes a poem look so beautiful as to create in the mind of the reader a desire or a disposition to read it

sent when the critic assumes the facilitatory role – the moment, that is, when she is all by herself, given that the poet and the poem are here her objects of study. It turns out, upon closer inspection, that, as matter of fact, the question of responsibility arises here in much subtler ways. In the facilitatory mode, the critic's responsibility has to do with the decision as to which set of "facts" (historical, biographical, sociological, political, linguistic, textual, or what have you) she must regard as having a bearing on the task at hand – and, naturally, which other set of "facts" she must thereby relegate to the background as being not so relevant. In the recommendatory mode, one should think, the responsibility is more straightforwardly to a set of value judgements.

Now, it is certainly true that our century has witnessed a major change in regard to the question of responsibility in reading. With the advent of New Criticism, the recommendatory role of the critic was set aside, at least publicly, as no longer worthy of serious attention – although, as irony would have it, it seems to be more appropriate to say today that it was in fact pursued more avidly than ever before. This is particularly evident in the enthusiasm with which some critics, notably T.S. Eliot, took to their new business; Eliot the critic helped promote Eliot the poet by redefining an entire literary tradition and the canon that went with it. As Derek Attridge has remarked in a different context,

We may agree that the point, as always, is not to interpret the world but to change it; the problem, however, is that to interpret it convincingly is to change it – and there are few more powerful stances from which to effect such change than the one which disclaims any intent or even any capacity to do so."⁸

The question of responsibility is not altogether absent when the critic assumes the facilitatory role

Our century has witnessed a major change in regard to the question of responsibility in reading

Anyhow, in the hey-day of New Criticism, a critic's professional success was ostensibly at least, viewed as directly proportionate to the extent to which she was considered able to distance herself from the creator of the work of art. Criticism was, from now on, to be considered qualitatively different from literature. This radical separation of the two activities *viz.*, the actual creation of the work of art and its subsequent analysis by a critic, was clearly modelled on the practice of sharply

distinguishing between "object language" and "metalanguage," which had by then been widely accepted in such scientifically more "respectable" areas as philosophy and linguistics. And, to be sure, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith⁹ has pointed out among others, the two major formative influences on the New Criticism were logical positivism and humanism. With its declared aim of making criticism a truly scientific enterprise, New Criticism regarded the work of art as part of the object language in relation to which the language of literary criticism was to be seen as a metalanguage. The two activities were thus viewed as absolutely different from each other. The literary critic was no longer a privileged reader, endowed with vast experience and a diligently cultivated literary sensibility; he was a scientist, whose job was to analyse the work of art in the true scientific spirit of dispassionate, disinterested search for "facts." In the words of P. Harth:

What was new about [New Criticism] was a deliberate shift from expressive to objective considerations in the course of which the exclusive criteria for poetry were no longer drawn from the creative mind or sensibility behind the work, but from the verbal structures constituting the works themselves.¹⁰

It is interesting to note that the New Critic's objective of placing literary criticism on a scientific footing and the resultant separation of literature and criticism

into hermetically sealed compartments had been actually anticipated and effectively undertaken by the Romantic poets of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Random comments by some of them attest to this. Thus Wordsworth was simply giving vent to the received opinion of his epoch when he spurned the analytic frame of mind as thoroughly unfit for poetic for creation. Here is how he made his point: "We murder to dissect."¹¹ So too was Keats perfectly in tune with his times when he coined the expression "negative capability" (which the poet defined as a mental state marked by "no irritable reaching after fact and reason."¹²) to refer to what he believed to be the key to poetic success. What both Wordsworth and Keats were clearly implying was that the enterprise of criticism was an altogether different matter. It was very unlike poetry and knew no "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" or, for that matter, any "emotions recollected in tranquillity."¹³ If poetry was spontaneous and natural, criticism was studied and scientific. In point of fact, poetry ended where criticism began, said the Romantics. "How very true!", chimed in the New Critics, some decades later, "Criticism begins just where poetry leaves off." The new brand of scientifically oriented criticism that emerged with this rediscovery of old wisdom was more akin to laboratory tests of quality control than anything like the appreciation based on essentially personal, subjective responses to works of art that was commoner in other epochs. By the way, the analogy with the laboratory tests of quality control brings home another important point about New Criticism.

The two major formative influences on the New Criticism were logical positivism and humanism

For, although as we have already seen, the evaluatory dimension was ostensibly abandoned, it continued to be present as a hidden motive in the agenda of these new

scientifically oriented literary critics who swore they did not discriminate between kings and cabbages when they brought the whole weight of their analytical apparatus to bear on a given object of study. After all, what is the purpose of a laboratory test if it is not to approve of some objects and reject the others? Northrop Frye's

*Anatomy of Criticism*¹⁴ and E.D. Hirsch's *Aims of Interpretation*¹⁵ are, one might say, among the best examples of literary criticism proudly flaunting its borrowed scientific plumage and confidently trying to impress one and all that it was capable of soaring to higher and ever higher altitudes of academic respectability.

From this brief and rather selective foray into the history of criticism's self-image, it is possible to verify that the issue of responsibility was one that was almost always simply taken for granted. Now, this sweeping generalisation does call for some explanatory remarks. For, it is certainly the case that the question "Who or what

is the critic responsible to?" was, as I have been at pains to stress, answered differently at different times.

At one time, the critic was believed to be responsible to the lay reader or the neophyte; with the advent of the age of "scientific" criticism, the responsibility was transferred from to a set of higher order principles that ultimately rested on some notion of transcendental truth or criterion of validity. As for some of the other candidates considered in connection with the dictionary definition of "responsibility" referred

Although the case that the question of responsibility in respect of reading was differently answered at different times, at no given epoch was there any doubt as to who the critic was responsible or answerable to

to earlier on, the following rather caricaturally "stretched" examples should serve our present purpose. One way of describing Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* is to

see the poet/critic (the author, it is worth recalling, is careful not to conflate the two roles but keep them clearly distinct) as attending to a “calling” of some sort, for what inspired Sidney to indite the piece was, as no reader of the essay has probably failed to notice, an inexplicable sense of cavalierly duty to save the Damsel of Poetry he felt to be in distress (thanks to the ever-mysterious voice that whispered into his ears and all the rest of the usual embellishments to complete the script). Swift’s *The Battle of the Books*, on the other hand, was inspired, among other things, by a question of “conscience” (of the sort that doesn’t cowards of us all), of a feeling that somehow a history being widely told and retold had to be set right, even if that meant settling some old private scores and ruffling some fresh feathers.

In what sense, one might begin to wonder now, is it true to say that the question of responsibility was invariably taken for granted through all these different periods when the question itself was, as plainly recognised earlier, differently answered? The important point here – and this is worth stressing – is that, although it is indeed the case that the question of responsibility was differently answered at different times, *at no given epoch was there any doubt as to who the critic was responsible or answerable to*. Instead, it was the very availability of an unwavering and ready-made answer to that question that helped distinguish one epoch from another. So what all these different epochs did have in common is the absolute certainty as to the one question that helped discriminate between them in the first place – which is but another way of saying that the question itself was uniformly and without exception interpreted rhetorically. (To be more accurate technically, we should rather be saying that the question “Who or what etc.” was initially transformed into a “yes-or-no” type question and then interpreted rhetorically.) There was thus, during any one of the aforementioned periods, a single equivalent “yes-or-no” type

**Who or what
is the critic
responsible to?**

question, i.e., one that was framed as “Is there anyone who doubts that what the literary critic is responsible to is x ?”, the answer being all too obvious for the question to qualify as a bona-fide, full-blooded one.

To go back to the point I made at the very beginning of this essay, it should be evident by now that if we are today bringing up for discussion the issue of responsibility in respect of reading – if we are, that is to say, literally *asking* a question that in other epochs was invariably understood as a rhetorical question and hence no question at all – the very fact itself that we are asking the question, regardless of the answer we might eventually hope to come up with, is of great historical importance.

What then is the major change in the literary/cultural scenario of our times that has, all of a sudden, transformed a time-honoured rhetorical question into a bona-fide, full-blooded one, demanding an answer? What makes our intellectual climate so glaringly unlike what the previous generations went through is the absence of all those uncertainties that in other epochs undergirded our metaphysics and gave sustenance to all our foundationalist assumptions. In other epochs, metaphysics not only provided us with our ground rules and viable objectives and told us what could be considered minimally satisfactory and maximally feasible for efficient reading and meaningful interpretation, it also attended, albeit indirectly, to the ethical issues arising out of its premises.

Thus the English philosopher P.F. Strawson, who addressed the broader issue in his *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*,¹⁶ argued to the effect that the metaphysician had better confine her attention to her descriptive tasks rather than pursue possible revisionary goals, granted that any such revisionary attempt would itself have to be based

on some set of implicit metaphysical assumptions or another. Clearly then, for Strawson, the metaphysician’s professional responsibility, if any, would be to rigour in analysis and fidelity to facts.

**Who is the reader
ultimately
responsible to in
our post-
metaphysical days?**

The bona-fide question “Who or what is the critic responsible to?” has thus a suppressed complement that supplies the restrictive modifier “in an intellectual climate marked by scepticism towards all our time-honoured certainties.” The relevance of that clause has to do with the belief entertained in some quarters that, once scepticism is given a free reign, once we abdicate our foundationalist assumptions, all that is in store for us is a state of disorderly free-for-all, where “everything goes.” Questioning our ground rules, it is held, is tantamount to challenging the rules of the game even as we are playing it.

The question of the reader’s responsibility has come out into the open in the contemporary intellectual ethos that many characterise as “post-metaphysical.” It has also attained an unprecedented sense of urgency in the face of the growing suspicion that all this talk of the end of metaphysics is paving the way for a return to the law of the jungle in ethical matters. In an ethical vacuum of the many fear is just what awaits us in the near future, there is quite understandably a strong tendency to respond preemptively to the question “Who is the reader ultimately responsible to in our post-metaphysical days?” with a dismissive shrug of the shoulders and a monosyllabic “None.” “Undercutting the appeal to reason, truth and the thesis of the interminability of interpretive activity is by no means a claim to the effect that the reader no longer has any useful and important role to play just as presently ‘coded,’” complains Thomas McCarthy,¹⁷ “may harbor not so much the ‘promise’ of a better world as the ‘danger’ of some monstrous mutation.”

But such hasty responses only contribute to stonewalling the real issues in virtue of their dogmatically held premise that there is one and only way of approaching the question of responsibility, which is linking it to some founding principle or another. Apart from the obvious objection that the putative justification offered here by the detractors is precisely what is being challenged

by those who speak from a post-metaphysical perspective, there is the further objection that the opponents of the so-called “post-metaphysical turn” are invoking the equally questionable principle that such philosophically “loaded” concepts as “responsibility” are themselves timeless and uniformly applicable across the board. But as Alasdair MacIntyre¹⁸ has argued,

“[...] moral concepts change as social life changes,” hastening to add, “I deliberately do not write ‘because social life changes,’ for this might suggest that social life is one thing, morality another, and that there is merely an external, contingent, causal relationship between them. This is obviously false. Moral concepts are embodied in and are partially constitutive of forms of social life.” As we shall see, what is at issue here is a radical rethinking directed at the traditional “form of social life.”

What MacIntyre is calling our attention to is the idea that it is in relation to actual, living practice that ethical questions can be meaningfully asked and answered and that, if one wants to find out how to characterise precisely

the moral issues cherished by a society at a given point in time, one had better start by looking at the day-to-day life patterns of the people involved, because it is pointless to try to identify a set of moral values in abstraction from the social life of the group. There is no more to morality than what is to be gleaned from the often erratic, frequently unreflective deeds and turns, actions

and reactions that together make up the social life of the group. In short, morality belongs to the realm of contingency.

The question of responsibility in reading in an epoch that we have been characterising – for want of a better term – as our post-metaphysical times (just how far we can meaningfully speak of metaphysics as something that can be overcome or altogether dispensed with is indeed an open question, as Jacques Derrida has been

The question of responsibility in reading will necessarily have to take into account the instability of some of the key terms involved in our very query

tirelessly insisting – and the passage quoted from Strawson (clearly suggests), will necessarily have to take into account the instability of some of the key terms involved in our very query. In addition to recognising the erosion of several of the familiar connotations attached to the word “responsibility” and the accretion of a few others that were not there previously, this means also asking if it is not the case that “reading” itself does not any longer signify what it did in other epochs. No less significant in this whole process is the new role that awaits the critic who, as it turns out, is no longer entitled to that special, privileged status of the sort that past epochs had customarily reserved for her.

As regards the critic’s new role, once again, one argumentative gambit that is totally unwarranted and utterly unhelpful – though, all the same, frequently resorted to – is the attempt to foreclose the whole issue with the rather smug remark that critical pluralism and interpretive open-endedness render the enterprise of enlightened literary criticism entirely redundant. E.D. Hirsch, for one, takes this tack when he argues, “If the meaning of the text is not the author’s, then no interpretation can possibly correspond to the meaning of a text, since the text can have no determinate or determinable meaning.”¹⁹ Hirsch’s line of reasoning boils down to this: if the meaning of a text is in a permanent state of flux, why on earth should anyone in the right frame of mind bother to look for it, let alone worry about the best way of retrieving it? The question is meant to be rhetorical. Its sole purpose is to lead us into an argumentative *cul-de-sac* and force us to see the need for retracing our steps. In other words, at its worst, rhetoric of this sort is designed to smother the very possibility of further discussion and is reminiscent of the King in *Alice in Wonderland* who merrily jumps to the

comfortable conclusion: “If there is no meaning in it ... [well,] ...that saves a lot of trouble, you know, as we needn’t try to find any.”²⁰ At its best, on the other hand, the argument is a shot in the dark and fails to address the real issue raised by those who advocate the thesis of interpretive open-endedness, which is that no interpretation can aspire to be definitive and final, not because – as many in the adversary camp would be all too willing

***The reading of a poem
is part of the poem.
This reading is
productive in its turn***

to concede – one can never know whether one has retrieved the authorial intention in its entirety, but because every new interpretation one may come up with is itself nothing but further grist to the interpretive mill. As J. Hillis Miller puts it, “The reading of a poem is part of the poem. This reading is productive in its turn. It produces multiple interpretations, further language about the poem’s language, in an interminable activity without necessary closure.”²¹

What must be stressed here is that the thesis of the interminability of interpretive activity is by no means a claim to the effect that the reader no longer has any useful and important role to play. Quite on the contrary, with no “expert” or “critic” to “tutor” her on how to read and what to read, it is now up to her to, as it were “make things happen.” In other words, her activity ac-

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quires a whole new dimension whose full significance was hitherto either ignored or downplayed. The new role she is being asked to assume entails a lot of responsibility, on a scale directly responsible to the critical powers being transferred to her. As Hillis Miller’s words make it amply clear, the ordinary reader, the one who was simply taken for granted in other epochs, now has a vital role to play in the very survival of the poem

as a signifier. She and she alone can impart to the work of art its creative vitality or, if you like, its *élan vital*.

In the final analysis, then, the responsibility of the

“plain” reader of today who is being asked to take on the role of the de-mystified critic – indeed the greatest of all challenges she and others before her have ever been asked to face – is nothing less than that of keeping the very work of art *alive* by systematically refusing to let any reading of the work she may come up with get settled into a final, definitive interpretation, or what amounts to the same, decreeing its death. The survival – or, rather the *survival* – of the text is conditional upon a solemn decision on the part of the reader to pursue doggedly and for ever the one goal of teasing out fresh possibilities of interpretation, or simply to persist in reading it continually, always on the lookout for newer and newer mean-

ings. It is in this sense that, I believe, Derrida speaks of the “infinite line of credit”²² that an author invariably opens for herself. Are we still entitled to use the word “responsibility” here? The following words of John Caputo may help dispel any lurking suspicion in this regard:

[...] an ethics, albeit a radical ethics, arises not in spite of the foundering of metaphysics and eschatology but precisely because of it. It is precisely the fact that metaphysics has come to grief, its pretensions exposed, its claims delimited, that gives rise to ethics and some idea about how to dwell with one another.²³

NOTES

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³Id., *ibid.*, stanza 6.

⁴WORDSWORTH, William. Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, 1980. In: NOYES, op. cit.

⁵English translation, published by Reynal & Hitchcock, New York, 1939.

⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 46-7.

⁷SHAW, George Bernard. *Man and Superman*, “Maxim for Revolutionists”. [1903]. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, p. 230.

⁸ATTRIDGE, Derek. Language as History/History as Language: Saussure and the Romance of Etymology. In: ATTRIDGE, D. et al. (eds). *Post-structuralism and the Question of History*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁹SMITH, Barbara Herrnstein. *Contingencies of Value: Alternative Perspectives for Critical Theory*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

¹⁰HARISH, P. The New Criticism and Eighteenth Century Poetry. *Critical Inquiry*, v. 7. n. 3, p. 522, 1981.

¹¹WORDSWORTH, The Tables Turned, *cit.*, p. 259.

¹²KEATS, John. Letter to George and Thomas Keats [Dec. 22, 1817]. In: NOYES, op. cit., fn. 2, p. 1.211.

¹³WORDSWORTH, Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*, *cit.*, p. 259.

¹⁴FRYE, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, N.J., 1957.

¹⁵HIRSCH, E.D. *Aims of Interpretation*. Chicago, 1976.

¹⁶STRAWSON, P.F. *Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. London, Methuen, 1959.

¹⁷MCCARTHY, Thomas. The Politics of the Ineffable: Derrida’s Deconstructivism. In: —. *Ideas and Illusions: On Reconstruction and Deconstruction in Contemporary Critical Theory*. Cambridge, MIT Press, 1991, p. 112.

¹⁸MACINTYRE, Alasdair. *A Short History of Ethics*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967, p. 1.

¹⁹HIRSCH, E.D. *Validity in Interpretation*. New Haven, Yale University, 1967, p. 5.

²⁰Kingsport, Tenn., Grosset & Dunlap, Inc., 1946, p. 135.

²¹MILLER, J. Hillis. “Steven’s Rock” and Criticism as Cure. *Georgia Review*, 30, p. 333, 1976.

²²DERRIDA, Jacques. *The Ear of the Other*. New York, Schocken Books, p. 54. See Epigraph 1 to this paper for the full passage.

²³CAPUTO, John. *Radical Hermeneutics*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 257.

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The mathetic function of English as a world language

N.S. PRABHU

If one asks why the English language is an important subject of study in Asia today, the answer is likely to be partly in terms of our colonial history, but more importantly in terms of the current and future role of English as a world language. If one then asks what constitutes the role of English as a world language, the answers is likely to refer to international trade and travel, political and economic relations, the flow of technology from more industrialised to less industrialised countries, and the prospect of economic development in the latter.

The answer may also, of course, refer to the use of English within particular countries – resulting from the colonial past – as a common or link language, though even this can be said to be largely centred in areas of activity related to economic development. English is, in general, viewed as a vital channel of technical and commercial information, an instrument of economic modernisation (perhaps even of economic survival) for the Third World.

I do not wish to deny that English has this important role in the present-day world, but would like to argue that the language has a more basic role which tends to get obscured by immediate and obvious concerns. What I have in mind is not the use of English for literary creation or artistic expression in the Third World, which is what often receives attention when one moves away from the more utilitarian uses. Creative use is no doubt a significant aspect of the role of English in certain Third

World countries, but I take it to be essentially a manifestation of that role, rather than a motive force behind it. What I wish to explore here is the cognitive aspect of language use, rather than the artistic one.

In a discussion of language acquisition by a child, Halliday makes “a fundamental distinction between language as doing and language as learning – the pragmatic and the mathetic functions.”¹ The pragmatic function is “language as action” while the mathetic function is “language as reflection” (and there is, says Halliday, a third, subsidiary function as well, which is “language as creation, or meaning in the imaginative mode,” p. 87).

The pragmatic function in language acquisition seems to me to be well-recognised and often exclusively focused on. It is based on the transparent fact that (to quote Halliday again) “the child learns to talk in order to get what he wants, which means getting other people [...] to give it to him or do it for him.” The mathetic

function, which receives much less attention, is based on the less transparent fact that “the child learns to talk [...] to express ideas – ideas about things and their relations” (p. 106-7). Language in its mathetic function is “the use of the symbolic system not as a means of acting on reality but as a means of learning about reality” (p. 106). It is “language enabling the child to learn about his social and material environment, serving him in the construction of reality – [it] evolves in the context of his thinking about the universe, (as distinct from) the context of his exploiting it” (p. 75). Elsewhere, Halliday observes that “every human language is a potential for meaning in these two ways: it is a resource for doing with; and it is a resource for thinking with.”²

Halliday, of course, makes this distinction between pragmatic and mathetic (and, as a third term, aesthetic) functions in the context of first language acquisition; and he in fact treats these generalised functions as a transitional phase in the child’s development from “proto-language” to adult language. The pragmatic and mathetic functions, that is to say, are seen by Halliday as the child’s generalisation of areas of language use, before those func-

“ The mathetic function involves meeting basic need of the mind – the need to make sense of the world one lives in ”

tions get codified, in much more abstract and complex forms, as aspects of language structure. I think, however, that the distinction is of great value in discussing areas of language use generally – not only of the first language but of a second language and, in particular, of English as a world language. The prevalent view of the role of English in the Third World tends to focus primarily on the pragmatic function and secondarily on the aesthetic function, thus overlooking the mathetic function. We are very aware of the use of English across the world for information-transfer and for what may be called transactional communication; we are much less aware of the role English plays in the sharing and furthering of a certain “construction of reality” – a certain “way of thinking about the universe” (to use Halliday’s words).

Unlike the pragmatic function which involves meeting one’s material needs, the mathetic function involves meeting a basic need of the mind – the need to make sense of the world one lives in, to develop a conceptual model of causes and consequences, to construct a worldview in which one can locate oneself, or at least to be able to believe that one has done so. It involves the satis-

“ Ideas of power are not static entities ”

faction of what one commentator on science has called “the rage to know”³ or an intellectual strategy for coping with the unknown, even if this means operating with some form of delusion of knowledge. Some views of the world are clearly more satisfying than others – or more powerful, in that they are able to satisfy a large number of minds, and to replace less satisfying views. Despite the many divisions of mankind into races, continents, nations and cultures, ideas of power tend to reach out to large numbers of minds, though the extent and pace of their spread can be hampered or enhanced by other forms of power. Further, ideas of power are not static entities, but change, expand or exhaust themselves in time, as a result of the differential responses they evoke in different minds. They may change gradually over time or violently at certain points of time, setting up what Kuhn⁴ has called new “paradigms” of knowledge, which change not only the content of knowledge but the concept of what constitutes knowledge. The concept of what constitutes knowledge has, as we know, taken different forms in the past – from powerful and widely influential myths and epics, to the great religions and mystic visions, to abstract philosophical and mathematical constructs. Although such concepts originated in particular cultures (and particular minds), their power over other minds enabled them to spread across cultural, geographical and ethnic boundaries, influencing people’s views of the universe and providing more satisfying ways of constructing reality. It would of course be simplistic to deny that the power of ideas has had to contend with more material forms of power, but it seems to me important to

recognise that ideas do have power and that that power often underlies material power.

To move back from these epistemological matters to more linguistic ones, I think we can distinguish between two kinds of function for a common language which spreads across linguistic groups. A common language may serve a purely or largely pragmatic function, meeting the needs of transactional communication, whether

“ English as a world language is not just a transactional medium across large parts of the world ”

in trade or tourism or administration or the transfer of technology. Alternatively a common language may function as a language of learning, enabling different linguistic groups to share and participate in the same knowledge-paradigm. The notion of a “bazaar language” clearly illustrates the first function, while the role of Latin in medieval Europe illustrates the second. I am not suggesting that a given common language is necessarily confined to one of these two functions; I am only suggesting that the functions themselves are different. More importantly, I am suggesting that English as a world language is not just a transactional medium across large parts of the world but, more significantly, the medium of a knowledge-paradigm which has spread across the present-day world. Behind the technology and industrialisation of the West are powerful concepts of the material world providing their knowledge-base. What Newton, Darwin and Einstein developed are views of the universe which have had the power to influence minds in all parts of the world. Nor are such ideas of power confined to the field of science. The concepts of democracy and a democratic organisation of society, the rights of the individual, the possibility of progress and the common good, the value of rational enquiry as well as of criticism, doubt and scepticism are all among the powerful ideas which have, through the English language, exercised a world-wide influence on people’s modes of thought. It is this knowledge-paradigm that constitutes much of the academic content of formal edu-

cation, especially of higher education, in different parts of the world; and it is within this paradigm that the learned professions seek to advance their understanding in different fields. The actual language of formal instruction or professional discussion may not always be English, but it is English which provides the most direct access to relevant sources of knowledge, which makes it a disadvantage in the pursuit of knowledge not to know the language.

We therefore need to look on the English language not just as a legacy of our colonial past, nor just as a national need for economic survival in the present-day world, but as the medium of a knowledge-paradigm which has reached out to all of us. It is the language in which a powerful construction of reality became available to minds across many boundaries, and was able to influence their perceptions of man and the material world. More significantly, it is the language which offers the possibility of world-wide participation in a shared knowledge-paradigm, a language through which a widening circle of thinking minds across the world can function as an intellectual community, sharing, sharpening or changing particular concepts, and together moving the knowledge-paradigm

“ The concepts of democracy and a democratic organisation of society exercised a world-wide influence on people’s modes of thought ”

forward. Other languages have played a similar role in the past – among them Latin, Arabic and Pali, each carrying the knowledge-paradigm of its day to sizeable parts of the world and thus bringing into being a learned community which functioned across linguistic and political boundaries. What we have today is not only a different knowledge-paradigm and a different language to carry it; we also have a far wider spread of both the language and the knowledge-paradigm, making it possible to think of a learned community which functions as a world community, employing a world language. It is truly a phenomenon to celebrate: an unprecedented prospect of world-wide intellectual participation and parity.

That is not, however, how the benefits of the spread of English are usually seen. The benefits that get highlighted are those of technology and economic development – the products of the knowledge-paradigm rather than its processes. The current knowledge-paradigm can be said to be different from those of the past in that, to quote Judson again, “the rage to know has been matched by the rage to make.”⁵ It defines knowledge as that which is empirically knowable; what is not so knowable does

“It is language which offers the possibility of world-wide participation in a shared knowledge-paradigm”

not count as knowledge.⁶ Knowing a phenomenon is being able to predict, manipulate and exploit it – to make it serve our purpose. While this may have shut out other possible forms and concepts of knowledge, it has been able to produce a vastly powerful body of empirical knowledge and a body of technology based directly on it. Indeed it can be said that the power of this knowledge-paradigm derives to a large extent from the technological translatability of the knowledge it generates. However, if the Third World saw in the English language only (or primarily) an opportunity to make use of modern technology, it would be claiming a share of the products of the knowledge-paradigm, but denying itself a share in the knowledge-generating processes. While the flow of technology from the West can increase the gross national product of Third World countries and perhaps reduce economic disparities between different parts of the world, it is, at the same time, likely to leave the world divided between knowledge-generators and knowledge-receivers, the future course of the knowledge-paradigm being shaped in one part of the world while the other part continues to depend on the products arising from that process. A concentration on reducing technological and economic disparity can thus result in a perpetuation of intellectual non-parity.

What I have said about the desirability of Third World participation in the processes of knowledge-development does not imply any assumption that the cur-

rent knowledge-paradigm is the best, in some absolute sense, or even that it is permanent or long-lasting. What it implies is that it is the paradigm of our time and has deeply influenced not only our life-styles but our perceptions of ourselves and of the world. We exist within it, simply by living at this time in history. It is a part of our response to “the rage to know” – a part of our mental make-up. The question then is: are we content to let ourselves be influenced by the knowledge-paradigm or do we wish to play a part in its generative processes? We need English as a world language for both, but for the first we need it in an essentially pragmatic function, while for the second we need it in a mathetic function. It is, moreover, English in a mathetic function that can enable us to play a more equal or integral part in the future development of the knowledge-paradigm or the eventual emergence of a new paradigm. Even a radically

“Are we content to let ourselves be influenced by the knowledge-paradigm or do we wish to play a part in its generative processes?”

different future paradigm will have arisen to respond to an exhaustion or atrophy of the current paradigm, and world-wide participation in the current paradigm will also be world-wide participation in that change.

An argument on these lines, which regards English as the medium of a knowledge-paradigm originating in the West, might suggest the possibility of another part of the world returning to an earlier knowledge-paradigm of its own, carried by a more “native” language. I think, however, that this would be a negative approach to take. It would be an attempt to move back in time, instead of moving ahead with it. To the extent the current knowledge-paradigm is already a part of our mental make-up, it would also be an act of rejecting a part of ourselves, instead of building on what we are at this time. More regrettably, I think, it would be a turning away from the prospect we now have of a world-wide knowledge-paradigm, open to participation through a widely-spread world language and, given such participation, more and more

a possession of intellectuals across the world, rather than of those in one part of it. We should, I think, be looking beyond the notion of native and alien knowledge-paradigms, rather than helping to perpetuate that notion.

“ Written language has had a secondary place in language teaching theory ”

Let me now turn to an implication of the view I have outlined to the teaching of English in the Third World. About a hundred years ago, there was a major reorientation of foreign language pedagogy, known as the Reform Movement and led by linguists in Europe such as Vietor, Jespersen and Sweet. It rejected the then prevalent Grammar-Translation Method of language teaching and advocated a Phonetic Method, which gave primacy to spoken language instead of written language. It was an emphatic assertion by linguists that language was speech, and that to give primacy to the written form of a language over its spoken form was to treat that language as a “dead” language. The Reform Movement was a very influential one, leading among other things to the setting up of the International Phonetic Association⁷ and resulting in due course in the emergence of the Oral Method on one side of the Atlantic and the Audio-lingual Method on the other. It started the tradition which has since established a firm precedence to oral skills over written skills in language pedagogy across the world. In more recent years, the Communicative Language Teaching movement, which challenged the Audio-lingual Method, has nevertheless preserved the assumption that oral skills are primary, and has in fact reinforced that assumption by highlighting interactional activity for transactional purposes. Written language, that is to say, has had a secondary place in language teaching theory for a century now, partly because of the attention given to speech in linguistic analysis and partly because of an increasing emphasis on pragmatic objectives in language instruction. Languages should be taught, it is argued, in order to enable learners to talk to people so as to get what they want or to transact the work they have to in employment.

If, however, we want to teach English such that it can serve a mathetic function, in the sense I have suggested, there is reason to give written English a much higher priority than it receives at present. An obvious reason is that written language enables minds to reach out to other minds across distance and time, in a way that spoken language does not. Publications, as we know, play a central role in the operation of a knowledge-paradigm, making it possible for workers in a given field of knowledge to function as a professional community. The more wide-spread the knowledge-paradigm is, with members of the community being more widely separated, the more crucial the role of written language becomes.

A second reason for the importance of written language has to do with the process of articulating knowledge, as distinct from transmitting it. Unlike informational and transactional content, which is relatively easily coded in

“ The process of writing is in fact a process of thinking ”

language, conceptual content, such as a theo-retical argument, demands a high degree of deliberation and precision in its articulation as well as its interpretation. Such deliberation and precision in formulation are characteristic strengths of language in the written mode, rather than in the spoken mode. In general, the spoken mode of language is well-suited to the pragmatic function, as “a resource for doing with,” in Halliday’s words, while the written mode is well-suited to the mathetic function, as “a resource for thinking with.” Indeed, there is a sense in which the process of writing is in fact a process of thinking, with effort at verbal precision helping to sharpen mental perception. This is the essential insight behind what is called the “process” approach to the teaching of writing, which makes assertion such as that writing is a process of discovering meaning.⁸ It is also, I think, the reason for treating writing as an independent discipline in higher education, quite outside the field of second/foreign language instruction. Teaching people to write, in the sense of enabling them to articulate conceptual content, is an important way of training them to participate in a knowledge-paradigm.

A third argument for giving written English a high priority in teaching is that there appears to be an organic connection between the evolution of the current knowledge-paradigm and the evolution of its chief medium, namely, English in its written mode. Halliday provides a revealing account of this connection, showing how the forms of conceptualisation involved in scientific thought are related to such structural features of written English as nominality, lexical density and grammatical metaphor. He concludes: "Thus there are a lot of things that can only be said in nominal constructions, especially in registers that have to do with the world of science and technology [...] that is to say, they can only be said this way in the grammar of modern English."⁹ Halliday, in fact, goes a step further and makes the large generalisation that "the structure of the modern world and the structure of the language together make the written language what it is" (p. 75). It is therefore not enough to learn English, in some general sense, to be able to participate in the current knowledge-paradigm; it is crucial to learn it in its written mode, in the way it functions as a carrier of the paradigm.

“ It is crucial to learn English in its written mode, in the way it functions as a carrier of the paradigm ”

A revision of priorities between spoken and written modes is not the only implication for pedagogy of the view outlined above of English in its mathetic function. I have suggested elsewhere¹⁰ that communication tasks in the language classroom can be classified into information-gap activities, reasoning-gap activities and opinion-gap activities, and that reasoning-gap activities have a greater value for language acquisition than the other two types. An appreciation of the mathetic function of English in the world further strengthens the case for a high priority to reasoning-gap activities, since reasoning in English is clearly a good preparation for mathetic uses of the language. There are other pedagogic implications, too, such as that the relatively high degree of deliberation and precision involved in mathetic use engenders a correspondingly high degree of language awareness which can be

of value in preventing (or at least reducing) the phenomenon of "fossilisation" in language acquisition; or that a priority to mathetic use makes it natural (or legitimate) to employ serious, knowledge-based subject-content in the language classroom (in contrast to the relatively frivolous subject-content which prevails much of the time). But perhaps I have said enough to indicate that an appreciation of the mathetic function of English has consequences for the teaching of English as a second/foreign language.

“ Variations in the forms of English between different communities occur chiefly in spoken uses of the language ”

I have been concerned in this paper with the function of English as a world language, rather than with the status of English as an international language, seen in terms of one or more varieties. I would, however, like to conclude by commenting on the consequence of this view of the function for the current debate on the relative status of native and non-native (or old and new) varieties of English. Briefly, a perception of the centrality of English in its mathetic function does not resolve the issue of varieties, but I think it helps to reduce the proportions of that issue, as well as its significance.

To begin with, variations in the forms of English between different communities occur chiefly in spoken uses of the language, largely in a pragmatic function – or, arising from those spoken uses, in creative uses of the language, in an aesthetic function. Variation can also occur in written uses of English in a pragmatic function (as in office letters and newspapers), but it seems fair to say that it occurs least in written English in a mathetic function (such as professional publications and textbooks). The phenomenon of variation, therefore, is far more limited and, in that sense, far less important – in the international use of English in a mathetic function. It is also likely that writing – in the sense of articulating conceptual content – is an aspect of language use in which proficiency is acquired mainly through intellectual discipline, and in which, as a result, being a native speaker is a doubtful advantage.

However, it would obviously be a mistake to assume that English in its mathetic function does not operate in speech: the written mode of English, which is what is involved in the mathetic function, is not the same as the written medium, which is a matter of scripting as against pronouncing the language.¹¹ An instance of language use can be in the written mode but in the spoken medium, as in professional debate such as this seminar. Mathetic uses of English across the world will therefore involve not just the written medium but the spoken medium as well, and a high priority to the mathetic function (with a correspondingly large reliance on the written medium) can have an effect on the spoken forms of English internationally, perhaps making non-native speakers "sound like a book" or move towards spelling-based pronunciation. There will thus be variations in spoken English, and deviations from native-speaker speech, too large and regular not to raise questions of varietal status, even in the mathetic uses of English as a world language; and varietal status will inevitably bring up notions of superiority and inferiority between native and non-native speech-forms.

It seems to me likely that there is a relationship between the presumption of superiority by native varieties of English and the role of English as the language of the current knowledge-paradigm: it is the fact that the dominant knowledge-paradigm developed and continues to operate largely in native-English speaking parts of the world that supports the notion of native-English superiority over Third World varieties of the language – just as it supports other notions of superiority, such as that of ethnicity. To the extent that this is the case, seeking to counter the notion of superiority on linguistic grounds as such would be seeking to remedy a symptom rather than the cause. It is a widening of the knowledge-paradigm, with increasing intellectual participation from different parts of the world, that can lead to a truer sense of parity and, in the process, eliminate the symptoms of non-parity. If, on the other hand, the notion of linguistic superiority is in fact unrelated to achievement in the knowledge-paradigm, then it seems to me not very worthwhile trying to counter a notion which involves no more than privilege by the circumstance of birth. A trivial no-

tion is best treated as being trivial, not dignified with the effort of professional argument. Besides, I am unable to see much substance in the measures meant to counter the notion, such as a loud assertion or declaration of linguistic independence or secession – a self-conferment of linguistic status, as unrelated to any substantive achievement as the notion of superiority by birth. I think it is far more worth our while to seek a more equal share in knowledge-generation through English than to seek a more equal status for our variety or varieties of English. International English is of greatest value as the language of international collaboration in the mathetic endeavour, and it is by internationalising that endeavour more and more that we can truly internationalise the language.

NOTES

¹HALLIDAY, M.A.K. *Learning How to Mean – Explorations in the Development of Language*. London, Edward Arnold, 1975, p. 3.

²HALLIDAY, M.A.K. *Spoken and Written Language*. Victoria, Deakin University Press, 1985, p. 7.

³JUDSON, Horace Freeland. The Rage to Know. In: FAHNESTOCK, Jeanne & SECOR, Marie (ed.). *Readings in Arguments*. New York, Random House, 1985, p. 65-76.

⁴KUHN, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1962.

⁵JUDSON, op. cit., p. 74.

⁶GOULET, Denis. In Defense of Cultural Rights: Technology, Tradition and Conflicting Models of Rationality. *Human Rights Quarterly*, v. 3, n. 4, p. 1-18.

⁷HOWATT, A.P.R. *A History of English Language Teaching*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981, p. 169-89.

⁸MURRAY, Donald M. Writing as Process: How Writing Finds its Own Meaning. In: DONOVAN, Timothy R. & URBANA, Ben W.I. (eds.). *Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition*. Illinois, National Council of Teachers of English, p. 3-20.

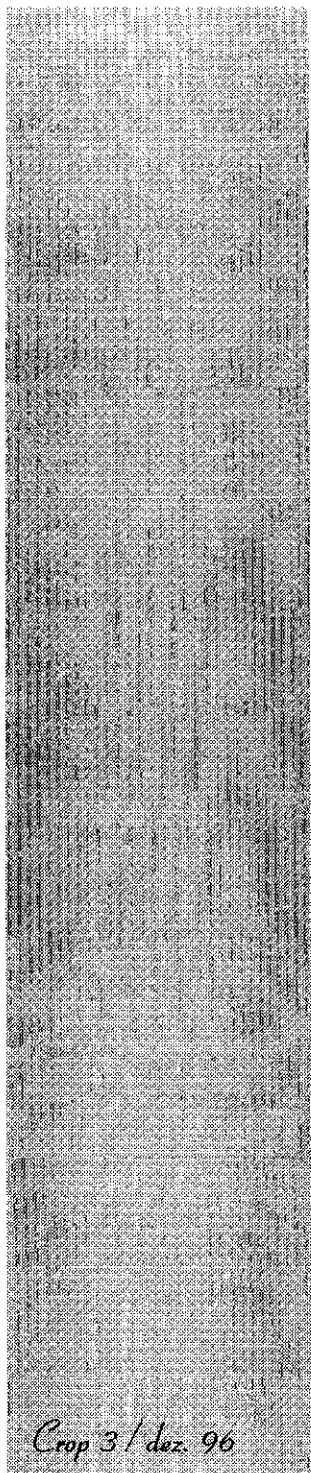
⁹HALLIDAY, *Spoken and Written Language*, cit., p. 73; original emphasis.

¹⁰PRABHU, N.S. *Second Language Pedagogy*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 46-51.

¹¹HALLIDAY, *Spoken and Written Language*, cit., p. 42-5.

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Translation
Tradução



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A LEITURA DAS OBRAS DE WILLIAM KENNEDY NO BRASIL

REGINA ALFARANO

O contato do público leitor brasileiro com o escritor norte-americano William Kennedy pode ser descrito por pouquíssimos momentos específicos, sendo, provavelmente, os dois principais a sua visita ao país em 1987 e o lançamento do filme *Ironweed*, baseado em romance do mesmo nome, publicado em português com o título *Vernônia* (1988). Afora estudiosos, professores e amantes da literatura, William Kennedy não parece ter conquistado um público respeitável no Brasil. Considerado um dos maiores escritores norte-americanos deste final de século, apontado por muitos como um “novo Faulkner”, pareceu-nos no mínimo interessante investigar a razão pela qual o leitor brasileiro – o leitor em língua portuguesa exclusivamente – não compartilhou da mesma opinião, ou sequer optou por “conferir”.

Kennedy é um escritor muito especial, pois mantém uma espinha dorsal para toda a sua obra: a sociedade norte-americana vista pelo ângulo da sociedade de Albany, capital do estado de Nova York e sua cidade natal. Como que em um caleidoscópio, Kennedy reapresenta suas personagens nas várias obras: diferentes gerações, amigos comuns, profissionais comuns, em lugares também comuns. A mesma personagem também reaparece. E, como no caleidoscópio, as cores variam, os matizes se alternam, as formas se recriam – o espaço, porém, é o mesmo, as formas a que recorre são planejadas, a variação das formas nesse espaço segue uma dinâmica própria. Portanto, focalizado esse caleidoscópio diretamente em Albany, ampliando as lentes para a universalidade da verdadeira literatura, a tarefa – árdua – do transpositor dessa obra para outra cultura está definida por limites muito rígidos. Diríamos, assim, que a tarefa de traduzir William Kennedy reforça um aspecto fundamental no processo da tradução literária: o da coerência. Não

— Kennedy mantém uma espinha —
— dorsal para toda a sua obra: a —
— sociedade norte-americana vista pelo —
— ângulo da sociedade de Albany —

implicaria nenhuma novidade esse argumento, pois todo texto, traduzido ou não, deve ser coerente. Entretanto, um texto não-literário preserva a coerência do volume de informações, da postura ética, de registros talvez, ou seja, de natureza quase apenas formal. O texto literário terá que atender, ainda, a coerência estilística para atender o formal, que, por sua vez, deverá atender o literário-cultural. Exatamente por essa razão dissemos que os limites são rígidos. Negligenciados, nos farão derrapar pelos perigosos abismos da “terceira língua” mencionada por Alan Duff¹. Difícil voltar à rota original pois, uma vez mergulhados nessa “terceira via”, os transpositores de cultura se vêem sem parâmetros, sem escalas e sem bússola. O resultado é a perda da rota, a falta de identidade do texto e uma das facetas da invisibilidade do tradutor – nesse caso, por não vislumbrar sua própria meta.

Kennedy incorporou a atividade de escritor à de jornalista e professor a partir de 1969, com a publicação de *The Ink Truck* (*Caminhão de tinta*, Francisco Alves, 1988). Em 1975, publicou o primeiro romance do que inicialmente denominou a Trilogia de Albany – *Legs* (*A lenda de Legs*, Francisco Alves, 1988); em 1978, o segundo, *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (*A grande jogada*, Francisco Alves, 1987); em 1983, o terceiro, *Ironweed* (*Vernônia*, Francisco Alves, 1983; 7. ed., 1986). Já não mais uma trilogia, e rebatizada como O Ciclo de Albany, um quarto romance foi acrescentado em 1988 – *Quinn's Book* (*O livro de Daniel Quinn*, Companhia das Letras, 1988). Em 1992, sai o romance considerado como “o clímax do Ciclo de Albany” – *Very Old Bones*. Esse livro traz um mapa genealógico dos Phelan, na Albany entre 1813 e 1958. Assim, as fronteiras rígidas de Kennedy, ao redor das quais giram as demais personagens – muitas delas centrais –, está reforçada.

No Brasil, o leitor teve todas as obras em um espaço de tempo de cinco anos, sendo a maior parte em três. As duas primeiras obras da Trilogia foram publicadas após a terceira, e juntamente com *Caminhão de tinta*. Curiosamente, todas após *Vernônia*, ou seja, após o primeiro grande sucesso do escritor. Não nos esqueçamos de que *The Ink Truck* surgiu em 1969 e *Legs*, em 1978. Fica-nos claro, portanto, que a publicação de todas as obras seguiu o rastro do sucesso, e, infelizmente, a mesma pressa e precipitação daqueles que dele desejam se aproveitar. Poderia ter sido um momento a ser bem aproveitado, bem explorado, e não apenas “explorado”. Por que dizemos isso?

— Kennedy reforça um aspecto —
— fundamental no processo da —
— tradução literária: o da coerência —

Cada obra teve um(a) tradutor(a) diferente, e nenhum deles leu (teve a oportunidade de ler?) o trabalho do outro. Teria havido tempo hábil para isso? A editora (a mesma para as quatro obras) teria se preocupado com isso? Os tradutores teriam se dado conta desse direito?

Diz Maurice Blanchot:

The translator is a writer whose singular originality lies in the fact that he seems to make no claim to any².

E acrescenta:

Translation is the sheer play of difference: it constantly makes allusion to difference, dissimulates difference, but by occasionally revealing and often accentuating it, translation becomes the very life of this difference [...] Consequently, it becomes essential to recognize that translation in its many aspects [...] wields enormous power in the construction of national identities and hence can play an important geopolitical role³.

O caráter geopolítico a que Venuti se refere pressupõe a inexistência do perigo alertado por Duff. Ambos, por sua vez, pressupõem o jogo das diferenças a fim de ressaltar as identidades. Para que tais diferenças se façam claras, exige-se a visibilidade do tradutor – em seu primeiro sentido, sua meta/tarefa objetiva e perseguida com clareza, para seu sentido verdadeiro e primeiro –, a visibilidade que confere o aspecto genealógico da tradução ao traçar seu passado, que possa servir às suas duas funções históricas (política e utópica), que situe o texto traduzido em suas circunstâncias sociais e históricas e jamais negligencie seu papel político-cultural. Ou seja, conclui Venuti, que o tradutor se revele o agente de uma prática cultural, sob contínuo automonitoramento – e que, assim, se torne visível.

— *O tradutor deve se revelar o agente* —
— *de uma prática cultural, sob* —
— *contínuo automonitoramento* —

Venuti ressalta, com muita propriedade, que o tradutor de nossos dias está muito ocupado traduzindo, “com as mãos na massa”, produzindo traduções, e não comentando, criticando ou teorizando – ao contrário, revela-se um amador sensível à estética ou artesão talentoso, porém nunca o escritor com consciência crítica, atento às condições sociais e culturais de seu tra-

balho. E conclui: “The contemporary translator is a paradoxical hybrid, at once dilettante and artisan”⁴.

Todo artesão deve ser paciente e cuidadoso. Todo artesão é, por sua própria índole, humilde e persistente. Assim deverá ser o tradutor, para que sua obra constitua, realmente, uma obra de artesanato. Atualmente, um artesanato computadorizado, talvez, com bits-velocidade a cruzar fronteiras, com fax-correio a agilizar mensagens, com Internets a invadir as mesas de trabalho – porém ainda um artesanato, na acepção da palavra: única, que não é feita em série, não é industrializada.

— *Segundo Venuti, a tradução serviria* —
— *a duas funções históricas: uma* —
— *crítica e outra utópica* —

Venuti propõe, na antologia que editou e na qual é responsável pela Introdução, estimular o repensar da tradução em seu sentido filosófico, mas também político, envolvendo questões de língua, do discurso e da subjetividade, ao mesmo tempo em que articula suas relações com as diferenças culturais, contradições ideológicas e conflitos sociais⁵. Dessa forma, pretende o autor garantir a visibilidade do tradutor, ou melhor, lutar contra a atual invisibilidade do tradutor, ao traçar a genealogia enquanto pesquisa o passado para as soluções, ao desenhar teorias e práticas alternativas. Nesse caminho, ainda segundo Venuti, a tradução serviria a duas funções históricas – uma crítica e outra utópica. Com os textos traduzidos e inseridos em suas circunstâncias sociais e históricas, seu papel político-cultural estaria pavimentado, tal prática pressupondo uma análise das culturas específicas, abordando questões como a seleção dos textos estrangeiros a serem traduzidos e as estratégias utilizadas para traduzi-los e ainda quais textos, estratégias e traduções são consagradas ou marginalizadas e que grupos sociais são beneficiados.

The translator is the agent of a cultural practice that is conducted under continuous self-monitoring and often with active consultation of cultural rules and resources.

[...] The translation is located in an intertextual and ideological configuration that may escape the translator's consciousness to some extent and result in unanticipated consequences, like social reproduction or change⁶.

Especificamente para a leitura das obras de William Kennedy no Brasil, se considerarmos a declaração do autor em entrevista concedida a respeito de *Quinn's Book*, o qual declara ser o quarto romance no Ciclo de Albany, teremos a noção exata dos argumentos de Venuti:

[...] my impetus was always to look at the world that pre-existed the one I inherited, and to look at my ancestors – the Irish – discover what it was like for them back in the days when they were perhaps just arriving – I've never pinned them down exactly when they came – but certainly they [...] there were so many like them that came in the 40s, after the 1840s, after the famine, that something would be handed on to me significantly, and it was, of course, a heritage of isolation of the Irish, hostility toward them, an era in which there was incredible turbulence and truculence and violence of all degrees and kinds [...]⁷

A personagem que dá nome ao livro é pai de George Quinn, de *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game*, e avô de outro Daniel, garoto que aparece em *Ironweed*. E ainda, segundo Kennedy, “a história da família Quinn está apenas começando”. Kennedy declara gostar da idéia de permanecer no mesmo lugar e olhá-lo de forma vertical. Sente-se lisonjeado ao ouvir que o cenário de *Ironweed* poderia ser qualquer um, tal sua universalidade. Porém, é claro e direto:

That's nice to hear. But it couldn't have taken place in Capri, or Honolulu; not every town has a skid row and a mission, or trolley strikes with the heavy violence that made Francis Phelan what he was. Even being Irish Catholic – it's not the same even in Ireland as it is in Albany⁸.

Esse caráter peculiar de Kennedy inevitavelmente levará à peculiaridade da atividade tradutológica. Albany é Albany, e os irlandeses de Albany não são os irlandeses da Irlanda, e tal afirmação deve ser tomada em

suas dimensões mais profundas e complexas. Nesse sentido, propusemo-nos a analisar a razão pela qual o leitor brasileiro não apreciou Kennedy como deveria, ou melhor, a razão pela qual Kennedy não chegou ao leitor brasileiro como Kennedy.

Em primeiro lugar, as personagens são, como dissemos, entrelaçadas, interligadas, e muito bem caracterizadas. Kennedy utiliza os recursos lingüísticos com mestria e chega a fazer de *Quinn's Book* um ato de fé à palavra. A mínima desatenção a esse aspecto e teremos a personagem truncada.

Em segundo lugar, a dinâmica da escrita é cuidadosa, forte e vigorosa. Kennedy impõe um ritmo consistente, sem nuances. O texto deve fluir com o mesmo vigor, pois qualquer represamento ou inconsistência levarão ao deslize do abismo duffiano.

Kennedy utiliza os recursos
lingüísticos com mestria e chega a
fazer de *Quinn's Book* um ato de
fé à palavra

E, em terceiro lugar, o ambiente físico é fundamental, e descaracterizar Albany e as personagens locais é atingir o âmago da obra.

Assim, teremos a árdua e desagradável (antiética, diriam alguns!) tarefa de examinar algumas pouquíssimas (das numerosas) situações referentes aos três pontos principais:

Personagens

Ironweed (p. 2, 3, 4, 5)
Vernônia (p. 10, 11, 12, 13)

Como poderia Francis dizer

Veja aquele túmulo... Não é um troço? Eu o vi em Albany quando era garoto...

Nunca se sabe... Esse tipo de gente sempre consegue se agarrar a alguma coisa de valor...

quando, na verdade, a personagem diz:

Look at that tomb... ain't that somethin'? I saw him around Albany when I was a kid...

Don't bet on it... Them kind of guys hang on to a good thing.

Legs (p. 11, 15)

A lenda de Legs (p. 11, 16)

Como poderia Flossie dizer em português “Ele não está falando sério” para “He don't mean it”?

Ou ainda, na fala de Tipper: “Bones wouldn't of done that to any man, drunk or sober, him or Jack the corpse, God rest his soul.” Como poderíamos caracterizar essa personagem dizendo: “Bones não faria isso a qualquer homem, bêbado ou sóbrio, ele ou o cadáver de Jack, que Deus proteja sua alma”?

Packy:

I was sitting where you're sittin... and saw a barman work up an order for Jack's table, four rum Cokes. All he poured was one shot of rum, split it over the top of the four and didn't stir them so the suckers could taste the fruit of his heavy hand.

A fala em português:

Eu estava sentado onde você está agora... e vi o *barman* preparar o pedido para a mesa do Jack, quatro cubalibres. Só derramou uma dose de rum, cuspiendo nos quatro copos sem sacudir, assim os provadores poderiam sentir o gosto de sua mão pesada.

Billy Phelan's Greatest Game (p. 6, 97, 98)

A grande jogada (p. 16, 105, 106)

Scotty: “Dirty son of a biiiiitch!...”

Billy: “You think I'm getting to him?”

Scotty: “He can't even stand to lose a fiver, can he?”

Scotty: “Filho da puuuuuta!”

Billy: “Acha que estou chegando perto dele?”

Scotty: “Ele não suporta perder nem cinco mangos, suporta?”

“Kilmartin never comes in any more”. Red Tom said.

“O'Hare comes in for a night-cap after he gets laid...”

“Billy been here tonight yet?”

“He's about due.”

“Kilmartin não vem mais aqui”, disse Red Tom.

“O'Hare vem para uma saideira depois de já tocado...”

“Billy vem aqui esta noite?”

“É quase certo.”

Como dissemos, nossa intenção não é nomear inglórias, tampouco levar alguém ao banco de réus. Nossa proposta é pensar, como Venuti, nas fronteiras muito mais amplas da atividade tradutória e ressaltar seu caráter interativo: se a editora não permitir tempo hábil, se não remunerar os profissionais decentemente, se a sociedade não reivindicar boas leituras – até que em certo momento comece a reivindicar a qualidade do produto:

— *Nossa proposta é pensar* —
— *fronteiras muito mais amplas da* —
— *atividade tradutória e ressaltar seu* —
— *caráter interativo* —

“quero o produto que imaginei comprar, um bom texto”, enquanto a indústria e o comércio em geral não se conscientizarem da responsabilidade do tradutor e da importância do texto bem traduzido, não haverá motivos suficientes para a crítica da tradução em seu caráter mais amplo.

Estilo

Em *A lenda de Legs*, tomo a liberdade de dizer que pouquíssimos leitores empenhariam seu tempo após uma primeira página onde em todas as falas do diálogo temos “fez” em lugar de “disse”, “respondeu”, “reagiu”, “co-

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mentou”. Uma primeira página extremamente irritante, não sendo esse o único problema. Mas se o leitor corajoso continuasse até a página 3, teríamos o seguinte:

I had come to see Jack as not merely the dude of all gangsters, the most active brain in the New York underworld, but as one of the truly new American Irishmen of his day; Horatio Alger out of Finn McCool and Jesse James, shaping the dream that you could group up in America and shoot your way to glory and riches [...]

Does anyone think these superlatives were casually earned? Why he was a pioneer, the founder of the first truly modern gang, the dauphin of the town for years. He filled the tabloids – never easy. He advanced the cause of joyful corruption and vice. He put the drop of the creature on the parched tongues of millions. He filled the pipes that pacify the troubled, loaded the needles that puncture anxiety bubbles. He helped the world kick the gong around, Jack did. And was he thanked for this benevolence? Hardly. The final historical image that endures is that corpse clad in underwear, flat-assed out in bed, broke and alone.

That’s what finally caught me, I think: the vision of Jack Diamond alone, rare sight, anomalous event, pungent irony. Consider the slightly deaf sage of Pompeii, his fly open, free apart, hand at crotch, wetting surreptitiously against the garden wall when the lava hits the house. Why he never heard the rumbles. Who among the archaeologists could know what glories that man created on earth, what truths he represented, what love and wisdom he propagated before the deluge of lava eternalized him as The Pisser?

Eu fora ver Jack não somente como o dândi de todos os gângsters, o cérebro mais ativo do submundo novaiorquino, mas como um dos verdadeiros irlandeses americanos de seu tempo; Horatio Alger, saído de Finn McCool e Jesse James, dando forma ao sonho de que você poderia crescer na América e abrir caminho a bala rumo à glória e à riqueza [...]

Alguém pensa que esses superlativos foram adquiridos casualmente? Ele foi um pioneiro, um fundador da primeira gangue verdadeiramente moderna, o delfim da cidade durante anos. Tomou conta dos tablóides – sem ces-

sar. Defendeu a causa da corrupção e de vício alegres. Ele depositou a gota da criatura nas línguas ressecadas de milhões. Acendeu os cachimbos que pacificaram os atormentados, forneceu as agulhas que perfuraram bolhas de ansiedade. Ajudou o mundo a tocar o gongo, Jack o fez. E foi recompensado por sua caridade? Duramente. A imagem histórica final que resiste é a daquele cadáver de cuecas, jogado na cama quebrado e sozinho.

Acho que foi isso que finalmente me tocou: a visão de Jack Diamond solitário, imagem rara, acontecimento anômalo, ironia pungente. Considere o sábio ligeiramente surdo de Pompéia, a braguilha aberta, pés separados, mão entre as pernas, suando furtivo contra a parede do jardim quando a lava atinge a casa. Por que ele nem mesmo ouviu o estrondo? Quem dentre os arqueólogos poderia saber as glórias que aquele homem criara na terra, que verdades representara, quanto de amor e sabedoria propagara antes do dilúvio de lava eternizá-lo como o Mijão?

Um leitor atento perceberá, de imediato, que o estilo do autor é oscilante, inconsistente, assim como as personagens. Como é que alguém “suando furtivo” pode ter o apelido de “Mijão”? Ou como esse leitor compreende a recompensa “dura” que Legs recebeu, quando, na verdade, a recompensa praticamente inexistiu? (E alguém o agradeceu por tanta benevolência? Praticamente ninguém.) O leitor atento provavelmente também se aborrecerá com “Considere o sábio ligeiramente surdo”...

Em *Ironweed* (p. 162):

Jesus Christ, Annie, I missed everybody and everything, but I ain't worth a goddam thing in the world and never was. Wait a minute. Let me finish. I can't finish. I can't even start. But there's somethin'. Somethin' to say about this. I got to get at it, get it out. I'm so goddamned sorry, and I know that don't cut nothin'. I know it's just a bunch of shitass words, excuse the expression. It's nothin' to what I did to you and the kids. I can't make it up. I knew five, six months after I left that it'd get worse and worse and no way ever to fix it, no way ever to go back. I'm just hanging out now for a visit, that's all. Just visitin' to see

you and say I hope things are okay. But I got other things goin' for me, and I don't know the way our of anything. All there is is this visit. I don't want nothin', Annie, and that's the honest-to-god truth, I don't want nothing but the look of everybody. Just the look'll do me.

Meu Deus, Annie, senti falta de todos e de tudo, mas não valho nada neste mundo e nunca vou valer. Espere um minuto. Deixe eu acabar. Não posso terminar. Não sou capaz nem mesmo de começar. Mas há uma coisa a dizer a respeito disso. Preciso falar, preciso pôr pra fora. Lamento profundamente e sei que isso não vale nada. Sei que não passa de um monte de palavras de merda, desculpe a expressão. Não compensa o que eu fiz com você e com os garotos. Não posso compensar. Percebi, cinco, seis meses depois de sair de casa, que a coisa ia se tornar cada vez pior e não tinha jeito de consertar, não tinha jeito de voltar. Vim só pra uma visita. Vim ver você e dizer que espero que as coisas corram bem. Mas tenho outras coisas à minha espera, e não sei como me desvencilhar. Vim só fazer esta visita. Não quero nada Annie, essa é a mais pura verdade. Não quero nada, apenas dar uma espiada em cada um. Basta dar uma espiada.

O estilo de Kennedy, para ter coerência quanto à caracterização de Francis, seria algo assim:

Meu Deus, Annie, senti muitas saudades de todos e de tudo, mas não tenho nenhum valor nesse mundo e nunca tive. Espera. Me deixa terminar. Não consigo nem começar. Mas tem uma coisa. Uma coisa eu quero falar. Tenho que conseguir, pôr pra fora. Sinto tanto, mas tanto, mas sei que não ajuda nada. Sei também que tô falando um monte de merda, desculpe o palavreado. O que eu fiz pra você e pras crianças. Não tem jeito de compensá. Eu já sabia, cinco, seis meses depois que fui embora, que tudo ia ficar cada vez pior e que não ia dar pra consertar, e não podia voltá atrás. Só vim fazer uma visita, só isso. Só ver você pra dizer que eu quero muito uma vida boa pra vocês. Eu tenho a minha vida e não consigo solução pra nada. Não quero nada, Annie, e essa é a pura verdade, não quero nada, só ver todo mundo. Só olhar já está bom.

E, por fim, a Albany, que até litoral virou:

That empty afternoon, and that book, gave me the insight that my life was a stupendous bore, and that it could use a little Gargantuan dimension. And so I said yes, I would take Jack Diamond up on his telephone invitation of that morning to come down to his place for Sunday dinner, three days hence. It was the Sunday I was to speak at the police communion breakfast, for I was one of Albany's noted communion breakfast intellectuals in those days. I would speak, all right, and then I would walk down to Union Station and take the west shore train to Catskill to listen to whatever that strange and vicious charmer had to say to an Albany barrister. (p. 16)

Aquela tarde vazia e aquele livro me levaram à percepção de que minha vida era de uma monotonia fantástica, de dimensão colossal. Ai eu disse: sim, vou aceitar o convite daquela manhã feito por Jack Diamond, para ir à sua casa jantar no domingo, dali a três dias. Era o domingo em que eu tinha de falar no café da manhã de confraternização da polícia, pois eu era um dos intelectuais mais preeminentes em cafés da manhã de confraternização na Albany daquele tempo. Tudo bem, eu falaria e em seguida iria até a estação ferroviária e tomaria o trem litorâneo oeste para Catskill, a fim de ouvir o que quer que aquele sedutor estranho e viciado teria a dizer a um advogado de Albany.

Tomo a liberdade de não fazer comentários... Mas Catskills são as montanhas onde Legs se refugiava, e o litoral está um tanto quanto longe, e custa-me imaginar qual seria o trem litorâneo oeste na costa da Nova Inglaterra... O leitor sente-se menosprezado, humilhado. E o escritor é, literalmente, varrido do mapa...

William Kennedy cultiva tamanha dedicação às obras que escreve, continua a cultivá-las por tanto tempo que transformou a casa onde Legs foi assassinado no local em Albany onde recebe as pessoas. Uma casa de dois andares, extremamente bem-cuidada, que ele comprou para preservar. Ao escolher residir nos arredores da cidade, faz da ex-casa de Legs seu "escritório" e seu

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“estúdio”. A decoração também é mantida, impecável, e o único sinal de contemporaneidade fica para os cálices e o bom vinho em um fim de tarde gélida, típica dos invernos de Albany. Kennedy fala de suas personagens como se falasse de seus amigos. Fala de Legs como se ele estivesse no segundo andar. Intercala perguntas sobre o Brasil como se colhesse dados para a próxima obra. Demonstra uma curiosidade infantil, uma energia adolescente e uma postura adulta e cândida quando confessa jamais ter recebido qualquer direito sobre as obras publicadas no Rio de Janeiro. Quer saber das traduções, quer saber como é visto no Brasil. Não posso mentir. E digo que *Quinn's Book* é, sem sombra de dúvida, a obra que menos o compromete. Ressalto, no entanto, que seu público-alvo o lê no original. O que o conforta muito.

NOTAS

¹DUFF, Alan. *The Third Language*. Great Britain, Pergamon Press, 1981.

²BLANCHOT, Maurice. Translating. Trad. Richard Sieburth. *Sulfur*, 26 (83): 82-6, 1990. Apud: VENUTI, Lawrence. *Rethinking Translation*. London, Routledge, 1992.

³Id., *ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴VENUTI, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵Id., *ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶Id., *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷KENNEDY, William. Interview on the Public Radio Bookshow, July 14, 1988.

⁸KENNEDY, William. Interview: The Art of Fiction. *Dialogue*, 4, p. 67, 1990.

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