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Apresentação

Via Panoramica: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos/ A Journal of Anglo-American Studies (ISSN: 1646-4728) acolhe artigos para os seus próximos números.

Via Panoramica é publicada pelo CETAPS (Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies) da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto. A revista, que tem uma periodicidade semestral, acolhe ensaios na língua portuguesa ou inglesa, no âmbito dos Estudos Anglo-Americanos, propostos preferencialmente por jovens investigadores, desde alunos de pós-graduação a recém-doutorados. *Via Panoramica* possui uma Comissão Científica que assegura a arbitragem científica ("double blind peer-review") dos textos submetidos para publicação.

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4. Interesse da investigação e originalidade em relação ao estado da arte.
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Gualter Cunha, editor geral
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Presentation

Via Panoramica: Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos/ A Journal of Anglo-American Studies (ISSN: 1646-4728) welcomes the proposal of articles for its next numbers.

Via Panoramica is published by CETAPS (Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies), at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto. The journal, which is published twice a year, welcomes essays in Portuguese or in English, within the field of Anglo-American Studies, proposed preferentially by early-career researchers, from post-graduate students to researchers who have recently obtained their PhD degrees. *Via Panoramica* has a Scientific Committee which ensures double blind peer-review of the texts submitted for publication.

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1. Suitability of the article to the journal's scope.
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3. Structure and argument (coherence, depth, relevance).
4. Interest and originality of the research in relation to the state of the art.
5. Familiarity and engagement with the state of the art.
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EDITED BY:

MIGUEL RAMALHETE GOMES

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A Prefatory Note

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Miguel Ramalhete Gomes

This issue of *Via Panoramica* marks a series of exciting changes in the journal, signalled already by its drop of the circumflex in the original form of the journal's name, "*Via Panorâmica*," thus making it more internationally accessible. Reflecting a trend that will have become increasingly noticeable in recent issues of the journal, *Via Panoramica* is now aimed at publishing articles preferentially, though not exclusively, by early-career researchers, from post-graduate students to researchers who have recently obtained their PhD degrees. The editors' collaboration with the JRAAS platform (Junior Researchers in Anglo-American Studies)[1] has provided a compelling argument for the need to expand the number of journals dedicated to the production of early-career researchers, to which *Via Panoramica* is now joined. Starting in 2018, *Via Panoramica* will be published twice every year and will benefit from the expertise of a Scientific Committee which ensures double blind peer-review of the texts submitted for publication. Finally, the journal now includes a Publication Ethics and Publication Malpractice Statement[2] and a revised style sheet, based on the eighth edition of the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (2016).

The current issue therefore already reflects these substantial changes. Namely, in keeping with previous collaborations between *Via Panoramica* and the JRAAS platform, some of the articles published in this issue were initially presented in the Second JRAAS Colloquium, with the title *Exploring the Inevitability of Death*, which took place in 21 November 2017.

In "'Scanning the Landscape for Some Guidance in That Emptiness': The (De)Construction of Meaning in *Blood Meridian*," Márcio Santos begins by focusing on the crisis of signification in the novel as well as on the competing worldviews vying for control in this void, in order to turn to the ultimate impact of this struggle on the narrator himself, torn between a declining religious fervour and a mythologised view of war. Tânia Cerqueira, in "Drowned Angels and Watery Graves: Representations of Female Suicide in Victorian Art," succinctly addresses the Victorian form of the trope of the fallen woman redeemed in death, in a discussion of a series of paintings (by John Everett Millais, George Frederic Watts, and Augustus Egg) inspired by literary precedents and serving to reinforce the patriarchal discourse of Victorianism. Passing from the nineteenth into the twentieth century, Jaqueline Pierazzo's "O Medo do Desconhecido: Uma Análise Comparada entre 'The Outsider' e 'The Fall of the House of Usher'" discusses the influence of Edgar Allan Poe on Howard Phillips Lovecraft, namely by comparing Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" and Lovecraft's "The Outsider," in an exploration of the peculiarities of each writer's form of terror. The third article, Ana Isabel Almeida's "From Sin to Treatment: A Very Brief Survey of the Relationship Between Political Power and End-of-life Decisions in Western Societies,"

turns to end-of-life practices by combining an exploration of Michel Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and biopower with three true life accounts, which are meant to question if and how the current form of medical care is instrumental to political power by reducing the individual's autonomy when facing death. In "Confessar a Morte: a Poesia Política de Anne Sexton e Sylvia Plath," Susana Correia focuses on the autobiographical, but also eminently political, poetry of Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath by considering some of their confessional work in the context of the atomic threat during the Cold War, namely in images of suicide and wounded bodies. Jéssica Moreira also turns to poetry in "The Aesthetics of Seeing in Seamus Heaney's *Seeing Things*: Memory and Transcendence-in-Immanence in the Aesthetics of Everyday Life," in which she applies Husserl's phenomenological concept of transcendence-in-immanence and the adverbial theory of perception to answer the question about what things Seamus Heaney sees and how he sees them in the collection *Seeing Things*, a book marked by the workings and paradoxes of memory. Finally, in "Spaces of Resistance: Heterotopia and Dystopia in Toni Morrison's *Home*," Alice Gonçalves considers Toni Morrison's *Home* through the lenses of spatiality studies and of Foucault's concept of the heterotopia, as a means to inquire into whether the spaces of black people in American society can be seen as heterotopic or even as dystopian, in the context of the intense racial conflicts that characterise the USA nowadays.

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[1] Quoting from the prefatory note of the 2017 issue of *Via Panorâmica*, JRAAS is "a platform created in 2016 by current and former Masters Students of the Department of Anglo-American Studies of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Porto, and now enriched by the creation of a second coordinating team at the Faculty of Social and Human Sciences of the New University of Lisbon [NOVA/FSCH] . . . . [The] breadth and quality of the JRAAS initiatives has proved impressive and can be consulted on their regularly updated page." The platform's updated page is: http://www.cetaps.com/jraas-platform/presentation/.

[2] This statement is based on the statement devised for *e-TEALS: An e-journal of Teacher Education and Applied Language Studies* (ISSN 1647-712X). The editors would like to gratefully thank Carlos Ceia for permission to use and adapt the statement in *e-TEALS*.

"Scanning the Landscape for Some Guidance in That Emptiness": The (De)Construction of Meaning in *Blood Meridian*

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Abstract

In the diegesis of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian* (1985), the decline of religious fervor is accompanied by a trenchant crisis of signification. The need for the reassertion of meaning leads to the advent of an alternative worldview that offers a mythologized view of war as a suitable substitute for religion, but neither of these competing worldviews (nor any other) gets a firm foothold. What is particularly striking, however, is that this conflict surpasses the diegesis, since the narrator – just like the characters – is also torn between these two worldviews, craving for a stable and verifiable way of reading reality, for a paradigm that can be validated beyond any doubt. He fails, in the process creating a schizophrenic narration and, consequently, negating the possibility of verifying meaning.

Keywords: Narrator; meaning; religion; war; form.

Resumo

Na diegese de *Blood Meridian* (1985), de Cormac McCarthy, o declínio do fervor religioso é acompanhado por uma profunda crise no entendimento do sentido da existência. A necessidade de reafirmá-lo conduz ao advento de uma mundividência alternativa que oferece uma visão mitificada da guerra como um substituto apropriado para a religião, mas nenhum destes paradigmas (nem qualquer outro) cimenta de modo convincente a sua posição. O que é especialmente inusitado, contudo, é que o próprio narrador, à semelhança das personagens, está dividido entre estes dois paradigmas, procurando freneticamente um modo estável e comprovável de ler a realidade, uma cosmovisão que possa ser validada para lá de

quaisquer dúvidas. Esta busca revela-se infrutífera, resultando dela uma narração esquizofrénica e, por conseguinte, uma negação da possibilidade de verificar o sentido.

Palavras-chave: Narrador; sentido; religião; guerra; forma.

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In Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian, Or The Evening Redness in the West* (1985), the institution of religion, operating in an amoral and violent world, is in steep decline. The demise of religious fervor generates a crisis of signification and, as a logical consequence, the need for the reassertion of meaning. For that reason, an alternative worldview that presents the sacralization of war as a viable replacement for religion emerges. It is my contention that the novel sanctions neither of these competing worldviews (nor any other): on the one hand, some characters offer resistance to the new paradigm and even stand by religion as a still reliable authority on meaning; on the other hand – and more importantly –, the narrator, who is also torn between these two worldviews (among others), produces a discourse marked by ambivalence and indecision. The outcome is a deliberately enigmatic novel that, remaining skeptical of the possibility of verifying meaning, sees in uncertainty the only certainty.

Blood Meridian takes place in the Mexico and the United States of the mid-nineteenth century, a "heathen land" (McCarthy 84)[1] that serves as the stage for violent confrontations between Indians, Americans and Mexicans, which frequently degenerate into merciless massacres. The world of the novel, then, is adverse to religion, to say the least. In effect, this setting, traversed mostly by amoral men far more concerned with killing and scalping than honoring God, witnesses the decline of the persuasive force of religion in general and Christianity in particular. There are still some apparent believers, but they only seem to follow religion mechanically. For instance, the members of Captain White's company at one point pray for rain, which materializes soon after. The prayer appears to have been answered, but no sign of gratitude or acknowledgement is given for this supposedly divine intervention in their favor, confirming how little religion is worth in their estimation. Shortly thereafter, they are slaughtered, suggesting either God's exaction of revenge or a darkly comical, but meaningless, coincidence. In any case, it is difficult to reconcile the extremes in which the Glanton gang indulge with any semblance of religious zeal.

Occasionally, however, one does come across some believers who seem to have a relatively greater degree of conviction in their professed persuasion, but even these struggle to harmonize their beliefs with the "immense and bloodslaked waste" that surrounds them (186). For instance, Tobin, the so-called "expriest," rides with the Glanton gang but denies having lost his faith, although his is, at best, a strange and unexpected trade for a self-proclaimed man of God. Recalling a moment when his death seemed imminent, he revealingly says that there "was none to curse and none to pray [to]" (140). He hardly strikes the reader as one that puts much stock into his God. Also peculiarly heretical is the anchorite's account of the creation of man, which contradicts that proposed by Genesis: "when God made man the devil was at his elbow" (20). It is unsurprising that such an unorthodox cosmogony and theodicy emerge in a land frequently swept by war.

At any rate, most of the believers are already dead by the time we encounter them, and their demise is often gruesome. Thus, what one may call the Christian paradigm is deteriorating swiftly and steadily, causing a crisis in the validation of meaning and opening the door for the affirmation of a new paradigm. Petra Mundik proposes that this paradigm is science:

> *Blood Meridian* is, in many ways, a study of the gradual paradigm shift that occurred during the era that Marshal Berman refers to as "Classical Modernity" (1789-1900). In the West, the Age of Modernity inaugurated the shift away from the mythico-magical apprehension of the world, dominated by the teachings of organized religion, toward the dominance of a rational and scientific world view. (*A Bloody and Barbarous God* 53)

However true that may be in the context of the history of Western civilization, it does not apply so neatly to this novel, in which the main conflict is that between religion and Holden's deification of war, his "creed of brutality and bloodshed" (Cooper 70). The scientific paradigm is indeed upheld by the judge, but it remains subsidiary to his overarching conception of war, which still relies on a mystical perspective: after Holden states that war is his "trade," Brown asks him "about them notebooks and bones and stuff," to which the judge replies that "[a]ll other trades are contained in that of war" (262). "The myth of science," as Sarah L. Spurgeon argues, "is not enough" (100), and the judge formulates a synthesis of war, religion and science.

Consequently, Holden's paradigm asserts that one should search for meaning in war: "War is the truest form of divination. It is the testing of one's will and the will of another within that larger will which because it binds them is therefore forced to

select. War is the ultimate game because war is at last a forcing of the unity of existence. War is god" (263). Holden explicitly argues that war creates or confers meaning, owing to the extremely high stakes: "Men are born for games. Nothing else. Every child knows that . . . the *worth* or *merit* of a game is not inherent in the game itself but rather in the value of that which is put at hazard. Games of chance require a wager to have *meaning* at all" (262; emphasis added).

Considering that, even without Holden's intervention, violence is thriving and religion is already suffering a seemingly irreversible process of disintegration, one may wonder whether his paradigm is necessary at all, but war, by itself, despite shaping the characters' identity, is not sufficient to assuage all doubts regarding the significance of their lives. The mere "reality" of war does not entail a validation of meaning; a metaphysical reading is needed, and the judge is happy to provide it. In this broad sense, the Christian paradigm and Holden's address the same needs, hence the attractiveness of both. One can now understand why the rhetoric of the previous paradigm pervades the judge's presentation of his new worldview, even – or especially – when he is directly pitting them against each other: the religious overtones of his speech on war amount to, in practical terms, an attempt to recover the persuasive power of Christianity that is conducted simultaneously with a subversion of, and in opposition to, Christianity itself.

His preservation of the binding power of the sanctified religious alliance is proof of this. As Tobin reveals, Holden and Glanton have struck a "terrible covenant" (133), and the same applies to the remaining members of the gang, whom the judge, shortly after joining them, has saved – or damned, perhaps – through his preparation of gunpowder, which amounts to an uncanny version of a religious ceremony:

> We hauled forth our members and at it we went and the judge on his knees kneadin the mass with his naked arms and the piss was splashin about and he was cryin out for us to piss, man, piss for your very souls for cant you see the redskins yonder, and laughin all the while and workin up this great mass in a foul black dough, a devil's batter by the stink of it (139)

Tobin even expected that they would have to "bleed into it" (139), stressing the ritualistic dimension of their actions. They may not bleed (yet), but their opponents certainly do, and bloodshed is, for the judge, an integral part of a ritual: "A ritual includes the letting of blood. Rituals which fail this requirement are but mock rituals" (347). Note also that the word "mass," the common name for the celebration of the Christian Eucharist, appears twice, creating a possible play on words. Aware of

Holden's manipulation of the men, Tobin states that they were "behind him like the disciples of a new faith" (137) and observes that the men fittingly numbered a dozen at the time: "Two men had deserted in the night and that made us down to twelve and the judge thirteen" (134). Wittingly or not, they become the original twelve apostles of a new prophet, Holden rather than Christ. Further emphasizing religious parallels, the judge had previously delivered a sermon: "It was like a sermon but it was no such sermon as any man of us had ever heard before" (137). Although the religious ritual is subverted, its power is retrieved. Herein lies the judge's cunning.

Yet, religion still survives, in however precarious a manner, and Holden's worldview is not undisputed, resulting in a crisis in the validation of meaning. Worldviews must be unchallenged for a reading of reality to acquire at least the appearance of a certainty, to become dogmatic, because the validating power of each paradigm relies on the assumption that its authority is the *only* true authority and proposes the *only* true way of reading reality. By coexisting, these opposed worldviews undermine each other's persuasiveness. It is not surprising, therefore, that the characters display ambivalent attitudes towards Holden's views. Moreover, Tobin resorts to religion to contradict the judge explicitly and directly. Although this act of active opposition is at least partially belied by the compliance implied in his willingness to collect scalps alongside the rest of the gang, he may still be the best mouthpiece for Christianity in the novel. Consequently, Tobin and Holden operate as the chief advocates for two different paradigms and, as such, vie for influence over the kid, who favors the former and opposes the judge – hesitantly and silently at first, until finally clashing with him openly.

Yet, the ambiguous ending complicates the matter: when the judge embraces the kid at the end, the reader does not know whether the latter's attitude amounts to a final act of defiance or a resigned admission of defeat – or even "suicidal indifference" (Hellyer 56). The kid remains an enigma, given that the narrator seldom communicates the character's thoughts to the reader. As Elisabeth Andersen argues, "the conventions that normally structure a novel—the character's errors in judgement, moments of recognition, psychological insight and personal growth—are never pivotal" (92). Sometimes, the narrator even neglects to so much as mention the kid for a considerable number of pages at a time, especially during the battle sequences. The judge also "disappears" for large portions of the novel, as if the narrator cannot decide whether Holden or the kid is the protagonist.

Nevertheless, he tries to assure the reader that the kid is important, seeing him as a Christ-like figure. The opening line of the novel associates the kid with the son of God: "See the child" (3).[2] This is a loose translation of "Ecce puer" (*Latin Vulgate*, Isa. 41.1), often regarded as a prefiguration of the miracles of Christ, given that Pontius Pilate, when presenting Christ to the crowd, says "Ecce homo" (John 19.5), as Andersen has noted (89-90). Towards the end of the novel, the kid tellingly becomes the "man." In the next paragraph, the parallel with Christ is again underlined: "Night of your birth. Thirty-three. The Leonids they were called. God how the stars did fall. I looked for blackness, holes in the heavens. The Dipper stove" (3). The falling stars, cunningly juxtaposed with an explicit mention of God, can be read as an allusion to the Star of Bethlehem, although they are also, according to Kenneth Lincoln, an obscure reference to a real meteor shower (80). Furthermore, the kid was born in "[t]hirty-three," that is, 1833, and Christ was thirty-three at the time of his death. This may seem an interpretive stretch, but the truncated manner in which the year is indicated encourages the reader to establish such connections, especially since the narrator has no qualms about being strangely precise regarding dates in other occasions: "On the twenty-first of July in the year eighteen forty-nine they rode into the city of Chihuaha" (174). Therefore, simply stating "[t]hirty-three" invites further probing.

There is at least one more Biblical allusion in the opening paragraphs of the novel: "His folk are known for *hewers of wood and drawers of water* but in truth his father has been a schoolmaster" (3; emphasis added). The italicized phrase derives from John 9.21, 23. This is rather obscure, but more conspicuous religious allusions emerge later on. For instance, the kid is, like Christ, tempted in the desert three times. The tempter is the judge, which would make him the devil – and Holden is, in fact, addressed as the devil by both reverend Green (7) and Tobin (132). Besides facing and resisting the three temptations, the kid is also resurrected, in a sense, after a particularly violent battle: "With darkness one soul rose wondrously from among the new slain dead" (58).

These religious allusions and associations reveal that the narrator himself, feeling "without referents in the known desert about" (117), is immersed in the search for meaning that torments the characters. Because he projects his own insecurities onto what he sees, even the shadows become "contorted on the broken terrain like creatures seeking their own forms" (69). His attention to the act of interpreting is equally revelatory of his concerns: "The other effects [Holden] spread with the palm

of his hands as if there were something to be read there" (117-8); "Glanton looked upwards, briefly, as if there were anything to ascertain in that perfect china sky" (155). He is not a detached observer, but a tormented searcher who, in his quest for meaning, voices his hopes about the validity of the Christian paradigm.

Nonetheless, the attempt to revive religion prompted by his hunger for signification proves misguided and haphazard. He indiscriminately filters characters and events through a religious lens even when the result is incongruous and borders on the ludicrous, as in the kid's case: despite being compared with Christ, the kid does not measure up to that standard. Even the character is aware of his inadequacy in the face of religion. When queried about whether "God made this world . . . to suit everybody," he says that "I dont believe he much had me in mind" (20). When Tobin tells him no one "is give leave of [God's] voice," he retorts that he "aint heard no voice" (131). The narrator duly transcribes this dialogue but does not refrain from establishing Biblical parallels in unlikely situations. For instance, he points out that the kid journeys for "[f]orty-two days on the river" (4), alluding to Christ's forty days in the desert. This exercise often results in a forced application of sacred rhetoric, which can be quite absurd: "At night whores call to him from the dark like souls in want" (5).

At certain times, however, the narrator, as if backtracking, voices his awareness of the kid's shortcomings. After all, despite comparing the character with Christ, he also states that he is simply "a pilgrim among others." If Christ was baptized in the Jordan, the narrator points out that the kid merely "waded out into the river like some wholly wretched baptismal candidate" (29). The kid is indeed christened later, but the ceremony, which takes place while he is incarcerated, is hardly orthodox, and the narrator, despite indulging in yet another of his countless similes, makes no attempt to aggrandize the situation: "A Spanish priest had come to baptize him and had flung water at him through the bars like a priest casting out spirits" (324). As a result, the associations made by this self-contradicting narrator are always precarious, disallowing a consistent reading. There are comparable discrepancies in his treatment of Holden, who, regardless of his role as a devilish entity, is also presented "like some great pale deity" (98), "like a great ponderous djinn" (102) or "like an icon" (154). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that Holden has been variously regarded as an "Old Testament God" (Pastore 45) and as an evil archon.[3] What is ultimately certain is that the narrator offers several interpretative possibilities but favors none.

Despite the religious comparisons, the narrator does not necessarily have a bias or preference towards the Christian paradigm. In fact, he also attempts to assert

Holden's paradigm, following the judge's lead in presenting war as inevitable: "they berated the old man and swore at him until he moved off down the bar muttering, and how else could it be?" Answering his own question, the narrator asserts that it could not be any other way, because "these things end" invariably in "confusion and curses and blood" (43). Contravening the copious religious associations, the narrator – in the two only instances in which he clearly penetrates the kid's mind – regards the character as someone in whom from the start "already broods a taste for mindless violence" (3) and who "comes down at night like some fairybook beast to fight with . . . [m]en from lands so far and queer that standing over them where they lie bleeding in the mud he feels mankind itself vindicated" (4). If that were not sufficiently obvious, the narrator even presents him as the progeny of war: "he went forth stained and stinking like some reeking issue of the incarnate dam of war herself" (58). This would appear to prove Holden right. Yet, the narrator's unwillingness to report the kid's activities during any of the manifold skirmishes belies the notion that this character is an appropriate standard bearer for the judge's paradigm. In short, the narrator alternately treats the kid as a torch bearer for the two paradigms, although he leads an existence that conforms to neither, as if he had fallen short of both.

The narrator of *Blood Meridian*, then, is as confused as the characters, if not more so. It would even be tempting to hazard that there is no "unified" narrator, but rather a succession of narratorial voices that contradict each other, creating instability regarding the meaning of what is narrated. Alternately, one may be tempted to propose that these irregularities are due to narratorial limitations. Still, I would contend that a different phenomenon is at play here. Lydia R. Cooper argues that "the omniscient narrator remains so far removed from the individual characters that there are never shifts into the perspective of any single character" (66). That is over-emphatic, as there are a few occasions in which the narrator does penetrate the characters' psyches, but what interests me here is that she describes the narratorial entity as an omniscient narrator. If she means that he is free to access any diegetic datum, I agree with her, even though that might seem to contradict my observations vis-à-vis the narrator's erraticism. I classify the narrator as "omniscient" because he has full access to physical diegetic "reality."

Indeed, the narrator demonstrates that he is able to access the past. Consider this example: "This Angel Trias who was governor had been sent abroad as a young man for his education and was widely read in the classics and was a student of languages" (178). Even more impressively, the narrator's knowledge of the past can

extend for hundreds of millions of years: he speaks of "the brutal wastes of Gondwanaland in a time before nomenclature was and each was all" (182) and of the "devonian dawn" (197). Likewise, he can see into the future, as attest his occasional prolepses: "The pale dust of the enemy *who were to hound them* to the gates of the city seemed no nearer" (172; emphasis added); "within a few days [the severed heads] would become mottled white and altogether leprous" (177); "four hundred miles to the east were the wife and child that [Glanton] would not see again" (181). Furthermore, we have seen that the narrator can read the characters' minds if he wants to.

Yet, it is undeniable that the narrator seems out of his depth on some occasions, as when he discusses "the great puckered scars inaugurated God knows where by what barbarous surgeons" (176). However, I do not regard this passage as the result of his inability to determine the circumstances in which those scars came into being; it is rather the result of his penchant for roundabout ways of expressing narrative details. Consider the tortuous manner in which he tells us that the male victims of "white men who preyed on travelers" had been castrated: "Some by their beards were men but yet wore strange menstrual wounds between their legs and no man's parts for these had been cut away" (161). The narrator obviously knows that the wounds are not menstrual in nature, but he does not let that get in the way of crafting a resonant image and a bizarre conceit. Such dictional quirks also explain why he at one point explicitly vents his frustration regarding the shortcomings of language: "In the afternoon they came to a crossroads, what else to call it. A faint wagon trace that came from the north and crossed their path and went on to the south" (70). Whether the novel "refuses to acknowledge any gap or opposition between words and things" (Shaviro 17) or not, this passage does not derive from the narrator's supposed feebleness, but rather from his temperament.

The narrator's purview of the diegesis, then, is complete when it comes to physical reality. His dilemma, however, is that his powers of inspection of the material world do not give him any firm insight into the metaphysical realm. This is his motivation behind his frugal disclosure of the mental processes of the characters. Being selectively silent about them, he endeavors to preserve their mystery, so that they can be read in disparate ways: when, for example, he keeps mum about the kid's thoughts, he strategically ensures that the character remains open to interpretations aligned with the Christian paradigm *and* Holden's worldview alike. In other words, he hedges his bets, sometimes despairingly holding onto religion as a means for the

validation of meaning, other times adopting the judge's paradigm. This tense coexistence of multiple – and mutually exclusive – perspectives in the narration can be seen in the proliferation of disparate statements, the epitome of which perhaps being the incongruous description of the combatants. They are alternately presented as evil doers and pilgrims: in some moments, they, endowed with "pagan eyes" (177), may be "[i]tinerant degenerates bleeding westward like some heliotropic plague" (83) or "like oafish demons routed from a fen" (94), in "just those whited regions where they've gone to hide from God" (45); in other moments, they can look "like devouts at a shrine" (60), "like God's profoundest peons" (75), "like acolytes" (184) and, when dead, "like maimed and naked monks in the bloodslaked dust" (57). The narrator never reconciles these different and incompatible readings; he merely piles them up with abandon.

Nonetheless, even that is too simple for him, and he proceeds to present yet another alternative interpretation of the characters' behavior – simple barbarism – by employing animalistic tropes: "Men whose speech sounds like the grunting of apes" (4); "they once again began to hoot and to pummel one another like apes" (68); "They were half naked and they sucked their teeth and snuffled and stirred and picked at themselves like apes" (79); "the limbs and toothless paper skulls of infants like the ossature of small apes at their place of murder" (96); "they lay gazing up with ape's eyes" (161). Comparisons with dogs also recur: "in his sleep [the kid] struggled and muttered like a dreaming dog" (21); "They walked on into the dark and they slept like dogs in the sand" (69). Other options are available: "They entered the city in a gantlet of flung offal, driven *like cattle* through the cobbled streets" (75; emphasis added). As evinced by some of these examples, the choice of verb can also be a means of comparison: "[Toadvine] clawed at the mud" (10); "the hermit crawled away" (21); "They crouched in silence eating raw meat" (155).

If there is a trend towards the animalization of humans, there is also a penchant for regarding animals as possessing human traits of one kind or another: "birds flew crying softly after the fled sun" (112). Intriguingly, the characters treat horses almost as people – Glanton often speaks to his horse, and, early in the novel, we are told that "the judge turned and watched" the kid and "turned the horse, as if he'd have the animal watch too" (15) –, but the narrator does the characters one better by portraying the horses as beings that show more feeling than many a human, often drawing attention to their wails: "some of the horses began to scream" (119); "the horse shied and moaned" (161). As always, his similes are revelatory: "the horses

stood like roadside spectators" (125). It is no wonder, then, that he goes out of his way to highlight with unstinting attention to detail the animal skins worn by the warriors and the body parts of human beings worn by their horses:

> they saw one day a pack of viciouslooking humans mounted on unshod indian ponies riding half drunk through the streets, bearded, barbarous, clad in the skins of animals stitched up with thews . . . and the trappings of their horses fashioned out of human skin and their bridles woven up from human hair and decorated with human teeth and the riders wearing scapulars or necklaces of dried and blackened human ears and the horses rawlooking and wild in the eye and their teeth bared like feral dogs and riding also in the company a number of halfnaked savages reeling in the saddle, dangerous, filthy, brutal, the whole like a visitation from some heathen land where they and others like them fed on human flesh. (83-4)

Furthermore, this passage contains a simile that connects horses with dogs, manifesting the tangled web of comparisons that characterizes the confused and confusing narratorial discourse. The narrator continues this trend of unsettling associations by placing necrophagous birds side by side with religious icons: "the carrion birds sat . . . with their wings outstretched in attitudes of exhortation like dark little bishops" (62); "vultures squatted along the dusty entablatures and among the niches in the carved facade hard by the figures of Christ and the apostles, *the birds holding out their own dark vestments in postures of strange benevolence*" (76; emphasis added).

Descriptions of the land yield similar contradictions. The narrator is prone to use Christian rhetoric in his portrayals of the setting of the novel, referring to "a terra damnata" (64), a "purgatorial waste" (65) and an "evil terrain" (94), but he prefers to resort to astrological language elsewhere: "[the survivors] slept with their alien hearts beating in the sand like pilgrims exhausted upon the face of the planet Anareta" (48). Yet, he may also describe the territory as a "cinderland" (64), "a squalid kingdom of mud" (32) or "the void" (102, 111, 115, *passim*), a phrase which pervades the novel in different permutations, becoming, for instance, "the shoreless void" (52), "the greater void beyond" (69), "that hallucinatory void" (120) or "that lonely void" (155). Another expression that surfaces accompanied by various qualifications is "the waste."

Interestingly, the narrator sees this inhospitable landscape as the best setting for an inquiry into the nature of man: "not again in all the world's turning will there be terrains so wild and barbarous to try whether the stuff of creation may be shaped to man's will or whether his own heart is not another kind of clay" (5). This central

question, which the narrator introduces at the beginning of the novel, directly pertains to the problem of meaning, and different characters answer it differently. For the judge, man asserts his will and is not clay, since war gives meaning to his existence: "If war is not holy man is nothing but antic clay" (323). Tobin, influenced by Christianity, rather argues that we are dust, and the kid adopts his opinion: "[Holden] aint nothin. You [Tobin] told me so yourself. Men are made of the dust of the earth" (313). Later, he will say the same to Holden's face: "You aint nothin" (349). Nonetheless, the narrator, as always, is ambivalent. Sometimes, he subtly suggests that man has indeed shaped "the stuff of creation": "Bone palings ruled the small and dusty purlieus here and *death seemed the most prevalent feature of the landscape*" (50; emphasis added). On other occasions, he appears to propose that man is merely "another kind of clay": "old women with faces dark and harrowed *as the land* squatt[ed] in the gutters" (77; emphasis added); "The men . . . paled slowly in the rising dust until they assumed once more the color of the land through which they passed" (169); "Like beings provoked out of the absolute rock" (182).

As a result, the narrator neither sanctions nor negates any paradigm, simply hopping from one to the other and giving each a try – several tries, in fact. To say that his narration is a messy mélange may be an understatement. The troubling questions with which the characters are confronted also afflict the narrator – and, on him, the impact of this epistemological and existential doubt seems to be magnified tenfold, the intradiegetic queries acquiring a new breadth by surfacing on an extradiegetic dimension. The bulk of twentieth-century narrative fiction has accustomed its readership to narrators that, at most, only make veiled comments on the narrative, and many writers have expressed their desire to maintain narratorial "objectivity," however awkwardly and naïvely that concept may be defined. By contrast, McCarthy has boldly experimented with the conventions of the narrative voice, crafting a virtuoso novel told by a conspicuously jittery narrator that is not immune to the characters' plights.

Desperate for meaning, he restlessly scours the diegesis for evidence that would prove one paradigm correct and offer a meaningful account of the world. Unable to find such evidence, he is forced to champion different views alternately, as if stuck in an existential merry-go-round. The consequence of his bizarre juxtaposition of different views is a want of commitment to any. Ultimately, he fails to assert coherent meaning, precluding the possibility of validating a paradigm. Several paradigms are presented, but none is denied or approved – and, therefore, none is truly embraced.

There is merely a clash between different views that yields no clear victor. The narrator is conscious of an impasse in the apprehension or production of meaning, and the frequent contradictions brought about by his disparate similes may indicate a "refusal of the idea that meaning inheres" (Holloway 14).

Therefore, *Blood Meridian* is marked not only by the instability of meaning but also by the questioning of the possibility of validating meaning itself. The novel denies neither the Christian paradigm nor Holden's; it rather problematizes the verification of meaning, which appears impossible, owing to our limitations. The human mind is a part of the very reality that it tries to understand and from which it tries to extract – or to which it tries to confer – meaning. As the anchorite argues, a "man's at odds to know his mind cause his mind is aught he has to know it with" (20).[4] Even the judge admits this, in what is perhaps his only moment of weakness:

> This universe is no narrow thing . . . . Even in this world more things exist without our knowledge than with it and the order in creation which you see is that which you have put there, like a string in the maze, so that you shall not lose your way. For existence has its own order and that no man's mind can encompass, that mind itself being but a fact among others. (258-9)

Holden temporarily concedes that his paradigm, like any other, does not necessarily reflect the order of reality, being merely a fabricated order or "that which you have put there."

Despite this obstacle, the narrator persists in his attempts to find verifiable meaning until the very end of the novel, as the epilogue[5] demonstrates: "*In the dawn there is a man progressing over the plain by means of holes which he is making in the ground. He uses an implement with two handles and he chucks it into the hole and he enkindles the stone in the hole with his steel hole by hole striking the fire out of the rock which God has put there*" (355; italics in the original). Once again seeking religion as a validating paradigm, the narrator asserts that the perforated rock has been "put there" by God. Nevertheless, the perforation of the rock can be taken as a sign of the waning power of God – if not his outright inexistence. In this sense, the man, in addition to making holes in the rock, is also poking holes in the narrator's view. The reference to the placing of the rock echoes another episode, creating further hermeneutical complications: "we come upon the judge on his rock there in that wilderness by his single self. Aye and there was no rock, just the one. Irving said he'd brung it with him" (135).

We may also recall that the kid wanted "to make [his] mark in this world" (37), which is what the man quite literally does. Yet, the broader implications of this tardily introduced character remain mysterious. Harold Bloom, however, hazards a guess: "Perhaps all that the reader can surmise with some certainty is that the man striking fire in the rock at dawn is an opposing figure in regard to the evening redness in the West. The Judge never sleeps, and perhaps will never die, but a new Prometheus may be rising to go up against him" (7). Notice, however, the tentative manner in which Bloom makes his assertion: "some certainty" (an almost oxymoronic phrase), "may," "perhaps" (employed twice). *Blood Meridian* often demands such hesitations. Given the irregularities and enigmas favored by the text, every affirmation seems to require extensive qualification. In effect, the same reference to "fire" that may lend credence to Bloom's reading can also serve as the linchpin for a diametrically opposed interpretation. One could argue that the unnamed figure confirms the judge's creed, since fire has previously been presented as Holden's element: "The judge like a great ponderous djinn stepped through the fire and the flames delivered him up as if he were in some way native to their element" (102).

Bloom's appraisal, however, is not necessarily wrong; it is possible to see the man in that light. My point is merely that the novel does not privilege that reading over another, and I would underline that, although the role of the man in the novel is not clear, the narrator overtly tells the reader that the perforations are aimed at verifying a principle:

> *On the plain behind him are the wanderers in search of bones . . . and they cross in their progress one by one that track of holes that runs to the rim of the visible ground and which seems less the pursuit of some continuance than the verification of a principle, a validation of sequence and causality as if each round and perfect hole owed its existence to the one before it there on that prairie . . . . He strikes fire in the hole and draws out his steel. Then they all move on again.* (355; emphasis in the original)

The narrator, then, devotes the concluding words of the novel to stressing the difficulty of proving meaning. Indeed, "verification" and "validation" are the operative words in this section. Like the man, the narrator tries to authorize meaning, only to fail miserably. No such authentication is attained in *Blood Meridian*; it remains elusive. Still, he keeps trying: like the figures in the epilogue, he moves on again, searching not for bones but for a voice that "speaks in . . . the bones of things" (124), to steal Holden's turn of phrase.

In conclusion, the hostile landscape of *Blood Meridian* is the stage not only for sanguinary wars but also for conflicts between contradictory ways of reading reality. Focusing on the construction of meaning, the novel deconstructs its supposedly authoritative nature. Yet, it challenges authorities on meaning more than meaning(s). What is negated, therefore, is not the existence of meaning or the significance of human lives, but rather the possibility of confidently verifying that meaning, of truly unveiling that significance, whatever it may be. Hungry for the assuagement of their epistemological qualms, the characters are tempted by various potentially valid interpretations of the world but are ultimately unsuccessful in reaching a consensus. Troubled by the same vexing questions and unable to fully commit to any paradigm, the strangely reticent narrator creates a hybrid text whose fragments do not fit together: his reach exceeds his grasp. Constantly "scanning the landscape for some guidance in that emptiness" (71), he is Sisyphus redux, forever doomed to carry uphill not one but several boulders – that is, several paradigms –, only to see them roll downhill forthwith. Failing to keep any of them from falling, he simply restarts the process. A novel of doubt and indecision, *Blood Meridian* explores the burden of seeking and making meaning.

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[1] Henceforth, I will use only page numbers for citations of *Blood Meridian*.

[2] It could also be ventured that this sentence recalls the opening of *Moby Dick*: "Call me Ishmael" (Melville 3). Both sentences are three words long, are in the imperative mood and refer to the protagonist. Nevertheless, Ishmael asserts his own identity; the kid is not given a name, and the narrator speaks for him. (*Blood Meridian* has, of course, been read several times in light of Melville's novel. See, for instance, Polasek 82-94). There are also echoes of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: the kid runs away from home in the fourth paragraph of McCarthy's novel, which, as a result, seems to start where Twain's ended, that is, when Finn decided to "light out for the Territory" (Twain 281), even though the kid's motives are not as "innocent" as Huckleberry's. (For further parallels between both novels, see Worthington). Wordsworth is also alluded to at the beginning of *Blood Meridian*: "All history present in that visage, the child the father of the man" (3). For Sean Pryor, "[t]he introductory portrait of that child ends with an ironic reference to Wordsworth that separates the time of poetry from the time of this novel, a time when childhood wonderment could survive into adulthood from a time when that innocence is always already lost" (30). What all these references share in common is that they encourage comparisons that bare the kid's shortcomings.

[3] For a Gnostic reading of the novel, see, for example, Daugherty 122-33 and Mundik, "This Luminosity" 196-223.

[4] In McCarthy's draft of *Whales and Men*, a comparable claim is put forward: "What argument could you advance for the principles of logic that did not presuppose them?" (qtd. in Monk 2).

[5] For a brief account of different readings of the epilogue, see Busby 282-90.

Drowned Angels and Watery Graves: Representations of Female Suicide in Victorian Art

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Abstract

The theme of the fallen woman finding salvation in death was a popular topic in Victorian art and literature, especially during the mid-Victorian era. From the fiction of Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens to realistic paintings, the myth of the fallen woman had a strong presence.

In this article, I will focus on artistic representations of the fallen woman, such as John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* and Augustus Egg's *Past and Present* triptych and discuss the importance of Williams Shakespeare's Ophelia and Thomas Hood's poem "The Bridge of Sighs" for the conception of this mythical figure. I will also argue that, despite these artists' efforts to mercifully portray the fallen women, in the end, they reinforced a Victorian patriarchal discourse, which regarded women as physically and intellectually weaker than men, while mythologizing this transgressing figure, created in order to remind all women of the fate they could expect if they defied the idealized conception of femininity imposed by society.

Key words: fallen woman; Ophelia; Victorian culture; visual representations; death; suicide.

Resumo

A figura da mulher caída que encontra redenção na morte era um tema popular da arte e literatura Vitorianas, especialmente em meados desta época. Desde a ficção de Thomas Hardy e Charles Dickens até aos quadros realistas da época, o mito da mulher caída é mencionado com grande ênfase.

Neste artigo, analisarei representações artísticas da mulher caída, tais como *Ophelia* de John Everett Millais e a colecção *Past and Present* de Augustus Egg, e aludirei à importância de Ofélia de William Shakespeare e do poema "The Bridge of Sighs" de Thomas Hood, na concepção desta figura mítica. Também argumentarei que, apesar dos esforços destes artistas

em representarem esta mulher de uma forma misericordiosa, acabaram por reforçar o discurso patriarcal Vitoriano, que considerava as mulheres fisicamente e intelectualmente mais fracas do que os homens, ao mesmo tempo que mitificaram esta figura transgressiva, criada para lembrar todas as mulheres do destino que as esperava se desafiassem a concepção idealizada de feminilidade imposta pela sociedade.

Palavras-chave: mulher caída; Ofélia; cultura Vitoriana; representações visuais; morte; suicídio.

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In the nineteenth century, an idealized vision of the female emerged. A vision sustained by the ideology of separate spheres[1] and the cult of domesticity,[2] it held a dominant place in the Victorian public discourse. Thus, the Victorian conception of femininity was centred on family, motherhood and respectability. The woman ended finding herself "trapped" in the private sphere of the house, a place where everyone expected her to be a provider of love, a caring mother to her children, and a figure of purity and chastity who unconditionally loved and supported her husband, submitting to his every wish and desire.

In other words, the Victorian woman was expected to be a domestic goddess, the perfect angel in the house.[3] Any woman who defied the role imposed by the Victorians found herself ostracised by society. If her sexual indiscretions were discovered, she was branded a fallen woman.

The Victorians were obsessed with the figure of the fallen woman. As Nina Auerbach explains,

> the fallen woman, heartbreaking and glamorous, flourished in popular iconography . . . . . Her stance as galvanic outcast, her piquant blend of innocence and experience, came to embody everything in womanhood that was dangerously, tragically, and triumphantly beyond social boundaries. (150)

Therefore, a myth created "by a neurosis of a culture that . . . feared female sexuality and aggression" (Auerbach 157) emerged: once a woman lost her virtue, she became a pariah, whose fall must end in death. The figure of the fallen woman was then created "by the Victorians to serve a moral purpose – to remind women of the disgrace and demise (moral, social, and economic) of sexually transgressive women" (Rhodes 12).

The trope of the fallen woman embracing her death was a popular topic in Victorian art and literature. Victorian painters, such as John Everett Millais[4] and

George Frederic Watts,[5] represented this woman in their masterpieces. However, instead of criticizing her actions, there was an attempt to depict her in a compassionate manner since they "recognized the complex emotions within the fallen woman and her situation" (Lee, "Fallen Women in Victorian Art", n. pag).

In Victorian London, the perception of females as submissive, helpless, and emotional creatures, prone to madness and hysteria was widely spread.[6] Despite the fact that more men than women would end up committing suicide, there was a feminization of suicide in the nineteenth century.

The Victorians "wanted and expected suicide, like madness, to be a 'female malady'" (Gates 125) because of pre-conceived ideas of female mental fragility and instability. For this reason, there are far more Victorian representations of female suicide in both literature and the visual arts than male suicide. In several of these representations, "suicide by water . . . was the way most visual artists and many writers of the Victorian era imagined female suicide" (Gates 135).

The fascination with female drowning is related to the power of the patriarchal society. As Meessen claims, "the woman floating towards oblivion, slowly letting herself be submerged in water, was an object rather than agent" (38). Drowning was beheld as a passive and non-violent way of ending one's own life, as opposed, for example, to a bloody death, such as shooting oneself, where agency was needed. Thus, "the Victorian iconography of female suicide by drowning can be regarded as an important discourse, through which such ideas [of female passivity] were propagated" (Meessen 104).

The portrayal of a fallen woman was easily recognized in the arts since "women at the water's edge had a particular resonance for Victorian audiences; they carried connotations of prostitution and self-destruction" (Cooper194). In the visual arts, death by self-drowning is associated with feminine madness, love melancholy and transgression. As Gates argues, "if men had been their main reason to exist . . . losing them meant indifference to life" (131).

Moreover, it is also associated with the idea of baptism. Given that death by water was connected with the washing away of the sins, after falling into deadly waters, a sinful woman was pure again. Therefore, a fallen woman could only find redemption in a watery grave. In the end, "the drowned corpse after the event,

becomes a signifier of transgression, death and moral redemption" (sic) (Edmonds-Dobrijevich 123).

One of the most famous visual representations of female suicide by drowning is John Everett Millais's *Ophelia* (1851-1852), which was inspired by William Shakespeare's Ophelia from the play *Hamlet* (1609).[7]

Figure 1. John Everett Millais (1829–1896), Ophelia, c.1851-1852, Oil paint on canvas. © Tate Britain

Throughout *Hamlet*, Ophelia is mistreated, used by her family and by her lover, Hamlet. Too obedient, she makes no attempts to stand up for herself and passively accepts the patriarchal pressures. Ophelia's lack of agency ends up being her downfall. After losing, physically and emotionally, two of the most important men in her life, Ophelia is overtaken by madness and no longer is interested in the world of the living. Consequently, when she falls into the waters of the brook, Ophelia offers no resistance, passively accepting her fate for the last time.

In his painting, Millais captures the moment of Ophelia's death. In the representation, *Hamlet*'s tragic heroine is submerged in the waters of the brook; a garland made of "crownflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples" (Shakespeare 4.7.165) floats by her side. Millais incorporates in his visual interpretation of the scene the beauty and serenity of Ophelia's death narrated by Gertrude to Laertes and King Claudius.

Although it may depend on one's interpretation, several allusions to Ophelia losing her virginity can be found in the play. After madness emerges, Ophelia intones a ballad which tells the story of a young maiden who is seduced:

> To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
> All in the morning betime,
> And I a maid at your window,
> To be your Valentine:
> Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes
> And dupp'd the chamber door;
> Let in the maid, that out a maid
> Never departed more. (4.5.49-55)

The girl in the song mirrors Ophelia's condition – she too has lost her innocence. In the midst of singing ballads about love, sex and death, Ophelia offers flowers to those around her, an act that can suggest a symbolic deflowering. Additionally, the interpretation of the flowers chosen by Ophelia to weave the garland, and later reproduced in Millais's painting, can be read as an indication of the young woman's fall:

> There is a willow grows aslant a brook
> That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.
> There with fantastic garlands did she come
> Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
> That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
> But our cold maids do "dead men's fingers" call them. (4.7.162-167)

The symbolism of the flowers intertwines with Ophelia's character and fate. Symbolically, crowflowers, better known nowadays as buttercups, stand for childishness – in a sense, a childish innocence could still be perceived in Ophelia's behaviour and actions, especially as the madness takes over. Nettles represent the young woman's pain – a pain which emerged from the grief of being abandoned. Daisies are the symbol of innocence and purity.

However, intertwined with long purples, also known as wild orchids, which signify sexual love, they make Ophelia's loss of purity implicit. Besides, the weeping willow not only represents melancholy and mourning, but also forsaken love. As most fallen women, Ophelia has been abandoned by her lover.

In his representation, Millais added other flowers to the scene (forget-me-nots, which carry their meaning in the name; red poppies, a symbol of sleep and death; violets, representing "modesty and humility," which "appealed to the Victorian's

notion of [the] ideal woman" (Kirby 70); and fritillary, a symbol of sorrow), transforming a beautiful scene into a mournful and tragic one.

Furthermore, when Gertrude narrates Ophelia's poetic death, the queen compares Ophelia to a mermaid, a symbol of sexual deviance:

> Her clothes spread wide,
> And mermaid-like a while they bore her up,
> Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds
> As one incapable of her own distress,
> Or like a creature native and indued
> Unto that element. But long it could not be (Shakespeare 4.7.172-177)

Not only does Gertrude say Ophelia looked "mermaid-like" and a "creature native," but Ophelia chanting "snatches of old lauds" (4.7.174), while slowly drowned, reinforces the comparison. In Victorian culture "the image of [the] mermaid was pervasive . . . symbolizing fear of feminine sexuality and dramatizing the "otherness" of women" (Cooper 192).

In their many representations, both mermaid and fallen woman "shared a watery setting . . . put their bodies on display . . . [and] were the objects of judgmental gaze, although that judgement could range from condemnation to pity" (Cooper 194). Thus, the mermaid and the fallen woman are perceived as counterparts.

According to Ann Thomson and Neil Taylor, Ophelia ends up representing "a powerful archetype in which female insanity and female sexuality are inextricably intertwined" (Shakespeare 27). She is the archetype of the fallen woman in the mid-Victorian era.

In 1844, Thomas Hood's famous poem "The Bridge of Sighs" was published. The poem describes the death of a fallen woman. After being thrown out of her home after an illegitimate pregnancy, she decides to end her life by throwing herself from Waterloo bridge.[8] Cleansed by the waters of the Thames, "all that remains of her / now is pure womanly" (Hoods 19-20).

In *Passages from the Poems of Thomas Hood* (1844), Millais's colourless illustration depictures this young fallen woman standing on the bank of the Thames. In the illustration, a tall bridge stands behind the fallen angel. As Barbara Gates argues, "in visual arts the Thames and its bridges came to represent the end of the line for such desperate women" (138).

Inspired by the tragic figure of Ophelia and Hood's poem, many painters blended and brought to life these two poetic and emotional scenes, creating vivid and realist paintings of the tragedy which encompassed the fallen woman.

George Frederic Watts's *Found Drowned* (1849-50)[9] depicts a lost Victorian Ophelia driven to a watery suicide. The painting shows the body of a woman lying stretched out on the shores of the Thames, beneath Waterloo Bridge.
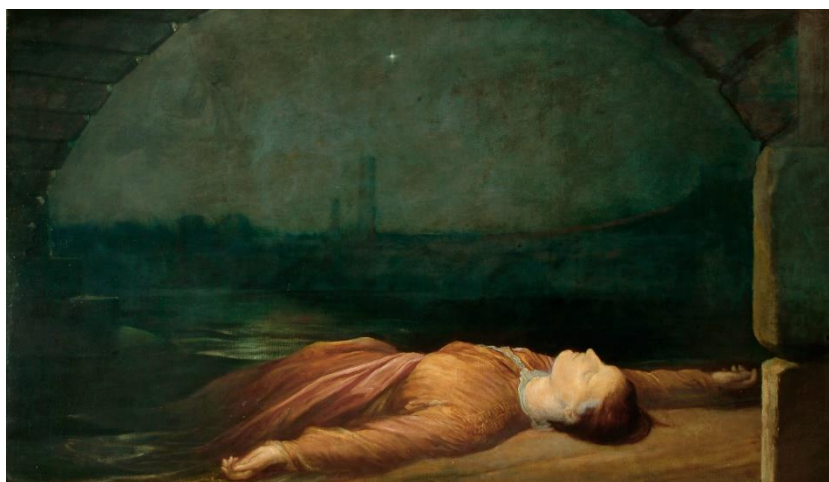

Figure 2. George Frederic Watts (1817–1904), Found Drowned, c.1848-1850, Oil on canvas. © Watts Gallery Trust

In the gloomy sky of industrialized London, a glowing star shines down on the dead fallen woman, the only source of light in the dark hues of the painting. The locket in her hand suggests unrequited love or the abandonment of a lover. In Watt's painting, there is religious symbolism: the fallen woman in stretched in a Christ-like form. She has become a martyr to Victorian morality. This scene is echoed in the third painting of Augustus Leopold Egg's[10] 1858 series, *Past and Present* (1858).[11]

Inspired by W. Holman Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience* (1853, oil on canvas, Tate Britain, London), Augustus Leopold Egg's *Past and Present* triptych represents the downfall of a bourgeois family. It follows the discovery of a wife's infidelity by her husband and the aftermath.

In the first panel, the husband discovers the wife's betrayal. The woman lies on the floor, while the husband stares at her with a letter, presumably from her lover, clutched in his hand. Near the woman, lies half an apple.[12] As Eve, the wife is being cast out from a haven. The open doorway reflected in the mirror foreshadows the wife and mother's exile into the unknown streets of London. Like the house of cards the children were building, the family house is collapsing.

In the second painting, set several years later, the two girls are comforting each other. Their father has passed away, leaving them orphans. Although their mother is still alive, the girls are all alone since Victorian law denied maternal custody rights. As John Stuart Mill wrote "even after he [the husband] is dead she is not their [the children's] legal guardian unless he by will has made her so" (Mill 161). Through brush strokes, Egg recriminates the Victorian society that judges the children for the mother's "crimes."

In the final scene of the triptych, the woman is under the Adelphi arches, a common place for prostitution and criminality at the time. In her arms, covered by a shawl, she holds the child born of her infidelity.

Figure 3. August Leopold Egg (1816–1863), Past and Present, No. 3, c.1858, Oil paint on canvas.
© Tate Britain

On the wall behind the fallen woman, there are three posters advertising plays with suggestive titles: *Victims, A Cure for Love*, and *Return the Bride.* All the plays,

> contain the structural components of . . . complicated, almost farcical, plot; unexpected encounters; jilted lovers; misconstrued actions; mixed-up packages; and happy resolution . . . . Each play depicts people trapped in unhappy marriages and comments upon the possible reasons and consequences of such mismatched unions. (Rutherford n. pag.)

Not only does Egg reveal that his sympathies lie with this woman (he places the poster with the word "victims" written on it above her and the bastard child), but he unveils

the reality of the institution of marriage: the marital happiness propagated by the Victorian discourse was a farce; most women who were forced to marry young lived unfortunate and despondent lives.

In this painting, the fallen woman is staring at the moon, a symbol of "virginity and chastity . . . partly through its connection with virgin goddesses [Artemis or Diana] and partly because its light is cold" (Ferber 130), as if she is waiting for the river waters to rise and wash her away – "if the tide is out of for the moment, it will not be for long; the woman's beloved moon will see to that" (Gates 139). As Ophelia, the woman passively accepts her fate and waits for the tide to come and wash her away, in hope of finding in death the expiation she could not find in life.

Abraham Solomon's[13] *Drowned! Drowned!* (1860, unknown) takes its title from Laertes exclamation when Gertrude first tells him of his sister's death.[14] It represents the moment the body of the drowned woman is discovered. Echoing Hood's poem, in the lithographic reproduction, the female body is carefully lifted by a woman. A bullseyes lantern illuminates the beautiful face of the corpse.

Diverging from his contemporaries, Solomon included in the painting the man who ruined the young woman's life. While society judged and condemned any woman who dared to defy the ideal of Victorian Respectability, men did not see their transgressions punished, therefore maintaining their social position. Near the man, stands his new conquest, who is unaware of the drowned Ophelia; unaware that she may be the next woman dragged from the river waters lifeless.

On the whole, the bodies of the drowned angels are surrounded by an aura of peacefulness and quietude. There is a magnificence covering the ugliness of death – in death, beauty and innocence are once more restored; in death these "sinners" find salvation, becoming again angelic figures.

The authors of the visual representations explored in this essay did choose to view and depict the fallen woman favourably. However, in their attempts to make society more receptive and compassionate towards a figure which defied the female ideal and Victorian conceptions, they ended up reinforcing the stereotype of the fallen woman, as well as the patriarchal discourse on gender roles.

Instead of dispelling the belief that females were feeble, passive and submissive figures, they strengthened the myth "invented by the Victorians in order to remind all

women of the eventual demise and death of those who could be categorized as sexually transgressive and threatened to destabilize male order" (Meessen 23).

Through the exposition of the galvanic bodies, Millais, Watts, Egg and Solomon created an iconography that exalts the fallen woman, but which did nothing to change the conception built around the image of the subservient female intrinsic to the Victorian patriarchal discourse.

As a matter of fact, they reinforced the patriarchal discourse. These representations forced women to embrace the idealized conception of femininity imposed by a patriarchal society since they perpetuated the myth that any woman who defied Victorian order – any woman who was sexually transgressive – would end up in the cold waters of the Thames.

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[1] The ideology of separate spheres dictated a woman's place was in the private sphere, in the sphere of the home and family life.

[2] The cult of domesticity became "more widespread in the nineteenth-century" because "more people among the expanded middle class had greater resources to practice the domestic ideal" (Davidoff and Hall xx).

[3] "The Angel in the House" is a narrative poem written by Coventry Patmore, published in 1854. Inspired by Patmore's marriage with his wife Emily, the poem describes the ideal happy marriage. This concept can be found in the third canto "The Lover," where the wife is perceived as a spiritual figure, and as a mean of getting closer to God. The term was widely used to describe the perfect Victorian middle class housewife.

[4] John Everett Millais (1829–1896) was an English painter. He was one of the founders of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He was well-known for his landscape and portraiture paintings. Apart from *Ophelia*, some of his most famous works are *The Blind Girl* (1856) and *The Boyhood* of Raleigh (1870).

[5] George Frederic Watts (1818–1904) was an English painter associated with the symbolist movement. A versatile painter, he became known for *The Wounded Hero* (1837) and *Hope* (1886). He was considered to be the greatest painter of the Victorian era.

[6] In the nineteenth century, female madness was intrinsically connected with her sexuality.

[7] As Gail Marshall writers in the synopsis of *Shakespeare in the Nineteenth Century* (2012), it was "in the nineteenth century [that] Shakespeare achieved the status of international pre-eminence that we recognize today." Hence, since Shakespeare was extremely popular with the Victorian audience, it is not surprising that Ophelia was the subject of so many Victorian painters.

[8] In the 19th century, Waterloo Bridge was popularly known as the Bridge of Sighs because many people chose to commit suicide there.

[9] Watts took the painting's tittle from a regular column in the *Time New Paper* where it was listed the number of women that committed suicide by self-drowning.

[10] Augustus Leopold Egg (1816–1863) was an English painter. He belonged to The Clique, a group of artists created in the 1830s which rejected the academic high art in favour of genre painting. He was interested in moral themes, as perceived in the diptych *The Life and Death of Buckingham*.

[11] Egg's triptych was displayed with the quote: "August 4th - have just heard that B_ has been dead more than a fortnight, so his poor children have now lost both parents. I hear she was seen on Friday last near the Strand, evidently without a place to lay her head. What a fall hers has been!"

[12] In the Christian tradition, the apple signifies the loss of innocence.

[13] Abraham Solomon (1823–1862) was a realist English painter. He became famous through works such as *Contrast* (1855), *Waiting on the Verdict* (1857) and the controversial *First Class – The Meeting* (1854), which he later revised.

[14] "Drowned? Oh, where?" (Shakespeare, 4.7.161).

O Medo do Desconhecido: Uma Análise Comparada entre "The Outsider" e "The Fall Of The House Of Usher"

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Resumo

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) e Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) podem ser considerados dois dos maiores escritores da ficção de terror ou horror. Se, por um lado, os dois autores deixaram uma considerável variedade de textos ficcionais pertencentes ao âmbito da literatura de terror, por outro lado, foram também os responsáveis pelo estabelecimento de bases teóricas essenciais para a sua consolidação e o seu estudo. De forma análoga, a influência de Poe no escritor de Rhode Island pode ser dividida em dois âmbitos: o da escrita de ficção e o da teoria estética. Tendo em vista a ficção lovecraftiana, "The Outsider" é um dos contos nos quais a influência de Poe aparece de maneira mais clara e diversificada. Neste conto, Lovecraft estabelece um diálogo com diversas obras de Edgar Allan Poe, em especial com as histórias das chamadas *Dark Ladies* - Berenice, Morella e Ligeia -, "William Wilson" e "The Masque of the Red Death." No entanto, é a sua aproximação com "The Fall of the House of Usher" que chama mais a atenção. Nesse sentido, partindo da consideração da influência de Poe em Lovecraft, este artigo tem como objetivo geral propor uma leitura comparada dos contos "The Fall of the House of Usher" e "The Outsider," tendo como base a consideração dos pontos de contato e das particularidades do terror de cada um dos escritores.

Palavras-Chave: Edgar Allan Poe; H. P. Lovecraft; "The Fall of the House of Usher"; "The Outsider"; terror.

Abstract

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) and Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) can be regarded as two of the greatest writers of terror or horror fiction. If, on the one hand, both authors left a considerable variety of fictional texts within the scope of the literature of terror, on the other hand, they were also responsible for establishing an essential theoretical basis for its consolidation and study. In a similar way, Poe's influence on the Rhode Island writer can be divided into two scopes: fiction writings and aesthetic theory. Considering Lovecraft's fiction, "The Outsider" is one of the tales in which Poe's influence appears more clearly and diversely. In this tale, Lovecraft establishes a dialogue with various works by Edgar Allan Poe, especially with the stories of the so-called Dark Ladies - Berenice, Morella and Ligeia -, "William Wilson" and "The Masque of the Red Death." However, it is his approach to "The Fall of the House of Usher" that draws the most attention. In this sense, starting from the consideration of Poe's influence in Lovecraft, the main goal of this article is to propose a comparative reading of the stories "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Outsider", based on the consideration of the points of contact and particularities of the terror of each of the writers.

Keywords: Edgar Allan Poe; H. P. Lovecraft; "The Fall of the House of Usher"; "The Outsider"; terror.

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Eternal brood the shadows on this ground,
Dreaming of centuries that have gone before;
Great elms rise solemnly by slab and mound,
Arch'd high above a hidden world of yore.
Round all the scene a light of memory plays,
And dead leaves whisper of departed days,
Longing for sights and sounds that are no more.

Lonely and sad, a spectre glides along
Aisles where of old his living footsteps fell;
No common glance discerns him, tho' his song
Peals down thro' time with a mysterious spell:
Only the few who sorcery's secret know
Espy amidst these tombs the shade of Poe.

Lovecraft[1]

Notas Introdutórias

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) e Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937) podem ser considerados dois dos maiores escritores da literatura de terror ou horror, não

somente pelo valor das suas próprias obras, mas também pela influência que exerceram em outros autores. Diferentemente de muitos escritores norte-americanos, H. P. Lovecraft nunca escondeu a sua admiração por Edgar Allan Poe e a contribuição do escritor de "The Raven" para a sua obra. Mais do que isso, Lovecraft foi um dos principais leitores da obra de Poe na primeira metade do século XX e, ainda hoje, o seu contributo é inegável dentro dos chamados "Poe Studies."

É possível distinguir a influência de Poe em Lovecraft em dois âmbitos principais: o primeiro diz respeito à sua própria obra ficcional, ao passo que o segundo reporta à sua teoria do terror, apresentada de maneira mais clara no ensaio intitulado "Supernatural Horror in Literature," publicado pela primeira vez em 1927. Se, por um lado, podemos identificar em muitos contos do escritor de Rhode Island a influência de Poe, por outro lado, o seu conceito de horror supernatural também estabelece um diálogo com a ficção e a não-ficção do autor de "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." A influência de Poe na obra de Lovecraft é tamanha – especialmente na primeira década da sua ficção considerada madura –, que S. T. Joshi chega a afirmar que, por exemplo, o conto "The Tomb" poderia ter sido escrito pelo próprio Poe (*Unutterable Horror* 2: 501).

Tendo em vista a ficção lovecraftiana, "The Outsider" é um dos contos nos quais a influência de Poe aparece de maneira mais clara e diversificada. Neste conto, Lovecraft estabelece um diálogo com diversas obras de Edgar Allan Poe, em especial com as histórias das chamadas *Dark Ladies* – Berenice, Morella e Ligeia –, "William Wilson" e "The Masque of the Red Death." No entanto, a sua aproximação com "The Fall of the House of Usher" chama mais a atenção. Nesse contexto, o presente artigo tem como objetivo fundamental realizar uma leitura comparada entre "The Fall of the House of Usher" de Edgar Allan Poe e "The Outsider" de H. P. Lovecraft com destaque para as particularidades do terror em cada uma das obras.

Terror *vs.* Horror

No ensaio "On the Supernatural in Poetry," publicado postumamente em 1826, Ann Radcliffe define as bases para a diferenciação entre o terror e o horror gótico. De acordo com a autora de *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, o sentimento ou efeito de horror é consequência de um choque direto do leitor com uma situação horrível, o que possivelmente causaria repulsa e nojo, paralisando-o. O sentimento de terror, por sua vez, decorre da possibilidade, mas não da efetiva observação do horrível. Por outras palavras, o terror gótico caracteriza-se por uma certa obscuridade no tratamento de eventos horríveis, ao passo que o horror gótico, pelo contrário, caracteriza-se justamente pela explicitação da violência desses eventos. A importância da obscuridade para provocar o terror já havia sido destacada, em 1757, por Edmund Burke em *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. Se, por um lado, no ensaio de Ann Radcliffe a obscuridade constitui o elemento capaz de distinguir o terror do horror gótico, por outro lado, no estudo de Burke o destaque dado a este elemento faz-nos perceber que o terror, e não o horror,

poderia levar ao sublime, sendo esta uma das maiores consequências da diferenciação terror-horror.

Nesse sentido, Burke destaca a correlação entre o sublime e o terror, afirmando ser este último o princípio dominante do primeiro (54). Apesar de usar ambos os termos, terror e horror, em sua definição do sublime, fica evidente que, se levarmos em consideração a distinção feita posteriormente por Radcliffe, Edmund Burke aproxima o sublime do terror e não do horror, o que é evidenciado pelo destaque dado à obscuridade. De acordo com o autor do *Enquiry*, a obscuridade é fundamental para fazer com que algo se torne terrível, argumentando que "when we know the full extent of any danger, when we can accustom our eyes to it, a great deal of the apprehension vanishes" (54).

A diferenciação terror-horror tende, contudo, a ser ignorada e, a partir do século XXI, especialmente depois do 9/11, o termo terror passou a ser visto como sinônimo de terrorismo. Contudo, é possível notar uma tendência para diferenciá-los até aproximadamente o início da década de 1980, quando encontramos importantes referências para um estudo independente do terror. Nesse contexto, encontramos autores que seguem a ideia geral proposta por Radcliffe, destacando o papel da obscuridade na obtenção do terror, como Devendra P. Varma, Peter Penzoldt e Stephen King. A diferenciação também foi considerada a partir dos objetos do terror-horror, como em Terry Heller: terror seria o medo de que algo nos acontecesse e horror o medo de que algo acontecesse a outrem. Na crítica contemporânea, destacam-se duas tendências: uma que ignora a distinção, seguida por David Punter, Fred Botting e Xavier Aldana Reyes, e uma que a reconhece, mas a despreza, representada por S. T. Joshi.[2]

A oposição terror-horror, no entanto, é fundamental para a consideração tanto da obra de Edgar Allan Poe quanto da obra lovecraftiana, sendo especialmente importante para um estudo comparado entre as obras de terror dos dois autores.

Da Estética Literária à Estética do Terror

Como já mencionado, a influência de Poe em Lovecraft pode ser notada em dois âmbitos, que, por sua vez, podem ser resumidamente definidos como o âmbito da escrita de ficção e o da escrita de não-ficção. Nesse sentido, em Lovecraft torna-se possível detectar um diálogo não somente com a obra ficcional de Poe, mas também com a sua teoria estética. No seu ensaio "Literary Composition" de 1920, por exemplo, o autor estabelece preceitos para a escrita literária de maneira semelhante ao que foi realizado por Poe no seu famoso texto "The Philosophy of Composition" de 1846. Em "Literary Composition," o criador do Cthulhu defende, entre outros aspectos, a unidade da obra, a importância de se ter em mente o desfecho do enredo antes mesmo de se começar a escrita e a valorização do sentimento a ser despertado no leitor através do texto literário. Lovecraft destaca, assim, a importância do que chama de "impressões sobre o leitor" ("Literary Composition" 44), numa referência quase direta ao conceito de efeito definido por Poe.[3]

Também a teoria do que Lovecraft denominou "weird tales" é claramente influenciada pelos textos teóricos e pela ficção de Edgar Allan Poe. Ambos os autores partem de uma ideia comum em relação a um elemento essencial ao efeito de terror: a obscuridade. De maneira semelhante, a base da teoria lovecraftiana do terror envolve o desconhecido, a obscuridade levada ao extremo, o que, segundo o escritor, é capaz de causar o mais terrível dos medos (Lovecraft, "Supernatural Horror" 82). Assim, para que uma literatura pudesse ser considerada como representante do verdadeiro "horror cósmico" (84), deveria explorar as mais variadas vertentes do desconhecido, sem, contudo, esgotá-lo.

De acordo com Lovecraft, o fato de a incerteza e o perigo estarem sempre coligados transformaria qualquer mundo num mundo desconhecido, repleto de perigos e possibilidades de desenvolvimento do *mal* (83). Deve sublinhar-se que, para H. P. Lovecraft, a ideia de mundo desconhecido não diz respeito, necessariamente, aos mundos da Literatura de Fantasia, como os criados por J. R. R. Tolkien, J. K. Rowling ou George R. R. Martin, mas sim à possibilidade da existência de algo maior, que escape ao entendimento humano, capaz de exercer forças e interferir na vida quotidiana. O desconhecido pode, então, abranger desde um mundo de forças não-humanas, satânicas ou alienígenas, até o mundo da morte, ou da possibilidade de existência de vida ou retorno *post mortem*.

Na literatura de terror, autores e leitores partilham mais ou menos o mesmo mundo desconhecido. Apesar de ser o responsável pela criação deste universo e de explorar as emoções que o medo do desconhecido pode causar, o escritor de ficção de terror não escapa às incertezas que o permeiam e, mesmo quando propõe algum tipo de solução para os mistérios em causa, esta não passa de mera especulação. Daí, por exemplo, uma das grandes diferenças entre a literatura considerada como pertencente ao género terror e a literatura do género detetive. Por mais que as personagens dos contos de terror tentem encontrar explicações lógicas para os eventos que narram ou vivenciam, a possibilidade da existência de algo inexplicável e sobrenatural geralmente mantém-se até o final das narrativas.

Nesse sentido, ao definir a sua noção de "weird tales," H. P. Lovecraft indica aspectos importantes da ficção de terror, afirmando, por exemplo, que o verdadeiro "weird tale" deve ter algo além de assassinatos secretos, sangue e pseudo-fantasmas cobertos em lençóis: "A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplained dread of outer, unknown forces must be present" (84). Aqui, encontramos alguns termos-chave para a compreensão da literatura de terror, como "unexplained dread" e "unknown forces." Estes termos vão ao encontro do forte papel desempenhado pela obscuridade na construção deste tipo de literatura e, para usar as palavras de Lovecraft, atuam na composição do que ele define como "half-told, half-hinted horrors" (85).

Das Profundezas do Castelo às Profundezas da Consciência: O "Outsider" como "Insider"

Tanto Poe como Lovecraft partem da ideia do terror causado pelo desconhecido; no entanto, cada autor orienta o terror para caminhos diferentes. Enquanto o escritor de

"Annabel Lee" traz o desconhecido para o nível da consciência humana, Lovecraft preocupa-se mais com a relação entre a humanidade e o universo. O próprio Lovecraft assumia esta postura, afirmando:

> Man's relations to man do not captivate my fancy. It is man's relation to the cosmos – to the unknown – which alone arouses in me the spark of creative imagination. The humanocentric pose is impossible to me, for I cannot acquire the primitive myopia which magnifies the earth and ignores the background. (qtd. in Joshi, *Lovecraft and a World in Transition*, n. pag.)

Nesse sentido, torna-se possível identificar uma espécie de movimento centrípeto, no caso do terror de Poe, e, inversamente, um movimento centrífugo, no caso do terror lovecraftiano, que se afasta da centralidade terrena e caminha em direção ao universo. Por sua vez, estes movimentos parecem ser materializados pelos próprios contos que são objeto de análise neste artigo, como se constatará a seguir.

"The Fall of the House of Usher" foi publicado pela primeira vez em 1839 no periódico *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. Em 1926, pouco menos de um século depois da publicação da história da família Usher, H. P. Lovecraft publicava "The Outsider" também num periódico, o *Weird Tales*. A aproximação deste conto com a escrita poesca era assumida pelo próprio escritor, que admitia que o conto representava o ápice da sua literal, ainda que inconsciente, imitação de Poe (qtd. in Joshi, *Unutterable Horror* 2: 501-502). O conto narra a história da escalada do narrador pela torre de um castelo que, afinal, era subterrâneo. Ao alcançar a torre, a personagem descobre estar ao nível do chão, descobrindo também que a sua presença causa terror e rebuliço entre os transeuntes. Durante o seu percurso entre as pessoas, o narrador refere-se à possível presença de um monstro e, ao deparar-se com um espelho, no final do conto, percebe que o monstro era, na verdade, ele próprio.

Durante a escrita de "The Outsider," Lovecraft já havia lido "The Fall of the House of Usher" e, possivelmente, toda a obra de Poe, pois, segundo S. T. Joshi, o primeiro contato do escritor de Providence com o escritor de Boston deu-se quando Lovecraft tinha apenas oito anos de idade (*Unutterable Horror* 2: 497). Mais do que isso, a história dos gémeos Usher era um dos "weird tales" preferidos de Lovecraft e influenciou outros contos do escritor, como, por exemplo, "The Rats in the Walls," considerado por Joshi como uma fusão entre "Usher" e "The House of the Seven Gables" de Nathaniel Hawthorne (*Unutterable Horror* 2: 502). Contudo, ainda que o autor de "The Haunter of the Dark" tenha afirmado que "The Outsider" era uma tentativa de imitação de Poe, o conto, pelo menos do ponto de vista do enredo, parece ir além da imitação, complementando a obra de terror de Edgar Allan Poe e dando voz à consciência de muitas das suas personagens masculinas. Nesse sentido, o narrador do conto de Lovecraft parece entranhar-se nas consciências dos narradores de "Berenice," "Morella" e "Ligeia," bem como de Roderick Usher, trazendo-as para o nível narrativo. O "outsider" é, na verdade, o "insider," sendo responsável pela exteriorização da consciência de várias personagens masculinas criadas por Poe. Além disso, o intruso, assim como os narradores criados por Edgar Allan Poe, confunde realidade com imaginação e imaginação com memória, confusão que contribui, muitas vezes, para a manutenção da obscuridade necessária ao efeito de terror.[4]

Se, por um lado, a narrativa revelada pelo *outsider* parece descrever a consciência de Roderick Usher, por outro lado, a sua jornada das profundezas para o mundo "normal" é comparável à trajetória de Madeline, que, depois de ser sepultada ainda com vida nas profundezas da casa de Usher, ascende ao mundo dos vivos para sucumbir, desta vez para sempre, juntamente com o seu irmão e a casa da família:

> There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold — then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her horrible and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had dreaded. (Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" 313)

O estado de Madeline é um indício das dificuldades por ela enfrentadas para escapar do seu túmulo na cripta da família para, enfim, chegar ao quarto do irmão numa atitude desafiadora. Essa ascensão, no entanto, acaba por conduzir Madeline ao seu derradeiro destino, sucumbindo juntamente com Roderick e a casa de Usher. De modo semelhante, a tumultuosa ascensão do "outsider" das profundezas do seu castelo leva-o ao decisivo confronto com a sua monstruosa e abominável identidade, sucumbindo, ainda que de modo não tão literal como Madeline.

Além disso, o castelo de "The Outsider" parece ser o reflexo invertido da casa de Usher vista pelo narrador, do lago, no início do conto. Também o sentimento causado pelo reflexo invertido da mansão ao narrador de "Usher" parece permear a narração de "The Outsider." Nesse sentido, no conto de Poe encontramos o seguinte trecho:

> I know not how it was – but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. . . I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down – but with a shudder even more thrilling than before – upon the re-modelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows. (299)

Ainda que de uma maneira não tão consciente quanto o narrador de "The Fall of the House of Usher," o narrador de "The Outsider" parece partilhar desta mesma "tristeza insuportável" em relação ao seu castelo-prisão, afirmando: "the castle was infinitely old and infinitely horrible" (164).

Conclusão

De um modo geral, não somente o castelo, mas também o próprio conto de Lovecraft parecem refletir inversamente "The Fall of the House of Usher." Enquanto, por exemplo, encontramos no conto de Poe movimentos descendentes, culminando, no final da história, com a queda da própria casa, em Lovecraft encontramos um movimento ascendente: o narrador sobe das profundezas para o nível do chão, escapando do seu estado claustrofóbico.

Nesse sentido, a história de Poe é permeada de imagens que indicam descidas, quer seja num sentido mais estrito, como quando as personagens masculinas descem até à cripta da família em função do sepultamento de Madeline, quer seja num sentido mais genérico, através de pequenos atos dispersos no decorrer da história, como, por exemplo, o fato de o narrador, no início da narrativa, estar sempre a olhar para baixo para analisar o reflexo da casa de Usher no lago. Daí a presença constante de expressões como "down," "gazed down," "looking down," "made its way down," "sat down," "looked down" e "fell down." Em "The Outsider," por sua vez, encontramos uma abundância de expressões que indicam precisamente o oposto, ou seja, um movimento de subida, destacado pelo uso constante da palavra "up": "climb up," "crawling up," "dragged myself up" and "rush up." Ademais, a narrativa de Lovecraft encontra-se permeada de imagens que indicam ascensão, como se nota no seguinte excerto:

> And at last I resolved to *scale* that tower, fall though I might; since it were better to glimpse the sky and perish, than to live without ever beholding day. In the dank twilight I *climbed* the worn and aged stone stairs till I reached the level where they ceased, and thereafter clung perilously to small footholds leading *upward* (165, itálico meu).

Esses movimentos, descendentes e ascendentes, refletem as particularidades do terror de cada escritor: enquanto em Poe encontra-se um terror voltado para os instintos mais primitivos dos seres humanos, que, de acordo com o narrador de "The Black Cat," levariam à perversidade (532-33);[5] em Lovecraft somos transportados para um terror que está além do humano e, até mesmo, além do âmbito do universo, pelo menos como o conhecemos hoje. Nesse sentido, o final de "The Outsider" reforça a ideia da existência de algo desconhecido que ultrapassa não somente o conhecimento humano, mas também a própria humanidade.

Além disso, a frase inicial da último parágrafo da narrativa parece descrever tanto Poe quanto Lovecraft: "I know that I am an outsider, a stranger in this century and among those who are still men" (169). Se, por um lado, Lovecraft se refere a Poe no poema "In a Sequester'd Providence Churchyard Where Once Poe Walk'd" como um escritor que sonhava com séculos que já haviam passado, por outro lado, o próprio Lovecraft pode ser referido como um escritor que sonhava com séculos que ainda estavam por vir. Em ambos os autores, contudo, a manifestação das suas condições enquanto "outsiders" passa pela exploração das mais variadas vertentes de um mesmo objeto: o terror causado pelo desconhecido.

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[1] Lovecraft, "In a Sequester'd Providence Churchyard Where Once Poe Walk'd."

[2] Ver Heller, *The Delights of Terror*, King, *Danse Macabre*, Penzoldt, *The Supernatural in Fiction*, Punter, *The Literature of Terror*, Reyes, *Horror*, e Varma, *The Gothic Flame*.

[3] No ensaio "The Philosophy of Composition," de 1846, Poe define a sua noção de efeito como "impressões às quais o coração, o intelecto ou a paixão estão suscetíveis": "Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?" (698)

[4] Ao confundir realidade com imaginação, os narradores mantêm a dúvida característica da literatura fantástica, conforme Tzvetan Todorov: a oscilação real-imaginário (31). Por sua vez, esta oscilação colabora para a criação do efeito de terror, na medida em que deixa em aberto a possibilidade de que os eventos narrados não passem de meros devaneios dos narradores. Nesse sentido, tanto Poe quanto Lovecraft colocam o leitor diante do efeito de terror não somente através de um tratamento mais subtil dos momentos horríveis, mas também através do questionamento da ocorrência real destes próprios momentos, mantendo, assim, uma certa obscuridade.

[5] Em "The Black Cat" vemos o narrador afirmar: "Of this spirit [spirit of perverseness] philosophy takes no account. Phrenology finds no place for it among its organs. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart – one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself – to offer violence to its own nature – to do wrong for the wrong's sake only" (532-33).

From Sin to Treatment: A Very Brief Survey of the Relationship Between Political Power and End-of-life Decisions in Western Societies

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Abstract

Death and the circumstances under which one dies have been one of the most prolific themes in literature, the arts, and science in Western societies. Up until now, end-of-life practices in the West have relied more on curative treatments than on palliative care. The legalization of intentional practices such as euthanasia and assisted-suicide, in particular, is still a highly controversial topic. All this may lead us to think that the preservation of life and the intrinsic value of human beings inform current medical and political paradigms.

In this article, I explore how Michel Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and biopower have foregrounded the way political power has expanded its scope from the juridical right to "make live or let die" to the power of promoting life or rejecting it. To Foucault, death is the most secret part of our private life; it is where power meets its limit, thus the need to control every aspect of it, especially end-of-life decisions. I also illustrate my brief survey with three true life stories that may help us question the extent to which the contemporary organization of medical care may or may not be instrumental to political power in fostering the loss of autonomy of an individual facing death.

Keywords: death; biopower; biopolitics; end-of-life practices; autonomy.

Resumo

A morte e as circunstâncias em que alguém morre têm sido um dos temas mais prolíficos na literatura, nas artes e na ciência, nas sociedades ocidentais. O final de vida nestas sociedades tem recorrido mais a tratamentos para curar do que a cuidados paliativos. A legalização de práticas intencionais tal como a eutanásia e o suicídio assistido continuam a ser um tema muito

controverso. Tendo tudo isto em conta, é de esperar que a preservação da vida e o valor intrínseco do ser humano estejam na base dos paradigmas que sustentam a ação médica e política.

Neste artigo, explora-se a forma como os conceitos de biopolítica e biopoder de Michel Foucault permitem entender a expansão do poder político do direito jurídico de "dar a vida ou deixar morrer" ao poder de promover ou rejeitar a vida. Para Foucault, a morte é a parte mais secreta da nossa vida; é onde o poder conhece o seu limite, daí a necessidade de controlar todos os seus processos, especialmente as decisões de término da vida. Serão ainda apresentadas três histórias de vida reais que nos poderão ajudar a questionar até que ponto a organização contemporânea dos cuidados médicos pode ou não ser instrumental para o poder político promover a perda de autonomia de um indivíduo prestes a enfrentar a morte.

Palavras-chave: morte; biopoder; biopolítica; práticas de término da vida; autonomia.

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On 14 January 1998, Ramon Sampedro sipped his drink mixed with cyanide using a straw and a cup left by his bed. He had been paralyzed from the neck down since he was 25 years old and had been bedridden for twenty-nine years. The next day a friend who had been helping him with his daily routine since he had moved to La Coruña, Spain, found him dead. In fact, his friends had videotaped his suicide as evidence of Sampedro's voluntary act and no foul play from their part. In the video, he can be heard saying "When I drink this, I will have renounced the most humiliating of slaveries: being a live head stuck to a dead body." Yet, in the eyes of the Spanish law, Ramon Sampedro and his friends had resorted to assisted suicide, an illegal practice in Spain. In the following days, one friend was even arrested but soon released. Some years earlier, though, Mr. Sampedro had fought in the courts to be helped to die but in vain.[1]

Real cases like Sampedro's may lead us to re-evaluate to what extent the contemporary organization of medical care concerning end-of-life decisions in Western societies is instrumental to political power in fostering the loss of autonomy of an individual facing death.

The controversy is not new, and the sciences and the humanities have offered numerous for and against arguments on the legalization of practices like euthanasia and assisted suicide. In early modern Europe, literary works like Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), for instance, offered an imaginary account of an ideal society where the terminally ill were granted the right to make their own end-of-life decisions. In

practical terms, patients were counselled on which end-of-life decision would be best: the medical care and comfort provided by palliative care or to deliberately terminate life through euthanasia or assisted suicide.[2] Both forms of self-killing should be pursued under the advice of ministers and officials, on the one hand, and the supervision of a physician, on the other.

It soon becomes apparent, however, that the latter option is strongly encouraged because the terminally ill person "is now unequal to any of life's duties, a burden to himself and others" (More 78). Also, if the individual decided to shun such third-party interventions and commit suicide, she or he would not be worthy of proper funeral rites and burial. The dignity of a person is, in fact, deeply tied to the maintenance of an ideal social order (Trousson n.p.). The need to control the body and, consequently, society has been central to the utopian imagination because utopian projects have treated death and illness either as a source of instability and disorder or as an issue that must conform to strict rules (Fortunati and Franceschi 186).

To Michel Foucault, on the other hand, death is the most secret part of our private lives; it is where power meets its limit, thus the need to control every aspect of it, especially end-of-life decisions (248). Foucault's concepts of biopolitics and biopower have foregrounded the way political power expanded its scope from the juridical right to "take life or let die" to the power of promoting life or rejecting it (241). Moreover, he argues that suicide in any of its forms – suicide, euthanasia, assisted dying – has been considered a crime because it imperils the right of political entities to decide who lives and who dies (Ryan et al. 45).

In the last two centuries, death and dying have become more of a medical and legal issue and less of a religious matter. And, in fact, the concept of euthanasia, or "well dying," has also changed from the Christian point of view of death as a blessing from God to the central role of the physician in the process of death. From the nineteenth century onwards, in particular, the medicalization of death has meant that doctors assist the individual in the act of dying and provide a painless death. Consequently, the process of dying has almost ceased to be a family event at home to become a medical event supervised in a hospital (Ryan et al. 46). Moreover, even though euthanasia and assisted suicide have been legalized in a few Western countries, some have argued that the legalization of self-killing practices may have less to do with individual autonomy than with contemporary forms of biopower.

First, it would be useful to go back in time in order to understand which events and worldviews gave rise to current assumptions on self-killing. Second, I will briefly discuss Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics. Third, some factors and arguments that influence how end-of-life decisions are legally, medically, and personally understood and dealt with nowadays will be discussed.

A Very Brief Genealogy of Self-killing

The ancient Greeks condemned acts of self-destruction, except in cases of acute physical or mental suffering. However, the Hippocratic Oath that still informs medical ethics today was also formulated in ancient Greece by Hippocrates. It condemned self-destruction or any assistance to the act of dying: "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make suggestions to this effect." Moreover, whereas Socrates accepted self-killing in some cases, Plato and Aristotle were against it. Notably, Aristotle based his views on the idea that the body belonged to the gods and to the state, thus the individual did not have the right to take his own life.

From their part, the Romans punished self-destruction with an exception made to the cases of *taedium vitae*, a state of mind similar to depression. This rule did not apply to slaves though, since they were considered property. The Stoics, on the other hand, had a very different standpoint: not only did they advocate the right of self-destruction, which should nonetheless happen after careful thought, but they did it with the help of a trained technician (Ryan et al. 44).

The Bible follows the Platonic tradition in the sense that the prevailing idea about life is that it belongs to God (Ryan et al. 3). In general, both the Old Testament and the New Testament depict self-killing only under special circumstances, namely when the individual disobeyed God's will and, thus, could not express his or her own regret except through death. In the fifth century, Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the founding fathers of the Church as we know it today, condemned self-killing on the grounds of the fifth commandment: "You shall not kill." He argued that taking one's life was a way of questioning God's authority, and that the consequences would be to have no funeral rites or burial.

In the thirteenth century, influenced by Saint Augustine of Hippo and Aristotle, Saint Thomas Aquinas posited that any form of suicide was against God and society. During the Middle Ages, Aquinas' viewpoint informed many practices and civil

penalties against self-killing: the individual who had killed himself or herself would have no proper burial and the family would lose all their property. The condemnation of self-killing acts has been passed down throughout the centuries and still underpins the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and Judaism in the twenty-first century (Ryan et al. 45).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the acceptance of practices of self-killing underwent another change. Until the end of World War II, ideas about euthanasia and assisted suicide were underpinned by Darwin's theories of evolution, especially under the guise of Social Darwinism, which was deeply linked to eugenics as well. However, the discovery of the horrific medical experiments that had taken place in the Nazi camps marked a shift in Western sensibilities. In addition, the growing secularization of traditional authority in the 1960s and 1970s granted right-to-die organizations leeway to rally around the civil rights of the terminally ill. This was also an age when the process of dying started to be prolonged due to technological advances and public debate around the autonomy of the individual re-emerged (Ryan et al. 46).

Notwithstanding, even though suicide, euthanasia and assisted dying have historically been perceived on the same moral grounds, more recently, the religious and the secular society's viewpoints have somewhat diverged. Medicine and secular law have shown more leniency towards self-killing (Ryan et al. 45). On their part, contemporary right-to-die movements have founded their claims on the dignity of the terminally-ill individual.

The Birth of Biopower and Biopolitics

Foucault's concepts of biopower and biopolitics have been used to foreground the role of institutions in the normalization of knowledge and correlate practices. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Foucault argues, political power began to exercise a specific kind of power, *biopower*, that targeted the human body. This *anatomo-politics* depended on a range of disciplinary techniques, such as the spatial distribution of individual bodies and organization of fields of visibility as well as the control over the bodies through exercise. In the second part of the eighteenth century, biopower expanded its scope of action from disciplinary to non-disciplinary technologies of power which, instead of controlling man-as-body, focused on controlling man-as-species (Foucault 243). The State arrogated itself the right to

control biological processes that affected the population as a whole, such as birth, reproduction, illness, and death. Consequently, from the nineteenth century onwards, political power is to be acknowledged the main regulator of biological processes such as fertility, birth, or death insofar as it has developed technologies of power, or a *biopolitics* of the population, meant to control those processes.

Even though biopolitics targets the "population as political problem," Foucault also saw it as a scientific problem (245). The creation of institutions to coordinate medical care, public hygiene, and the centralization of power would underpin the development of medicine at the end of the eighteenth century. This also implied the normalization of medical knowledge (244). In other words, medical discourse started to settle the limits of "normality," which, in turn, became fundamental to the disciplinary techniques of biopower: the "medical gaze" monitored and regulated the body and, therefore, aimed at controlling and transforming human life itself (Ryan et al. 45).

Regarding the processes of illness and death, in particular, Foucault writes that at the end of the eighteenth century, concerns around health issues no longer focused on illness as epidemics but on prolonged illnesses, which "sapped the population's strength, shortened the working week, wasted energy, and cost money, both because they led to a fall in production and because treating them was expensive" (Foucault 243-244). Illness and death merge into each other and become permanent threats to productive forces, hence to the emerging capitalist society. In fact, according to Foucault, biopower and capitalism cannot be understood separately since they depend on each other (Ryan et al. 43).

Assisted-dying Today

In contemporary Western societies, end-of-life practices have relied more on curative treatments than on palliative care or assisted dying practices. In fact, the legalization of intentional practices such as euthanasia and assisted-suicide is still controversial in many countries, while a few have already legalized them under specific circumstances. This may lead us to think that, in twenty-first-century Europe, the preservation of life and the intrinsic value of human beings informs current medical and political paradigms, which apparently contradicts the previous idea that someone's life is worth keeping as long as she or he is productive.

Foucault's analysis was deeply grounded in historical events that took place in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, therefore one should be careful about the trans-historical application of the concepts of biopower and biopolitics. However, this does not mean that they cannot be used as analytical tools to assess contemporary regulations and practices concerning life, death, and illness. In fact, it has been argued that the concepts of biopower and biopolitics have taken new forms in Western countries, and its consequences may not always be nefarious (Rabinow and Rose 6-7). Foucault himself suggested that "the great overall regulations that proliferated throughout the nineteenth century [...] are also found at the sub-State level, in a whole series of sub-State institutes such as medical institutions, welfare funds, insurance, and so on" (qtd. in Rabinow and Rose 7). In other words, power is often not directly exercised by the state, but it is allocated to subordinate institutions that decide over life and death.

One should not forget the role of bioethics both in the reiteration as in the questioning of laws. Laws and bioethics have concomitantly shaped contemporary medical practices in the last decades. As Rabinow and Rose put it, "it is worth remembering that medicine is perhaps the oldest site where one can observe the play of truth, power and ethics in relation to the subject, and to the possibilities of a good . . . life" (7). They also foreground the "bioethical complex" underlying this relationship: medical agents still hold the power to "let die" and decide the circumstances under which it should occur. And, what is more, they are backed by medical technology and political power (Rabinow and Rose 13).

Rabinow and Rose also observe that Western liberal societies have been forging new forms of individualization and autonomy grounded on the rights to "health, life and the pursuit of happiness that is increasingly understood in corporeal and vital terms" (17). Other theorists have also emphasized how, in the last decades, neoliberalism has come to shape its own values around personal autonomy: authority no longer emanates from the government but from the individual. Biopower has shifted to practices of self-regulation and self-discipline. Hence, the individual has become responsible for guaranteeing her or his own economically productive life. Concurrently, the governing of death has been greatly influenced by prolonged processes of dying and ageing population. To contemporary capitalist economies this represents a double burden: it not only entails the loss of productive forces but also an increase in health costs. It is not surprising, then, that debate around assisted dying practices such as euthanasia has gained new relevance (Ryan et al. 47).

Arguments in favour of pro-assisted dying have been grounded on the patient's dignity, autonomy, and power to control the "how and when" of his or her process of dying. Conversely, some of the arguments against it decry the danger of indiscriminate utilization and restrictions to the doctor's autonomy. Palliative care is presented as an alternative to assisted dying. Another argument against it claims that assisted dying practices represent an extension of the medicalization of death insofar as it is based on the normalizing power of medicine "to include suicide as a 'treatment' for terminal illness." In the end, only doctors and institutions can decide on the conditions of the treatment. In the Netherlands, for example, patients pursuing an assisted death must always follow the doctor's determinations (46). In countries where assisted dying is legal, there has been some contestation against the criteria used by doctors, institutions and the law that help define who is allowed to have access to assisted dying. For instance, in 2016, Canada legalized medically-assisted suicide for people with incurable illnesses and whose death was "reasonably foreseeable." However, the bill excluded people with mental illness. In spite of the new law, 27-year-old Adam Maier-Clayton, who suffered from Somatic Symptom Disorder, a mental disorder that caused his body to feel severe physical pain, and had been fighting for assisted suicide for years, was still excluded. On 13 April 2017, he eventually took his own life in a motel room, away from his parents and friends, in order to avoid any criminal prosecution.

Every once in a while, controversies and arguments around biopower and end-of-life decisions seem to crystallize in one single situation, as in the case of baby Charlie Gard. Charlie was born with DNA depletion syndrome, a rare condition fatal in infancy and early childhood. His doctors at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London claimed that his chances of survival were so low that, despite their best efforts, keeping Charlie on life support was not a realistic option and that their concern was to grant the baby a death in dignity. His parents thought otherwise and fought to be allowed to take him to a doctor in the United States to pursue an experimental treatment. The discord was taken to the courts, including the UK Supreme Court and the European Court of Human Rights in France, which, in the end, ruled against the parents and declared that the experimental treatment would be "futile." Consequently, the hospital was granted the right to discontinue Charlie's life support.

However, when it came to decide the circumstances under which Charlie was to die, the hospital, the judge, and the parents could not reach an agreement one more time. While the parents' final wish was to take the baby home, the hospital objected

and proposed a children's hospice as the best solution since "the risk of an unplanned and chaotic end to Charlie's life [was] an unthinkable outcome for all concerned and would rob his parents of precious last moments with him" ("Latest Statement on GOSH Patient Charlie Gard"). Public and medical opinions were deeply polarized as both parties founded their claims on different but equally valid grounds. Biopower is not always a nefarious force behind end-of-life decisions, as already pointed out. Yet Charlie's case, just like Ramon's and Adam's, has underscored that one of the greatest challenges of our time is the harmonization of its tenets with our renewed sense of autonomy.

Conclusion

Decisions concerning a good life also imply reflection on a good death. Self-killing, in particular, has been understood differently throughout the ages: from sin to crime, from crime to mental illness, and nowadays even a medical treatment (Szasz qtd. in Ryan et al. 46). According to Foucault's argument, biopower and biopolitics have shaped medical care and its normalizing gaze, making them fundamental to the control of biological processes like illness and death. End-of-life decisions, in particular, have been strictly controlled by laws, institutions, and doctors.

On the other hand, the issue of loss of personal autonomy in the face of end-of-life decisions, like euthanasia and assisted suicide, has re-emerged in the last decades. Ramon, Adam, and Charlie are only some of the people who have given a human face to the debate around the limits of the individual's autonomy in her or his process of dying.

To a great extent, the contemporary organization of medical care is still instrumental to political power in fostering the loss of autonomy of the individual facing death. However, changing conceptions of autonomy, the empowerment of individuals, and economic factors have granted leeway to the reassessment of the patient's role in the process of dying.

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[1] Film director Alejandro Aménabar recreated Sampedro's story in his film *Mar Adentro* (2004).

[2] More, a devout Catholic, was not in favor of such practices. In fact, he voices his own views on killing through Hytloday's reference to God's prohibition of self-slaughter early in the book: "God has forbidden each of us not only to take the life of another but also to take his own life" (More 22). Regardless of the method through which it is achieved, More could not accept suicide, which he considered the "wicked temptation." See *A Dialogue of Comfort Against Tribulation* (1534).

Confessar a Morte: a Poesia Política de Anne Sexton e Sylvia Plath

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Resumo

Este artigo procura destacar a relevância da análise política na obra de Anne Sexton e Sylvia Plath, explorando o tema da morte no contexto da poesia confessional surgida nos anos 50. Para tal, farei algumas considerações sobre a novidade que *Life Studies* de Robert Lowell trouxe à cena literária norte-americana, num momento em que uma nova ameaça militar e atómica da União Soviética pairava sobre a América. Na iminência de um apocalipse nuclear, a luta contra o comunismo legitimava-se através da política Macartista, uma nova estratégia isolacionista com o intuito de detetar o "enemy at home." Utilizarei conceitos como o de vigilância, de política da contenção e da morte da privacidade na análise comparada de uma seleção de poemas de Sexton e Plath, para demonstrar como as autoras subvertem o culto da domesticidade e a visão mítica da família americana, que se configurava como forma de preservação dos valores democráticos. Nesta sequência, pretenderei concluir que a poesia destas mulheres é, mais do que autobiográfica, iminentemente política. Por outro lado, tenciono propor que a poesia teve um papel fundamental para subverter o paradigma social da América da Guerra Fria, oferecendo ainda uma importante e renovada forma de entender a morte através da exploração do suicídio e das imagens do corpo dilacerado como metáfora atómica.

Palavras-chave: poesia confessional; Guerra Fria; Macartismo; domesticidade; morte.

Abstract

This paper intends to show the importance of a political analysis of Anne Sexton's and Sylvia Plath's poetry, exploring the topic of death in the context of confessional poetry in the 1950s. I will consider the breakthrough that Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* brought to the American literary scene, in a moment when a new Soviet, political and atomic threat hovered over America. In the eminence of nuclear fallout, the fight against communism explained the emergence of McCarthyism, a new isolationist strategy which aimed to detect the "enemy at home." I will resort to concepts such as surveillance, containment and the death of privacy in the compared analysis of a selection of poems by Sexton and Plath, in order to demonstrate

how both authors subverted the cult of domesticity and the mythical vision of the American family, which was a privileged way to preserve democratic values. Thus, I aim to evince that these women's poetry is not only autobiographical, but also imminently political. Ultimately, I suggest that this poetry had a preponderant role in subverting the Cold War American social paradigm, offering an important and renewed insight of death, by exploring suicide and images of the wounded body as an atomic metaphor.

Keywords: confessional poetry; Cold War; McCarthyism; domesticity; death.

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other women's bodies
are not our battleground
Rupi Kaur

Paranoia; Contenção

Em 1947, W. H. Auden publicava um poema cujo título passou a caracterizar as gerações vindouras, *The Age of Anxiety*. Os anos posteriores à Segunda Guerra Mundial, especialmente durante a década de 50 nos Estados Unidos da América, foram anos de contradições. Havia paz, estabilidade económica e oportunidades laborais e, consequentemente, sociais, para as mulheres e para os negros do pós-guerra, mas uma nova ameaça comunista da União Soviética pairava sobre o país e sobre o sistema capitalista americano. No rescaldo da guerra e tendo em mente o bombardeamento com armas nucleares de Nagasaki e Hiroxima orquestrado pelos Estados Unidos, a União Soviética não tardou a desenvolver a tecnologia necessária para construir as suas próprias armas nucleares. Cientes da possibilidade de serem atingidos por um ataque nuclear, os americanos preparavam-se, ingenuamente, para resistir a este ataque, construindo *bunkers* nas suas casas, açambarcando alimentos e delineando planos comunitários de evacuação. Na edição de agosto de 1959 da revista *Life* destacavam-se as fotografias de um casal que celebrava a sua lua de mel de catorze dias, ao estilo atómico, num abrigo antibomba recheado de comida enlatada. Duas semanas de "unbroken togetherness" era a ideia sugerida pela reportagem, representativa do sentimento de paranoia relativamente à insegurança da vida pública, que desconstruía promessas de privacidade e segurança. Nas escolas, as crianças eram instruídas com a projeção de *Duck and Cover*, um filme de 1951 explicativo dos passos a tomar em caso de ataque nuclear. Enquanto se preparavam para o cataclismo, foram-se desenvolvendo nos cidadãos americanos sentimentos de incerteza e vulnerabilidade

que, em muitos casos, viriam a causar implicações a nível de saúde mental e psicológica.

A América tinha de ripostar ao poderio militar da União Soviética; por isso, no início dos anos 50, o Senador Joseph McCarthy passou a encabeçar uma nova política anticomunista, o Macartismo. Face à possibilidade de um holocausto nuclear, tornava-se legítima a luta contra a disseminação do socialismo, em detrimento do capitalismo, o que fundamentava a intervenção americana a nível internacional numa luta que não era exclusivamente ideológica, mas também geopolítica, económica e militar. Esta nova política trouxe uma atmosfera de suspeita entre colegas, amigos e vizinhos que deveriam reportar qualquer indício de atividade não-americana, como argumentam Peter J. Kuznick e James Gilbert, autores que defendem que o principal efeito da Guerra Fria terá sido a nível psicológico:

> It [Cold War] persuaded millions of Americans to interpret their world in terms of insidious *enemies at home* and abroad who threatened them with nuclear and other forms of annihilation. Seeing the world through this dark, distorting lens and setting global and domestic policies to counter these fanciful as well as real threats was and is, then, the largest impact of the Cold War. (Kuznick e Gilbert 11, ênfase minha)

Esta foi, por isso, também uma época que viu emergir a ideologia da contenção, uma estratégia isolacionista cujo intuito era impedir a expansão da influência soviética, inicialmente formulada por Geoge F. Kennan no artigo "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," em 1947, o ano representativo do início da segunda vaga do "Red Scare," ou seja, do medo da ameaça comunista. Segundo Alan Nadal em *Containment Culture: American Narratives, Postmodernism, and the Atomic Age*, de acordo com esta ideologia, a família nuclear americana, o culto da domesticidade e a preservação da segurança nacional e dos valores democráticos eram preponderantes para ganhar a luta contra o comunismo. Assim, numa altura caracterizada pela incerteza, vigilância contínua e paranoia, ansiosos por retomar uma ideologia nacional de normalidade, quer o Macartismo quer a ideologia da contenção legitimavam uma intrusão da vida pública na vida privada. A crítica justifica, portanto, que perante este panorama de paranoia social e cultural, o momento tenha sido o mais apropriado para a emergência da poesia confessional, motivada pela mudança nos limites entre as esferas públicas e privadas. Se Michel Foucault já tinha defendido que através de instituições fundacionais do Iluminismo houvera uma interpenetração entre a vida pública e a vida privada, Deborah Nelson argumenta que com a Guerra Fria se perdeu a ilusão da existência de privacidade como um conceito estável (Nelson *Pursuing* xiii; 27). Ainda

que estas duas categorias já estivessem de certa forma interrelacionadas, a verdade é que, com a Guerra Fria e, especialmente, com a doutrina de McCarthy, a morte da privacidade e a dissolução da categoria do público na categoria do privado se agudizaram ainda mais.

Confessionalismo

Em 1959, M. L. Rosenthal cunhava o termo poesia confessional para descrever o novo estilo poético de Robert Lowell em *Life Studies*. Este estilo, contrariamente ao "New Criticism," violava as normas de decoro social ao lidar com temas como a doença mental, a violência doméstica, a sexualidade, a maternidade, o suicídio, a morte, entre outros temas então considerados polémicos. Assim, no panorama do pós-guerra surgia um novo estilo que parecia responder às ansiedades criadas pela morte da privacidade, afirmando-se como um estilo onde a confissão, a autenticidade e a vida pessoal eram expostas. Sylvia Plath, quando entrevistada por Peter Orr, exprimia o seu entusiasmo relativamente à poesia confessional: "I've been very excited by what I feel is the new breakthrough that came with, say, Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, this intense breakthrough into very serious, very personal, emotional experience which I feel has been partly taboo…"[1]

A poesia confessional é habitualmente caracterizada pela urgência das suas revelações, pelo tom conversacional e muitas vezes coloquial que exalta e pela intimidade e transparência que parece convocar no poema. Admitindo, portanto, que os elementos biográficos reverberavam nos poemas destes autores, a fronteira entre autor empírico e sujeito lírico era frequentemente desestabilizada. Contudo, de acordo com Melanie Waters, esta provocação é precisamente o objetivo da poesia confessional; no entanto, não se deve esquecer que poeta e eu poético não são sinónimos: "Part of the intention and the trick of confessional poetry is, of course, to evoke the perspective of an imagined speaker in terms so intimate, candid and persuasive that the reader falls into the trap of believing that the words of the poem are a direct translation of the poet's own grief." (Waters 379). Numa entrada do seu diário correspondente ao dia 1 de abril de 1956, Sylvia Plath escreve: "Be stoic when necessary & write – you have seen a lot, felt deeply & your problems are universal enough to be made meaningful – WRITE" (*The Journals of Sylvia Plath* 569). Ao mesmo tempo, na entrevista concedida a Peter Orr, afirmava que os seus poemas surgiam das suas experiências emocionais, apesar de acreditar no poder de manipular e controlar

estas experiências. Para Sexton, a identificação com a poesia confessional é também ela delicada, visto que Sexton rejeitava e assimilava, simultaneamente, o rótulo "confessional," como confirmamos na carta escrita a Stanley Kunitz: "At one time, I hated being called confessional and denied it . . . . Now I say that I'm the only confessional poet." (citado em Waters 381). Ainda assim, ambas as poetas foram desde cedo associadas ao confessionalismo por frequentarem as aulas de escrita criativa de Lowell em Boston, por tal como Lowell serem pacientes no hospital psiquiátrico McLean, na mesma cidade, e pela semelhança na composição lírica, marcada pela flexibilidade do esquema rimático.

Donas de Casa Desesperadas

Em 1955, no ano em que Plath se formava pelo Smith College, o candidato presidencial pelo partido democrata, Adlai Stevenson, proferia um discurso inaugural na mesma instituição, que viria a definir a ideologia doméstica da Guerra Fria. No discurso, Stevenson promovia a importância do "humble role of housewife" (Nelson "History" 29), exortando as jovens universitárias a investir no seu papel como esposas e mães, a maior contribuição da mulher para resolver os "great issues of our day" (29).

A ideologia doméstica dos anos 50 é, curiosamente, descrita por Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie que, reportando-se ao tempo coevo, mais precisamente 2014, escreve:

> We teach girls to shrink themselves, to make themselves smaller. We say to girls, "You can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man. If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him . . . ." Because I am female, I'm expected to aspire to marriage. I am expected to make my life choices always keeping in mind that marriage is the most important. Marriage can be a good thing, a source of joy, love and mutual support. But why do we teach girls to aspire to marriage, yet we don't teach boys to do the same? . . . We raise girls to see each other as competitors – not for jobs or accomplishments, which in my opinion can be a good thing, but for the attention of men. We teach girls that they cannot be sexual beings in the way boys are. (n. pag.)

Similarmente, a mulher americana dos anos 50 deveria ser inteligente e atrativa, confiante e submissa, deveria ter aspirações, sabendo, contudo, que as suas mais altas proezas eram o casamento, os seus filhos e a sua casa. A ideologia da domesticidade

foi interiorizada na sociedade como resposta aos sentimentos de ansiedade e incerteza vivenciados na época, pois, se o conceito de família estava interligado com a ilusória noção de segurança, o culto da domesticidade era entendido como uma forma de contenção política e social que, em última instância, seria uma forma de conter a própria ameaça comunista, como defendido por Alan Nadel (3; 117).

O culto da domesticidade encontrava o seu auge em 1959 quando, em resposta ao lançamento do Sputnik em 1957, o Vice-Presidente Richard Nixon e o Primeiro Ministro Soviético Nikita Khrushchev se encontraram na Exposição Americana em Moscovo, um encontro que se viria a designar como "Kitchen Debates" e se apresentava como: "The corner of America in the heart of Moscow" (Baldwin 160). Com um espetáculo de retórica que tinha como propósito convencer o inimigo ideológico, a União Soviética, da superioridade do sonho americano, os Estados Unidos encenavam os prazeres da cultura de consumo e do progresso da sua indústria no interior de uma cozinha representativa do lar familiar americano. Exaltando a liberdade de escolha das donas de casa americanas, enquanto mostrava o interior de uma cozinha a Khrushchev, Nixon, orgulhosamente, terá dito: "Americans were interested in making life easier for their *women*." [ênfase minha]. Quando Khrushchev retorquiu que os soviéticos não tinham a mesma atitude capitalista perante as suas mulheres, Nixon clarificou: "What we want to do is make easier the lives of our *housewives*" [ênfase minha].[2]

No poema "Housewife," de Anne Sexton, publicado em 1962, em *All My Pretty Ones*, lê-se nos primeiros verso: "Some women marry houses. / It's another kind of skin; it has a heart, / a mouth, a liver and bowel movements. / The walls are permanent and pink." Destes versos depreendemos o novo propósito da poesia confessional: desmantelar o discurso dominante que imperava na idealização do papel da mulher. Este novo estilo de poesia era não só, mas na sua maioria, escrito por mulheres. Os motivos que governavam os poemas? O dia-a-dia de uma mulher. O local? As suas casas. Ironicamente, legitimava-se a entrada na esfera privada com poemas que subvertiam o mito da domesticidade e o questionavam o papel da mulher na sociedade, como argumenta Deborah Nelson:

> Sexton, Plath, and Rich undermined the assumptions about the privacy of the home, its sanctuary from surveillance, and its nourishment of individual autonomy – that is, the foundations of the cold war discourse on privacy. Since the home of containment ideology was principally a metaphor and a contradiction, a figure of conformity as well as a libertarian individuality, exposing the metaphor of the ideal home as the

fantasy that it was meant undermining a cherished ideological bulwark against totalitarianism. (*Pursuing* 77)

Um dos poemas de Plath que melhor reflete este papel interventivo da poesia, numa época de ansiedade militar, recorrendo ao uso irónico da esfera familiar, é "Cut" (235-236). O poema data de 24 de outubro de 1962, provavelmente a semana mais intensa da Guerra Fria, quando a possibilidade de holocausto mundial esteve mais próxima, isto é, a semana da Crise dos Mísseis de Cuba. O poema começa com alguém, uma mulher na sua cozinha, que, em vez de cortar uma cebola, corta o seu próprio dedo:

> What a thrill -
> My thumb instead of an onion.
> The top quite gone
> Except for a sort of hinge
>
> Of skin,
> A flap like a hat,
> Dead white.
> Then that red plush.

Imediatamente a seguir a este equívoco, vemos uma miríade de soldados a correr que, no entanto, não se devem confundir com os soldados britânicos, pois parecem, neste contexto, tratar-se de soldados soviéticos: "A million soldiers run, / Redcoats, every one." Enquanto estes soldados correm, o sujeito poético indaga – "Whose side are they on?" – passando, imediatamente, para uma questão do foro pessoal: "O my / Homunculus, I am ill. / I have taken a pill to kill." Este é, portanto, um poema sobre o foro doméstico, mas também um poema sobre a morte. O deslize da faca estará relacionado com a tensão que se vivia em 1962. Por todo o poema, o sangue é representativo da temática da morte, destruição e violência masculina. Neste sentido, parece natural surgir um "Kamikaze man," o "Ku Klux Klan," a "Babushka" e referências ao projeto expansionista norte-americano, nomeadamente: "Little pilgrim, / The Indian's axed your scalp." Confirma-se, portanto, que existe uma fusão entre eventos privados – uma mulher cozinha – e eventos públicos – a história da carnificina americana, agudizada em 1962. Toda esta destruição provoca no sujeito lírico, uma mulher distinta da "angel in the house" idealizada por Coventry Patmore, um efeito devastador que o leva a tomar "a pill to kill."

Tal como sugerido acima, a morte é um tema privilegiado na poesia das duas poetas e ainda mais nas suas vidas, se considerarmos os suicídios de Sylvia Plath em

1962 e o de Anne Sexton em 1974. As duas poetas eram amigas, adversárias poéticas, colegas no hospital psiquiátrico McLean e alunas das aulas de escrita criativa de Robert Lowell. Em *Live or* Die, a coletânea que confirmou Sexton como vencedora do Prémio Pulitzer para a poesia em 1967, consta um poema intitulado "Sylvia's Death" (126-128), composto no dia 17 de fevereiro de 1962, seis dias após a morte de Plath. No poema, Sexton acusa Sylvia de esta a abandonar, de lhe roubar uma morte que, por ter sido falada e discutida entre ambas, pertencia às duas:

> Thief!—
> how did you crawl into,
>
> crawl down alone
> into the death I wanted so badly and for so long,
>
> the death we said we both outgrew,
> the one we wore on our skinny breasts,
>
> the one we talked of so often each time
> we downed three extra dry martinis in Boston,
>
> the death that talked of analysts and cures,
> the death that talked like brides with plots,
>
> the death we drank to,
> the motives and then the quiet deed?

A morte, no entanto, não é motivo de lamento, mas de celebração. No poema, o sujeito poético não faz o luto da morte, mas brinda à morte. Sexton engrandece a morte como a forma mais eficaz de ultrapassar a perda a nível pessoal. Reportando-nos à vida pessoal de ambas as escritoras, Anne Sexton terá trivializado novamente o suicídio de Plath, ao referir-se ao sucedido como uma manobra artística, mencionando que a sua morte tinha sido "[a] good career move" (citado em Rollyson 1). Mas este engrandecimento da morte é também a solução para ultrapassar uma crise mundial gerada pela tradição belicista que despojara os americanos dos seus compatriotas na Segunda Guerra Mundial e, mais proximamente, na Guerra do Vietname, onde o número de perdas, em 1973, apontava para cerca de sessenta mil combatentes mortos. A celebração da morte é, em última instância, ironicamente encenada como grito inconformista ao mundo da domesticidade, no poema referido sarcasticamente como o mundo de "skinny breasts" e "brides with plots."

O mesmo impulso para a morte reaparece no poema de Sexton, "Imitations of Drowning" (107-109), onde o sujeito poético justifica o afogamento, imagem popularizada na literatura e artes plásticas para representar o sofrimento feminino, como estratégia para combater a solidão da dona de casa:

> Fear
> of drowning,
> fear of being that alone,
> kept me busy making a deal
> as if I could buy
> my way out of it
> and it worked for two years
> and all of July.

Sexton, tal como Plath, não se conformava com a expectativa de género que a sociedade lhe impunha. Num mundo em que Marilyn Monroe era um ícone de feminilidade, como explicado por Kathleen Spivack – "She [Marilyn Monroe] was beautiful and smart, but knew enough to play dumb." (172) –, a perspetiva de uma mulher com aspirações do foro laboral era vista como uma transgressão do conceito de masculinidade. Com o retorno dos soldados da Segunda Guerra Mundial, as mulheres deveriam agora regressar às suas casas, abandonar as oportunidades laborais que tinham alcançado, deveriam agora casar, permanecer nas suas casas, cuidando dos seus filhos e maridos. O conflito interno que acabo de descrever é espelhado no poema supramencionado, na imagem de uma mulher que tenta ocupar o seu tempo com pensamentos mortais, porque outro tipo de pensamento, racional ou intelectual, estava a cargo do marido.

Na poesia de Plath a imagem da dona de casa em revolta, no panorama doméstico, é transmitida pela mulher mecanizada e desmembrada que surge num poema como "An Appearance" (189): "From her lips ampersands and percent signs / Exit like kisses" e, ainda, "How her body opens and shuts – / A Swiss watch, jeweled in the hinges!" A mulher mecanizada, ou melhor, "A living doll" com "rubber breasts," reaparece no poema "The Applicant" (221-222) a ser entrevistada (como se se candidatasse a um emprego) para a tarefa de "To bring teacups and roll away headaches." Os requisitos necessários são os que se seguem: "It is waterproof, shatterproof, proof / Against fire and bombs through the roof" e ainda "It can sew, it can cook, / It can talk, talk, talk." Mas, se estes poemas exploram a revolta contra o padrão de género através do humor, o poema "Lady Lazarus" (244-247) vai explorar a mesma ansiedade através da mulher demoniacamente vingativa. O poema, cujo

enredo é de vingança, com claros ecos de T. S. Eliot, Coleridge e Baudelaire, recorre à mitologia bíblica de Lázaro, aquele que depois de quatro dias morto foi ressuscitado por Jesus. Contudo, o leitor depara-se com uma versão feminina deste mito, em rebelião contra a masculinidade opressiva representada pelo "Herr Doktor," "Herr Enemy" e "Herr God, Herr Lucifer." Lady Lazarus é uma figura alegórica que encena o espetáculo dela própria, assumindo diversos papéis, como opina Britzolakis (*Mourning* 155): a atriz, a prostituta e a mulher mecânica. A morte é aqui encarada como espetáculo voyeurístico e intencional – "The first time it happened I was ten / It was an accident" – para depois confessar – "The second time I meant / To last it out and not come back at all." O suicídio é, por isso, uma forma de recomeçar, motivo pelo qual se convoca o mito do renascimento da fénix. O sujeito poético encontra-se com a experiência da morte e renasce metamorfizado, surgindo das cinzas, agora preparado para se afirmar como um novo "eu," em pleno controlo sobre a estrutura patriarcal: "Out of the ash / I rise with my red hair / And I eat men like air."

Considerações Finais

Sylvia Plath e Anne Sexton viriam a ser uma influência preponderante para a geração de mulheres escritoras dos anos 70 e para a segunda vaga de feminismo que viria a surgir no final da década de 60 com a célebre máxima: "the personal is political." Ainda que desprovidas do contexto ideológico-cultural que viria a enformar a segunda vaga de feminismo, especialmente no caso de Plath que viria a morrer no mesmo mês da publicação de *The Feminine Mystique* de Betty Friedan, surgem na poesia destas escritoras muitas das preocupações e motivos que viriam a ser desenvolvidos posteriormente. Como menciona Spivack: "Lowell and his circle were right on the cusp of this change. They were trying to bridge the gap between the political/historical/societal and the individual life" (174). O papel da poesia tonara-se político, pois cabia agora ao género lírico encontrar o elo de ligação entre os eventos históricos e o significado das vidas pessoais de todos os americanos; de todas as americanas. É neste sentido que a poesia de Plath e Sexton, mais do que meramente autobiográfica, se concretiza como iminentemente política, pelo ataque direto às ansiedades militares e à ideologia da contenção, como resistência à política oficial de um país. Ao relacionar a narrativa pessoal com o trauma nacional, a poesia destas mulheres dava uma nova voz a um novo movimento de subversão do consenso nacional, derrubando os discursos dominantes da América da Guerra Fria.

Plath e Sexton escreviam para que poemas como o que se segue, "Consorting with Angels", publicado em *Live or Die*, deixassem de ser realidade e se tornassem meramente material poético:

I was tired of being a woman,
tired of the spoons and the pots,
tired of my mouth and my breasts,
tired of the cosmetics and the silks.
There were still men who sat at my table,
circled around the bowl I offered up.
The bowl was filled with purple grapes
and the flies hovered in for the scent
and even my father came with his white bone.
But I was tired of the gender of things. (Sexton 111-112)

Cinquenta anos depois, multiplicam-se os movimentos de luta pela igualdade de género. O mundo da comunicação social permitiu que movimentos como o "HeForShe," um movimento de homens e mulheres pela igualdade de género criado pelas Nações Unidas em 2014, a "Women's March," a manifestação que ocorreu um dia depois da tomada de posse da administração de Donald Trump, no dia 21 de janeiro de 2017, e o "Time's Up," movimento originado em inícios de 2018, em Hollywood, com o objetivo de denunciar o assédio sexual praticado não só, mas também na indústria cinematográfica, ganhassem projeção a nível mundial. Mas, se a verdade é que a adesão a estes movimentos, por parte de homens e mulheres de todo o mundo, tem sido muito significativa, tal comprometimento com esta causa apenas se justifica porque a desigualdade de género é agora mais clara do que nunca. Esta constatação torna-se mais evidente após um ano em que, em virtude da nova administração dos Estados Unidos, as mulheres, as comunidades religiosas, os diferentes grupos étnicos e a comunidade LGBT no mesmo país assistem a um inquietante retrocesso social e legislativo. A título exemplificativo, basta pensar na proibição da integração de pessoas transexuais no serviço militar, entre outras medidas praticadas que representam um recuo relativamente à aproximação da igualdade anteriormente praticada.

A poesia, como modo privilegiado para o exercício da liberdade de expressão, tem de continuar a fazer-se ouvir – a ser política – pois a atualidade dos poemas de Anne Sexton e Sylvia Plath permanece, hoje, inalterada.

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¹ A entrevista dada por Plath a Peter Orr pode ser consultada na íntegra através do sítio online da *Modern American Poetry*: http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/m_r/plath/orrinterview.htm.

² Ambas as referências feitas a Nixon são citadas no artigo "The Radical Imaginary of *The Bell Jar*" de Kate A. Baldwin (161). Sally Bayley acrescenta no artigo "'I have your head on my wall: Sylvia Plath and the Rhetoric of Cold War America" que Nixon terá destacado a importância de "[to] have many different kinds of washing machines so that the housewives can choose" (166).

The Aesthetics of Seeing in Seamus Heaney's *Seeing Things*: Memory and Transcendence-in-Immanence in the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to deconstruct not only the things that Seamus Heaney sees in his collection of poems *Seeing Things* but, more importantly, *how* those things are perceived. In order to do so, I will be applying Husserl's phenomenological concept of transcendence-in-immanence and different philosophical theories of perception, such as adverbial theory, to construct a useful device with which to read and look at *what* Seamus Heaney is seeing. In *Seeing Things*, unlike in previous collections, the perceptual experience of objects and these objects themselves will be transubstantiated and, therefore, transcended. The things perceived acquire a double status: they are both "there," in the tangible world to be observed, but also "beyond," in an ethereal realm in which they are "made different."

These theories push us, however, even deeper into the rabbit hole: into the problem of the ontological and the phenomenological status of the object and the problem of representation. These issues will be examined according to Heaney's own process of signifying them, for example: childhood memory, the death of his father and notions of limits and boundaries (which relate to concepts of binarism such as presence and absence). Furthermore, memory is the medium through which the ordinary and the visionary overlap and become transparent, but also the domain in which ontological meaning is restored after the revelation of the paradoxes that memory itself produces: for it is in memory that contraries intermingle – contraries such as life and death, fullness and emptiness, presence and absence.

Key-words: Seamus Heaney; Irish poetry; artistic creation; perception; ontology; representation; transcendence; immanence; death; memory; binarism.

Resumo

O propósito deste artigo é o de não só desconstruir as coisas ("things") que Seamus Heaney vê na sua coleção de poemas *Seeing Things*, mas também o modo *como* estas coisas são percecionadas. De modo a consegui-lo, será aplicado o conceito fenomenológico de transcendência-em-imanência, de Husserl, bem como diferentes teorias filosóficas no âmbito do debate da perceção – tal como a teoria adverbial – de forma a construir um mecanismo útil para ler e olhar para o que Seamus Heaney está a ver. Em *Seeing Things*, contrariamente ao que tinha vindo a acontecer em coleções prévias, a experiência percetual dos objetos e os objetos em si mesmos serão transubstanciados e, portanto, transcendidos. As coisas percecionadas adquirirão um duplo estatuto: elas tanto estão "lá," no mundo tangível para serem observadas, como também estão "para além de," num reino etéreo no qual estas são "tornadas diferentes."

Estas teorias empurram-nos, conquanto, ainda mais para o fundo na toca do coelho: para o problema do estatuto ontológico e fenomenológico do objeto bem como para aquele da representação. Estas questões serão examinadas de acordo com o processo de significação dos objetos do próprio Seamus Heaney, como por exemplo: a(s) memória(s) de infância, a morte do seu pai e noções de limites e divisões (que se relacionam com conceitos de binariedade como aquelas de presença e ausência). Adicionalmente, a memória será vista como o meio através do qual o comum e o visionário se sobrepõem e tornam transparentes, mas também o domínio no qual é possível a restauração de significado ontológico após a revelação dos paradoxos que a própria memória produz: pois é nela que os contrários coabitam – contrários como vida e morte, cheio e vazio, presença e ausência.

Palavras-chave: Seamus Heaney; poesia irlandesa; criação; perceção; ontologia; representação; transcendência; imanência; morte; memória; binariedade.

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> We never . . . originally and really perceive a throng of sensations, e.g., tones and noises, in the appearance of things . . . ; rather, we hear the storm whistling in the chimney, we hear the three-engine aeroplane, we hear the Mercedes in immediate distinction from the Volkswagen. Much closer to us than any sensations are the things themselves. We hear the door slam in the house, and never hear acoustic sensations or mere sounds. (Heidegger 156)

> All I believe that happened there was vision (Heaney, "The Disappearing Island," *The Haw Lantern* 50)

Seeing Things (*ST*) is both a poem and a collection of poems in which Seamus Heaney returns to the generational themes[1] of his earliest poems but with a whole new sense of awareness of his own writing process and of perceiving and representing those themes. As Eugene O'Brien asserts in *Seamus Heaney: Creating Irelands of the Mind*,

this volume is about "seeing things anew – a second look where things are seen in their full complexity" (96), "*anew*" being a key word to this point. Remarkably, while Heaney revisits the topics of his previous poetry – rurality, childhood, generations, places – these things are transubstantiated, re-contextualized and, most notably, re-seen. This shift from a kind of poetry "constrained by identities" to one which has "more openly metaphysical concerns" (McDonald 15) is propelled by the death of Heaney's father, Patrick Heaney, just two years after the death of his mother. The death of his father and the realization of himself as an orphan comes to inform Heaney of a boundary that only poetic creation seems to be able to penetrate and trespass – an idea which reverberates throughout the whole collection and to which we will turn our attention later in the essay. Deviating from the ideological turn of his earlier work – while still exploring the same spectrum of themes – *Seeing Things* is no longer bounded to those images of purely empirical experience but allows the poet its transcendence. Therefore, he is able to *see things*, both in the colloquial way of seeing things[2] that are not "actually" there, and in the sense of transcending the tangible world in order to see *beyond* it – or maybe *through* it. As Jerzy Jarniewicz argues in "The Way Via Warsaw: Seamus Heaney and Post-War Poets," in a section devoted to history and memory in *Seeing Things*,

> The very title of the collection , though alluding to the visionary possibilities of seeing things; that is, "crediting marvels" and imaging the reality beyond the material world, in its literal meaning, keeps the poet close to the horizontal dimension of the tangible world of time and space, of history and place. (114)

Therefore, when Henry Hart, in his article's title, asks "What is Seamus Heaney seeing in *Seeing Things*?" we would not have a much better answer than what we would have given to any of his previous works. The objects and themes examined remain, more or less, the same. Instead, the mutation occurs in Heaney's ways of seeing – and hence, of representing – them. In such a manner, the question seems not to be only a matter of *what* the things are that are seen by Heaney, but *how* these things are seen or observed.

In order to find an answer to the "how?" a distinction will be drawn between the two primary ways in which the notion of "seeing" things may be addressed when referring to the collection. The first method I will designate as *empirical* or *ordinary* – for referring to the usual mode of perceiving things which the *concrete* experience of the object itself provides. The second type of vision – transcendent to the first – I will be referring to as transcendence within (or "in") immanence, in accordance with the

expression used by Husserl in the second volume of *Logical Investigations*. Transcendence will be considered in the sense of surpassing – or "seeing beyond," to use Heaney's terminology – the ordinary phenomenological experience of the object. Immanence, on the other hand, is described in terms of what is subjacent to the object but hidden from intentional consciousness – as Husserl formulates it. My point will also be that while these terms are commonly opposed to one another – especially in theological philosophy – it seemed more appropriate to make use of Husserl's synthesis of them. This is because, for Heaney, even though the re-attribution of meaning to mundane objects seems to be done through transcendence, the meaning is never outside the object but within it, to be revealed. As Alan Peacock theorizes about the collection in "Meditations: Poet as Translator, Poet as Seer": "The visible and the invisible are continuous: the marvellous and the numinous may be sought in the visible, tangible ordinary. Seeing things is co-terminous with seeing things in the colloquial sense of having vision: the material dissolves into the immaterial" (251).

Accordingly, there are two main ways in which "seeing" – always related to mundane objects – will be regarded: an ordinary seeing, and a transcendent-in-immanence kind of seeing. Better still would be to say that there is only one key way of seeing – to which every other is subordinated – which is the imaginative dialectic relationship between both methods, but, in order to get to that, the distinction needs to be made.

Besides these, I will allude to *senses of seeing* which also refer to perception and which I will be addressing as *adverbial vision*. The concept will be used in continuity with the theory of perception from which the term is borrowed. This theory explicates the nature of perception according to the apprehension of the object's intrinsic qualities – *qualia* – and to the way the subject is altered. Specifically, adverbial perceptions are those which are presented to the subject through the intrinsic and phenomenal qualities of the object itself. In this way, according to adverbial theory, when I perceive "green water" I am experiencing "greenly" and "water-ly."[3] Adverbial theory, inversely to canonical descriptions of perceptual experience, considers perception in terms of action, reconceptualizing experience in terms of the dynamic act-object (excluding any particular order). The object ceases to be an object to become an adverb describing and mutating the way in which the action is perceived.

This type of vision is, in a way, what permits the poet the transcendence-in-immanence kind of perception. Only via the self-referential means of the things seen,

i.e. through the way in which the subject reacts and is altered by the perceived object, can a proper theory of signification be established.

But how is this relevant for the study of the ways in which perception is understood by Seamus Heaney? The argument can be made that the poetic vision and descriptions on perception of *Seeing Things* draw their energy from a form of seeing that is mainly adverbial. This is because the objects that Heaney is seeing are not only figurative but call his being – and his being there – into question. The image/object/place ceases to be merely static and becomes performative, *adverbial*. The object is perceived according to the ways in which it behaves, is modified and *plays* with its context – and its beholder. Take, for example, the poem "The Ash Plant" in which Patrick Heaney – Heaney's father – takes "the phantom limb/ of an ash plant in his grasp" and finds "his touch" which "steadies him" and allows him to "stand his / ground" (19). The subject and the action are represented through the link they hold with the object; and the object is perceived through the way it modifies and interacts with the subject. This relationship is made especially clear in poems whose titles are object names, such as "The Biretta," "The Pitchfork" or "The Schoolbag," to name but a few.[4]

The use of an adverbial type of vision, in turn, seems to be connected to the attribution of physical meaning to ontological concerns relating to the issue of representation – to which the dialectic correlation between ordinary perception and transcendence-in-immanence comes to answer. The problem of representation arises essentially from a concern towards the poet's capacity to give ontological meaning to things perceived through the medium of "going back," i.e. by remembering. In "Squarings, 4. Squarings, xxxvii," Heaney dwells upon this idea by endeavouring to undertake the stabilization of perception in the act of writing. By concluding that such representation can only be achieved[5] through the "virtue of an art that knows its mind" (*ST*, "Squarings, 4. Squarings, xxxvii" 97) Heaney appears to suggest that the poet must get beyond ordinary ontological meaning to truly know the object – through the exercise of the mind. Thus, one might even say that what is at stake is the exposure of the ontological nature of the object of perception, when he asks in "Squarings, 2. Settings, xxii":

> Where does the spirit live? Inside or outside
> Things remembered, made things, things unmade?
> What came first, the seabird's cry or the soul
>
> Imagined in the dawn cold when he cried? (78)

It can be argued that *Seeing Things* is shaped after the concern with signifying or giving meaning to perception beyond the limited prejudices of ordinary/mundane experiences and objects – whose commonness attributes rigid meaning, impeding transcendence. Perceptual experience is thus to be signified through the medium of imagination between subject and object for "Whatever is given/ can always be re-imagined" (*ST*, "The Settle Bed" 29). One might recall in these words – and in the practice itself – the words of Wordsworth in "Tintern Abbey":

> and of all that we behold
> From this green earth, of all the mighty world
> Of eye and ear, both what they half create,
> And what perceive . . . (105-108)

Implicitly in "Tintern Abbey" is an attribution of meaning to the phenomenal world: Wordsworth's description of the landscape is mediated by what he feels toward it, stressing not only the object's influence on him but equally how his experiences and feelings endow "reality" with meaning, shaping his perception of it. The experience of the world in art – and, more importantly here, in poetry – is, consequently, done through the mediating power of the imagination of the artist who proposes to transcend the bounds of representation. Likewise, and taking into consideration the placement of Heaney as descending from Romanticism,[6] the denunciation that Heaney appears to do of the rigidity of meaning correlates with the Romantics' critique of the principle of mimesis and inflexibility of neo-classic rules. Consider, for example, poem xix of "Squarings, 2. Settings":

> Memory as a building or a city,
> Well lighted, well laid out, appointed with
> *Tableaux vivants* and costumed effigies –
> . . . So that the mind's eye could haunt itself
>
> With fixed associations and learn to read
> Its own contents in meaningful order,
> Ancient textbooks recommended that
>
> Familiar places be linked deliberately
> With a code of images. You knew the portent
> In each setting, you blinked and concentrated. (75)

Or from poem xxii of the same sequence of poems:

> How habitable is perfected form?

> And how inhabited the windy light?

> What's the use of a held note or held line
> That cannot be assailed for reassurance? (78)

In both poems memory is compared to that "perfected form" of mimesis and in both the idea of representing it faithfully or literally is disregarded for its stativity and for adding no meaning or true value both to life and art. Heaney goes on to say in the following poem, in respect to his own process of representing a memory: "I remembered it as a frisson, but cannot/ Remember any words. *What I wanted then*/ *Was a poem of utter evening*" (*ST*, "Squarings, 2. Settings, xxiii" 79, my emphasis). However, even though a quasi-Romantic, transformative type of perception – and poetic creation – is upheld, the usage of memory speaks of something else: that perception is always grounded on "familiar places" or, in another way, in mundane reality. It is mundane because "for Heaney the appeal of metaphysical visions and voyages is countered by a similar devotion to the quotidian" (Hart 34). In this sense, transcendence-in-immanence of perception and of representation becomes a self-referential movement, informed by Heaney's experiences and memories. Not only is this the case, but it also implies a movement of self-discovery of *himself as a poet* and, hence, a *being* endowed with the capacity to unveil new meanings – "For Heaney, the notion of poetry as a mode of knowledge is one which partakes of multiple perspectives . . ." (34).

Also, the usage of the imagery of "light"[7] as a new vision angle, which is combined with a sense of alleviation, is developed in "A Basket of Chestnuts." In this, *lightness* – as in the antonymous of *heaviness* – forces the intertwining of a transcendence-in-immanence type of vision with the adverbial type through the mediating power of the poet's imagination. This relationship has been increasingly nurtured throughout the poems but is made explicit here:

> There's a shadow-boost, a giddy strange assistance
> That happens when you swing a loaded basket.
> The lightness of the thing seems to diminish
> The actual weight of what's been hoisted in it.

> For a slip second your hands feel unburdened,
> Outstripped, dismayed, passed through.
> Then just as unexpectedly comes rebound –
> Downthrust and comeback ratifying you. (24)

In the poem, the basket[8] acquires the texture of an adverbial kind of perception. The meaning of this is both of transcendence of the past from mere remembrance to retrospective vision, of a "child on his first morning leaving parents" (*ST*, "The Schoolbag" 30), and also a reference to the poet's artistic production. This is exemplified as the poet "Recollect[s] this basket full of chestnuts" (*ST*, "A Basket of Chestnuts" 24) and wishes "they could be painted, known for what / Pigment might see beyond them" only to realize that "the reach / Of sense despairs as it fails to reach it, / Especially the thwarted sense of touch."

In earlier collections, Heaney's representation on childhood is, or is trying to be, solely informed by the child's naïve perspective with no other term of comparison; however, in *Seeing Things* the poet seems to recognize the failure in "the reach." In this manner, and in these poems specifically, artistic creation acquires a whole new sense of itself through retrospective recollection in which childhood memory is transmuted by the mediated power of the adult's imagination "like memories/ You've trained so long now they can show their face/ And keep their distance" (*ST*, "Glanmore Revisited, 6. Bedside Reading" 36). In the same manner, Edward Maguire, who provides us with the archetype of the artist in the poem, fails to fully portray the static scene for:

> Although it was what he thought he'd maybe use
> As a decoy or a coffer for the light
> He captured in the toecaps of my shoes.
> But it wasn't in the picture and is not.
>
> What's there is comeback, especially for him.
> In oils and brushwork we are ratified. (*ST*, "A Basket of Chestnuts" 24-25)

Again, the point can be made of the need that one must transcend everyday life perception in order to give it significance and, with it, the sense of awareness that this act of transcendence must also involve the act of "rebound," "comeback" or "return." The reason why immanence is so important, and why we talk about transcendence-in-immanence and not of just one or the other arises precisely with this point. For the movement of transcendence is never truly detached from experience, since it does not involve a measly migration to another plan of being; it is instead always grounded in the object whose meaning it proposes to transcend in the first place. The movement of transcendence is then claimed as one of uncovering (the immanence of the object) and of "return" or "comeback" to the object – instead of alienation or escape. If one accepts this premise, then it becomes clear that, in the

last verses cited, the rebound is connected to the artist specifically, whose representation involves neither just similitude nor just transcendence: it means *transfiguration*, sublimation through the faculty of the imagination, of the object – making it sublime.

Henry Hart conceptualizes this relation of transcendence with that of the sublime, relating it to Kant's aesthetics, quoting from the *Critique of Power of Judgement*[9] a passage which relates the experience of the sublime with that of resistance. And while that can be sustained, for Kant, the experience of the sublime confronts the faculty of the imagination with its own limits and incapacities – for him, instead, the sublime can only be apprehended by the faculty of reason. For Seamus Heaney, however, it means the experience of mundane things made sublime *through* the power of the imagination – the source of our capacity for the transcendence-in-immanence vision.

The act of creation of poetry is, in many instances, explored through the analogy of fishing. Consider poems such as "The Pulse" from "Three Drawings" or "Casting and Gathering," which transform memories into moments of writing's autoreferentiality and where the tangible is subordinated to the transcendental – here typified by the act of writing. Childhood, through the act of fishing, suffers an apotheosis and is re-contextualized by the agglutinative power of the poet who rarefies the line between the real memory and the imagined one. In these poems the focus shifts from the object to the poet, who is the medium of transcendence and the vehicle to the extraordinary. The modification of sensitive perceptions through the faculty of imagination signifies the transcending of experience as it is given to us and of the mortality of the particulars of our memory. The same is to say that, through the movement of transcendence of the actuality of the objects – particularly of the objects of childhood memory –, one instils new meaning into them. In this way, the ontological nature of ordinary objects is revised through the lenses of the actual – in the sense of present – standpoint of the poet when looking into past memories. They are observed not just through the adult's retrospective vision but also through the poet's imaginative representation and reconstruction of their meaning. Objects and the connections they hold, both with their intrinsic qualities and with their context as they were perceived in the first place, are reframed and re-affirmed through the transcendental power of recollection and retrospective vision.

Therefore, the signifying process – the dialogical relationship between the "real" and the "imagined" – discloses the dialectical relationship between present and

absent, between episodic memory and episodic imagining. In *Seeing Things* recollection has to do with the need to give ontological meaning to its constituent objects and its manifestation relates both to first-order information – through which the event is recalled as it originally occurred – and second-order information – the subject's current memory of it. Subsequently, conventional chronology and causality are transcended and, instead, childhood memories are associated and connected with one another in a state of flux as Heaney enunciates in poem xxvii of the third group of poems in "Squarings": "Everything flows," and then "Flow on, flow on / the journey of the soul with its sole guide" (85). The poem that gives name to the collection, "Seeing Things," epitomizes just that.

"Seeing Things," however, might as well have been called "Two Ways of Seeing Things," since the first two parts of the poem seem to be alternating between the two main ways of seeing that we have been referring to. The first poem is related to ordinary vision and is devoted to giving an "actual" or "factual" image of the remembered experience in itself – an "unadulterated" episodic memory. This gives way or *flows out* – in the last four verses – to a possibility of a new means of seeing things. Suddenly, it was as if the boy was "looked from another boat / Sailing through the air, far up, and could see / How riskily we fared into the morning" (*ST*, "Seeing Things, I" 16). Here, the boy's imagination transforms experience and takes him upwards. This "new way of seeing things" or of redefining their meaning is made apparent in the second section of the poem which opens with the word *Claritas*, a Latin word meaning brightness, clarity, clearness or distinctness, explanatory of this transcendence-in-immanence type of vision.

The first part of the poem seems to expose a certain anguish – "in nervous twos and threes," "nobody speaking," "I panicked," "Kept me in agony" – which is illustrative of the ontological vacuum that the first type of vision imposes on this memory. However, in the second part, the theological imagery (the baptism, Jesus, John the Baptist, the cathedral); the opposition between "sunlight" and "shadowy," "visibility" and "invisible"; and the state of flux of the water and sky - all make clear the contrast between these two parts. This reinforces the argument for the necessity for a transcendence-in-immanence type of vision:

> And yet in that utter visibility
> The stone's alive with what's invisible:
> Waterweed, stirred sand-grains hurrying off,
> The shadowy, unshadowed stream itself. (*ST*, "Seeing Things, II," 17)

The predominance of religious symbolism in the second part of the poem, however, is not an end in itself, but instead serves the purpose of providing context to the poem's closing movement, in which the object-action-subject transcend/are transcended and are made mythical – resembling the end of "Man and Boy." This is also exemplified in "Glanmore Revisited, 7. Skylight" which will be returned to later. In the collection, this *new light* cast upon ordinary objects becomes especially evident and gains a new importance after the death of Heaney's father, an event that leaves him to "face the ice this year / With my father's stick" (*ST*, "I.I.87" 20).

The death of Heaney's father is, conversely, the major axis from which Heaney appears to extract most of his ontological concerns with ascribing meaning – as can be seen in "The Ash Plant," "Man and Boy," "1.1.87," "An August Night," among others. Memory and the revisiting of his childhood are here used both as a way to revisit the *presence* of his father and to contradict the tendency of apparently meaningless reality and consequent ontological anguish that death inflicts upon the subject. The realization of the lack can only take place through the death of the author's father; only then can one achieve "A whole new quickened sense of what rifle meant / . . . For the sin it was against eternal life." (*ST*, "Squarings, 2. Settings. xxi" 77). And Heaney seems to encourage the reading of a relation between this unravelling and one's consciousness of an ontologically void sense of Death when, in "Squarings, 1. Lightenings, xii," he clarifies the concept of light – which becomes a main motif throughout the poems:

> Illumination, and so on, is this:
>
> A phenomenal instant when the spirit flares
> With pure exhilaration before death – (66)

There is, then, the necessity of transcending the mundane-ness of everyday life through the restoration of the objects of childhood memory in order to repair ontological meaning after the absence that Heaney's father's death represents. It is precisely from his father's "ghosthood immanen[ce]" (*ST*, "Seeing Things, III" 18) and after everything "tumbl[es] off the world" that Heaney

> saw him face to face, he came to me
> With his damp footprints out of the river,
> *And there was nothing between us there*
> That might not still be happily ever after. (my emphasis)

and that the poet can clearly (through the no-longer-static-nor-opaque image of his father's figure) "capture the illumination of a son seeing his father 'face to face,' for the first time, without the halo, or, in Mr. Heaney's case, the hat of authority." (Parker 219).

This idea is reinforced by the first and last poems that frame the collection. The opening poem is a translation of the "Golden Bough," a passage from book VI of the *Aeneid* that deals with the need for Aeneas to obtain the fruit on that bough to gain entrance to the underworld in order to see his father. Meanwhile the concluding poem is a translation of a section in canto 3 of Dante's *Inferno* that deals with the crossing over to the underworld on Charon's boat. The two passages are concerned with the theme of death and those notions of absence and presence but also with how ordinary things can be rendered in illuminating detail (the bough) and with the deconstruction of meaning (Charon's task), both of which are permitted by *crossings* between the immanent and the transcendent.

The scene from the *Aeneid* that opens the collection begins with Aeneas pleading with the Sybil for one last face-to-face with his father, to which the Sybil replies that the descent is the easiest part of the expedition, "but to retrace your steps and get back to upper air, / This is the real task and the real undertaking" (*ST*, "The Golden Bough" 2). So, returning from the underworld will be impossible unless he brings Proserpina the golden bough – as if the gift of poetry was the only way for a safe passageway. And "while the role of the poet may not earn Heaney a 'face-to-face meeting' with his father, an encounter similar to the one so earnestly sought by Aeneas, it enables him to see his father again in a variety of ways, with imaginative powers that heighten and transform memory" (Collins 169), one can still argue for the poem "Seeing Things" – especially if we look at the third section – as one which retraces, nevertheless, those steps taken by Aeneas in his journey.

In the same mode, the journey we witness in *Seeing Things* is a journey *downwards*, which also means *backwards,* one of looking *down* into the past and the "imagined perfection" (*ST*, "A Basket of Chestnuts" 23) of things, when his father is not yet an absence and the consequent renegotiation of the ontological space occupied by him was still an unpondered possibility. The movement *backwards*, however – and similarly to what happened with Aeneas – also involves a crusade *upwards,* which in this case means transcendence through representation: "Confidently bearing the golden bough of metaphor before him, he combs the

underworld of memory for 'clear truths and mysteries,' and ascends into the 'upper air.'" (Parker 217).

In "Man and Boy," "a poem about the generations, examining the connections of fathers and sons" (Ross 98), Heaney uses the memories of his father to indulge in a mystical experience of his own. One in which the father is no longer the source of the child's unquestionable awe but a flawed human being, to whom Heaney can now gaze at an "eye-level." In its own way, "Man and Boy" begins with tangible experiences only to ascend to a *quasi-apotheosis* in which the father and the boy are renovated in the form of mythical figures – Aeneas who bore his old father Anchises out of the burning city of Troy:

> I feel his legs and quick heels far away
>
> And strange as my own – when he will piggyback me
> At a great height, light-headed and thin-boned,
> Like a witless elder rescued from the fire. (15)

This scene typifies the two apparently opposite movements: downward and upward, immanence and transcendence, past and present, presence and absence. It encompasses a return to earlier experience that has taken on new meaning in the light of maturity but, more importantly, loss. As Daniel W. Ross asserts: "On one level both 'Man and Boy' and 'Seeing Things' are returns for Heaney to the generational themes of his earliest poems. However, Heaney, now aware of his own aging process and feeling the loss of his father, finds a deeper mystery in these relationships than he did in the 1960s" (99).

Consequently, the move "back from the *underworld*" – or from the revisiting of the once mundane materiality of past memory of the father figure – is made through transcendence, sublimity, attribution of meaning and filling of ontological gaps. Heaney is "carried ahead / On the phantasmal flow-back" while "still mean[ing] business in the here and now" (*ST*, "Squarings, 3. Crossings, xxvi" 84); his business with revisiting the past is not mere nostalgia but has to do with the current state of ontological indeterminacy. For all of this, representing the past is not, for Heaney, about portraying it as "fixed associations" in which, according to "Ancient textbook . . . familiar places must be linked deliberately/ With a code of images",[10] but rather about "learn[ing] to read/ Its contexts in meaningful order" (*ST*, "Squarings, 2. Settings, xix" 75).

Consequently, memory is the medium through which the ordinary and the visionary become transparent – as in "Wheels within Wheels" – and also the domain in which ontological meaning is restored after the revelation of the paradoxes that memory itself produces, for it is in memory that contraries intermingle. Contraries such as life and death, fullness and emptiness, presence and absence.

Glanmore[11] represents the archetypical place/object for transubstantiation as it involves a double journey to the past: to when he and his family lived there in the previous decade; and to Heaney's childhood on a farm. This place had already served as reference in previous collections of poems, as Heaney hints at the beginning of the first poem of the sequence – which is, significantly enough, *a memoriam*: "It felt remembered even then" (*ST*, "Glanmore Revisited, 2. Scrabble" 31).

In the Glanmore house Heaney is confronted with this necessary recontextualization of the family home after the recognition of the *absence* of the rest of his family and the *emptiness* of the place. This, instead of being a symbol of sameness and continuity, becomes rather a place of difference. Even though the title gives us the impression of repetition and/or re-visitation of feelings and gestures experienced previously in Glanmore, this re-visitation differs from the poet's memory temporally and, therefore, spatially and meaningfully:

> The old activity starts up again
> But starts up differently. We're on our own
> Years later in the same *locus amoenus*,
> Tenants no longer, but in full possession
> Of an emptied house and whatever keeps between us. (*ST* "Glanmore Revisited, 2. The Cot" 32)

As metaphorized in the seventh poem of "Glanmore Revisited, 7. The Skylight," memory, represented by the house, is initially described as "low," "closed" with its "claustrophobic, nest-up-in-the-roof/ Effect" (37), being re-imagined, re-signified and transubstantiated from a notion of place as enclosure to one of freedom. This allows us, once more, to return to that idea of enlightenment and of transcendence. Thus, through the transcendence of memory, meaning is made clear and transparent and the poet is healed of "closed" meanings that previously impeded the attaining of the immanent meaning. So much so that, when the skylight is opened, the feeling of the place[12] is changed, and Heaney feels "like an inhabitant / Of that house where the man sick of the palsy / . . . Was healed, took up his bed and walked away." (*ST*, "Glanmore Revisited, 7. The Skylight" 37).

Furthermore, according to O'Brien in *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers,* places are usually – in Heaney's canon – "recontextualised in order to open different paths of signification" (O'Brien 7), places such as Glanmore, which is re-perceived temporally and in terms of presence/absence relations. In the third poem of the sequence, for example, this discontinuity through space and time is depicted via Heaney's change of perspective with regard to the disappearance of his friend's name from the bark, many years before. At the time, this moved him as "It brought back those blood-brother scenes where two / Braves nick wrists and cross them for a sign" (*ST*, "Glanmore Revisited, 3. Scene Shifts," 33) but, when remembered in his re-visitation, "is healed up."

What we seem to have throughout these poems is a sense of renegotiation – of place, memory and feelings toward it – which may be read as what O'Brien calls Heaney's "dialectic of presence and absence" (*Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers* 52) and which is responsible for the renovation of the object/place's context and, hence, ontological meaning.

In the fifth poem of the sequence – "Glanmore Revisited, 5. Lustral Sonnet" – the mutability and consequent transubstantiation of the place and of Heaney's own revising – and truly revisited look – is theorized. It is "revisited," for in the poem we are informed that, for Heaney, "Breaking and entering: from early on" were "Words that thrilled me far more than they scared me" (35). And he goes on:

> And still did, when I came to my own
> Masquerade as a man of property.
> Even then, my first impulse was never
> To double-bar a door or block a gate
> . . .
> But I scared myself when I re-entered here,
> My first break in . . .
> Only pure words and deeds can secure the house.

During the poem, a renegotiation of perception toward the house occurs which ultimately gives way to its concluding moment in the last poem through the opening of the skylight. That which begins to be said in the first poem is here repeated in the first verses of the second stanza, the idea of Heaney's initial resistance to the place as difference and absence, whose otherness leaves the poet as the only source of referentiality and as a boundary to himself. This is an attitude, however, that is

ultimately unheeded for its narrowness of sight. He is now the "man of property" and the poet who is left to "secure the house" with "pure words and deeds."

In Glanmore, as in memory, "contraries intermingle" and serve as the means for Heaney to transcend the absence and the "much too narrow" kind of prejudiced vision with which he initially perceived the experience. As Henry Hart proposes in his article, and as is perfectly confirmed here with the opening "Breaking and entering," the notion of boundaries and of resistance is a necessary threshold for Heaney's sense of transcendence. These inform the subject of his own limits – and those of signification – and that something lies beyond them. The notion of the limit is what compels the creative spirit of the poet to transgress it, a notion hinted at with the transposal of the phenomenal world when confronted with death, as mentioned earlier. In "Fields of Vision," Heaney shows us this relation:

> Face to face with her was an education
> Of the sort you got across a well-braced gate –
> . . . where you could see
>
> Deeper into the country than you expected
> And discovered that the field behind the hedge
> Grew more distinctly strange as you kept standing
> Focused and drawn in by what barred the way. (22)

In the scene described, both the lady's confinement to a wheelchair and the reference to the gate are those which establish the limit or "bar . . . the way" and serve as catalyst to transcendence. In the same manner, Husserl's intentional consciousness[13] informs itself, through the recognition of its own limits, of something that lies beyond, hidden. We must remember that for Heaney, however, this experience – of sublimity – is always informed by the ordinary, by what is familiar. So, in the poem, the things that the woman sees are not unusual but instead are, by the transformative power of imagination, made unfamiliar, "made strange" – to use the expression employed by Hart. This makes the woman "see things," to have a transcendence-in-immanence perception of the objects.

In "Markings," the familiar scene is portrayed by a football game in which the sense of resistance materializes itself in the delimitation of teams, whose choice by name seems to strike Heaney as senseless – or deprived of any true meaning – creating a frontier that seems to be there without any justifying reason. It is in this senselessness that Heaney also seems to face mere empirical vision: it lacks true

ontological meaning. Also, similarly to what happens in the previous poem, the youngsters *transcend* the game's rules:

> Because by then they were playing in their heads
> And the actual ball came to them
> Like a dream heaviness, and their own hard breathing
> Sounded like an effort in another world (*ST*, "Markings" 8)

In the poem, "The interweaving of actuality and imagination is clear at this point as a physical experience is internalised and seen as a paradigm for the process of imagination" (O'Brien, *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers* 53). The reader is, moreover, informed by the transformative moment occurring in the second stanza of the first part of the potential of challenging those *meaningless* rules – whose "limit had been passed" (*ST*, "Markings" 8). By means of adverbial descriptions there is a shift from "dying light," "heaviness" and "darkness" to "fleetness," "untiredness" and "free" in the description of the relation between the object – the game – and the subject.

In "Casting and Gathering," a poem dedicated to Heaney's friend Ted Hughes, the poet articulates the idea of going outward in order to make an inward movement, of casting in order to gather. This is an idea which stresses both the movement of casting the net of the poet's consciousness into the past in order to recollect a new meaning, and also a movement of transcendence from the materiality of form and colour of the memory. The binarism of the two movements – casting and gathering – is furthermore stressed by the sounds, which "took sides" and assume two completely different positions compared with fishing - as we have seen before, this serves as an analogy to the act of writing. The subject, however, is not torn between the two perspectives: instead "years and years go past and I do not move" (*ST*, "Casting and Gathering" 13). When he declares, in the final stanza, "I trust contrariness," he seems to be advocating this necessary irreducibility of one type of vision to the other. Even though they are perceived as contraries, the poem seems to gesture in the direction of an "inclusivity of consciousness" that does not mean the reconciliation of the said opposites but an affirmation of both, co-existing at the same time. This is because the creation of aesthetic and ontological structures of meaning is done through the dynamic of the disjunction.

Eugene O'Brien devotes much of his thinking in his book *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers* to this theory of disjunction or of binaries – which he allies to Derrida's concept of presence/absence – and one of his main points is precisely that

this notion of duality is dynamic and serves as structure to what he calls "dialectical knowledge" (32). His perspective on Heaney's usage of contrariness as writing and perceptual device remains that this "dynamic oscillatory structure" or "woven material," as he also calls it, "is comprised of numerous criss-crossings and intersections of threads which face in different directions, processes analogous to the complexities of dialectical thought" (32). The poem "Wheels within Wheels" is one of those examples in which two distinct forces are intertwined, transmuting actuality and providing the subject with a transcendence-in-immanence vision. In the poem the "pedal treads / Worked very palpably at first against you" to later "sweep your hand ahead / Into a new momentum," making the object of perception "Hummed with transparency" (46) by the action of the subject or, even, by the hand of the child made poet.

Analogously to what happened in "Markings," in which

> All these things entered you
> As if they were both the door and what came through it.
> They marked the spot, marked time and held it open. (9)

The subject becomes the medium wherein limits can be passed and new meanings made transparent by the recognition that "when one man casts, the other gathers / And then vice-versa, without changing sides." (*ST*, "Casting and Gathering" 13). Returning, then, to the poem "Casting and Gathering," one may finally conclude that this interfusion of differences, typified by the casting and the gathering, is at the core of Heaney's attribution of meaning: "The 'productive interplay of differences' is, it seems to me, Heaney's methodology of achieving his searches for answers. . ." (O'Brien, *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers* 68).

Moreover, says Colleen McKenna in "'A Meaning Made of Trees': The Unwriting of a Symbol," "These poems describe thresholds, crossings and peripheral images; they are oblique glances rather than detailed compositions" (55), making the act of perception become one of looking *through* and *into*, not *at*. This is particularly important if we accept the premise that Heaney's transcendence-in-immanence is not transcendence-beyond-the-world but transcendence through and because of sensibility: also, in this there is an interweaving of differences. Boundaries, such as death and absence, are necessary evils to the affirmation of their contraries: Heaney's poetry remains within the boundaries of perception and representation while seeking to transcend them and imbue representation with this newly discovered meaning. As

Heaney, himself, tells us, "it is this double capacity that poetry springs from and addresses" *(Something to Write Home About: A Meditation for Television* 48).

Heaney's ways of seeing seem to be, therefore, erected by opposition in order to undermine ordinary perceptions and create a private cosmos apart from complacent habits of seeing. Besides this, they provide a counternarrative to evidence-based and meaning-void vision of memory and of regular disinterested perceptions – and representations – of everyday life objects, whose identity is in need of renegotiation when one is confronted with the annulment of that identity, i.e., death. In this way, death is the mechanism through which Heaney is confronted with the boundaries and the contraries referred to – "for the sin it is against eternal life" – and from which he draws meaning for himself as a son of a lost father and as a poet whose poetry learns to transubstantiate itself in this collection. After all, "Who ever saw / The limit was the given anyhow?" (*ST*, "Wheels Within Wheels," 46).

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[1] See the title poem, "Seeing Things"; "Man and Boy"; or "Glanmore Revisited."

[2] See Allan Peacock, "Meditations: Poet as Translator, Poet as Seer."

[3] See, for example, the poem "Fosterlings" (*Seeing Things*, 50), when Heaney talks about his memory – and love – towards a "picture's heavy greenness", to which he refers again later as "My lowlands of the mind. / Heaviness of being. And poetry / Sluggish in the doldrums of what happens."

[4] This can also relate to the importance of places and the way in which places are "felt" and become adverbial in Seamus Heaney's poems, as "Glanmore Revisited." However, in order to make the point about adverbial perception clearer and to prevent the discussion from deviating into matters of place and spatiality, the topic will not be exhaustively addressed in the current essay. To read more about the matter of place and space in Seamus Heaney's poetry, see, for example, "Space, 1984-91," in Michael Parker's *Seamus Heaney: The Making of the Poet*, or "The Sense of Place," a lecture by Seamus Heaney included in *Preoccupations: Selected Prose: 1968-1978*.

[5] This realization has something very close to Heidegger's ontological anguish that arises from and with the realization of the Dasein as a Being-towards-death for death gives the Dasein existence and, thus, ontological significance.

[6] Neil Corcoran, for example, argues that Heaney's "critical consciousness of Wordsworth" is what "makes his basic conceptions of poetry essentially romantic ones" (Corcoran 31).

[7] A notable metaphor throughout the collection.

[8] Much like the schoolbag from the poem "The Schoolbag" "light / scuffed and supple and unemptiable" ("The Schoolbag" 30),

[9] This is the version used in the current essay; Henry Hart uses a version in which the translation of the title is *Critique of Judgement*.

[10] We can denote, one more time, the follow-up with Romantic aesthetic paradigms through the critique of neoclassic form.

[11] Heaney had already been there for a time during the 70s and ended up buying the cottage, which was his writing retreat and place of refuge, at the end of the 80s, from its previous owner and Heaney's friend, Ann Saddlemyer.

[12] "there is an opening, a sense of scope as place becomes space . . ." (O'Brien, *Seamus Heaney: Searches for Answers* 219).

[13] See the second volume of *Logical Investigations*.

Spaces of Resistance: Heterotopia and Dystopia in Toni Morrison's *Home*

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Abstract

The following paper aims to show that Toni Morrison's *Home* (2012) can be read and analyzed as a novel in which the spaces of black people in American society can be seen as both heterotopic and dystopian according to spatiality studies. The objective of this essay is to prove that it would be accurate to apply those concepts by developing an argument that focuses on how the spaces of the mind, of the body and the physical spaces affect the course of the novel and its characters, as well as the way in which the relationship between these spaces is meaningful to that reading. It is important to offer this reading of the novel, not only because the social dimension of the racial conflict in the USA is still very intense, but also because it provides a point of view that is relevant for social and cultural studies. At the end of the article, it can be noticed that a close reading of the novel applying the concepts of heterotopia – developed by Foucault in the 1960s and published 20 years later -, dystopia and spatiality studies enriches its analysis and interpretation, by offering alternatives to the more common and mainstream approaches to this work.

Keywords: dystopia; heterotopia; African-American; spatiality; racism.

Resumo

O presente trabalho pretende demonstrar que *Home* (2012), de Toni Morrison, pode ser analisado como um romance no qual os espaços dos negros na sociedade Americana são heterotópicos e distópicos com base nos estudos do espaço. O objetivo deste artigo é provar que é possível aplicar estes conceitos ao desenvolver um argumento que se foque em como os espaços físicos, mentais e corporais afetam o desenrolar da narrativa, os seus personagens e como a relação entre estes espaços é significativa para a análise da obra. É importante ter essa possível interpretação não só porque a dimensão social do conflito racial nos EUA ainda é muito intensa, mas também porque isso oferece um ponto de vista que é relevante para os estudos

sociais e culturais. Concluindo, pode-se notar que uma leitura atenta da obra, aplicando os conceitos de heterotopia – desenvolvido por Foucault na década de 1960 e publicado 20 anos depois -, distopia e estudos do espaço, enriquece as suas possibilidades de análise e interpretação ao oferecer alternativas às abordagens mais comuns a este romance.

<center>*****</center>

Toni Morrison's *Home*, first published in 2012, tells the story of Frank, a war veteran who fought in the Korean war with his childhood friends Mike and Stuff. The novel focuses especially on the time after his release from the hospital to which he was sent after the end of the war, when he crosses the United States to help his sister Cee. Frank gets a letter from a co-worker of Cee telling him his sister is very ill and needs to be rescued. In fact, she is not ill at all, but being used for scientific experiments. Throughout Frank's journey through America, Morrison explores the effect of the war on him, the prejudice and discrimination against Afro-Americans, the meaning of the word that gives name to her novel (home), while looking back at Frank's past and those to whom he relates, especially Cee and his ex-girlfriend Lily. In order to reconstruct and represent the past of the black community in the USA, Morrison uses throughout the narrative the strategy of exploring the character's past.

The book is usually read and analyzed mainly as a trauma novel. Another reading which is also very common among scholars is one that focuses on what the concept of home truly means for the characters of the novel and how the concept is represented there. Furthermore, studies around the role of memory in the construction of the meaning of home are also recurrent among the interpretations of this novel.

In this article, however, I would like to offer a different reading seeking neither of the approaches mentioned above. Instead, I intend to promote a close reading that highlights – through the conceptual tools of Spatiality Studies[1] and Utopian Studies – how the spaces of African-Americans can be considered both heterotopic and dystopian in relation to the society of the 20th century in the United States. I believe that studies of space are crucial for our understanding of how society functions, to point out its flaws and to think about possible solutions for them. According to Michel Foucault, "the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time" (23).

Thus, it is not surprising that it was also Foucault who developed one of the key concepts related to space that shall be used in this article: the concept of heterotopia. He first envisioned and described it in his text *Of Other Spaces* (1984):

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places - places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (24)

Considering heterotopia[2] as a space of otherness and a space of difference, we shall consider the African-American spaces represented in the novel as heterotopic, because they are outside hegemony, which belongs to white people.

In spite of the characteristics that make the space of the black community in the society heterotopic, it becomes evident throughout the novel that this space is also dystopian, if we take into consideration the disparity between the social spaces[3] which black and white people are allowed to be part of, how they are arranged, and the quality of life in such spaces. The fact that they do have a space of their own, the space of affirmation of difference and resistance, does not exclude the fact that these spaces include scenarios where people have to go through extreme experiences. Moreover, it is also important to mention that the space of Afro-Americans is always subjected to the space of white people and that, in a society with an intense racial conflict, it can lead to a dystopian environment.

Home offers us several examples allowing one to read the novel under the lenses of dystopia. One of them is a completely hopeless environment in an apocalyptical scenario - represented by Lotus, the city where Frank and the community of which he is part live – as is stated in the novel:

> *Lotus, Georgia, is the worst place in the world, worse than any battlefield. At least on the field there is a goal, excitement, daring, and some chance of winning along with many chances of losing. Death is a sure thing but life is just as certain. Problem is you can't know in advance.*
>
> *In Lotus you did know in advance since there was no future, just long stretches of killing time. There was no goal other than breathing, nothing to win and, save for somebody else's quiet death, nothing to survive or worth surviving for.* (Morrison 83)

In addition to the city, there are also other elements, such as: war (the Korean War); madness and instable states of mind, represented by Frank's condition (PTSD); scientific experiments conducted by a racist doctor on Cee's body; extreme poverty, exemplified in the following excerpt, "they practiced what they had been taught by their mothers during the period that rich people called Depression and they called life" (122); agents of the law promoting violence, as is clear in the following example, "You could be inside living in your own house for years, and still, men with or without badges but always with guns, could force you, your family, your neighbors to pack up and move – with or without shoes" (9); lack of respect for the lives of some (usually poor and/or black people) to the benefit of others (usually rich and/or white), as in the following passage, "Well, you know, doctors need to work on the dead poor so they can help the live rich" (12); and men fighting each other to death as a spectacle, as we can see in this passage:

> Can you beat that? Pitting father against son? (...)
>
> That's a devil's decision-making. Any way you decide is a sure trip to his Hell. Then, when he kept on saying no, his daddy told him, "Obey me, son, this one last time. Do it." Said he told his daddy, "I can't take your life." And his daddy told him, "This ain't life." Meantime the crowd, drunk and all fired up, was going crazier and crazier, shouting, "Stop yapping. Fight! God damn it! Fight!" (139)

The aspects mentioned above are commonly found in the most famous and most critically acclaimed dystopias. In *Brave New World*, for example, we can find scientific experiments and agents of the law promoting violence and madness; in *1984*, we can find war; in *The Hunger Games,* we can find the apocalyptical scenario, extreme poverty and the spectacularization of men fighting each other to death. So, taking into consideration those similar aspects, it becomes clear that Morrison's novel does have a dystopian dimension.

However, to say that *Home* is a dystopian novel would not be accurate, because even though it presents several dystopian elements, it also lacks a few of them. For example, dystopian novels are usually set in the future, in an imaginary society seen as a place where life is worse than it is now.[4] To say that Morrison's novel is dystopian is inaccurate, in this context, since it refers to the past, and problematic, because it would mean that the society of the novel is imaginary and, thus, that so is the racial tension and prejudice represented in it. Therefore, the fact that it portrays the experiences of the African-American community in the middle of the 20th century makes it impossible for us to say that the novel is a dystopia. The dystopian elements

presented there were, at that time and for that people, part of their reality. Furthermore, by the time the novel was published, although the reality of the black community in the United States had changed, racism still manifested itself tenaciously through discrimination and violence, and now, six years later, it still does. These aspects and their impact on the characters can be seen in different instances of space in the novel: the physical space, the space of the body and, finally, the space of the mind.

As the most concrete dimension of space, the physical space in Morrison's novel is crucial, because it impacts on the characters and makes evident that there is a clear separation between black and white, showing that the space of the former is always subjected to the space of the latter. We can observe a variety of levels to be worked with and analyzed. Firstly, the most obvious aspect in the novel is the dimension of prohibition, spaces of which black people are not allowed to be part and to which they cannot have access, as in the following example:

> The agent dropped her eyes, then decided not to lie. "Well, no, but there are restrictions."
> (…) Turning a page, she showed Lily an underlined passage. Lily traced the lines of print with her forefinger:
> No part of said property hereby conveyed shall ever be used or occupied by any Hebrew or any person of the Ethiopian, Malay or Asiatic race excepting only employees in domestic service. (73)

This aspect of the space makes the characters go through a transformation and end up creating spaces of their own – heterotopic ones. This process leads to something crucial as far as heterotopias are concerned, namely the sense of community and resistance that the physical spaces create, as is noticeable in the following passage:

> *Mama was pregnant when we walked out of Bandera County, Texas. Three or four families had trucks or cars and loaded all they could. But remember, nobody could load their land (…). Most families, like mine, walked for miles until Mr. Gardener came back for a few more of us after dropping his own people at the state line.* (39)

However, in spite of the heterotopic dimension of the space created by that community, in which resistance and solidarity can be highlighted, there is also a dystopian dimension, since the WASP society is always turning the space of the black people – directly or indirectly – into a space of rejection, dislocation and poverty. This becomes evident throughout the novel with the descriptions of the town where the black community is settled – Lotus – and also with the descriptions of the prohibitions

that whites impose on the African-American population, throwing them out of their homes, for example.

Another dimension of spatiality that is essential to this interpretation is the one of the body. It is through the body that people relate to other physical spaces and it is also a space common to every human being. Moreover, in theory, a person's body is their responsibility, as far as the decisions towards it are concerned; that power remains with the individual, or at least it should.

Starting with Frank's friends, Mike and Stuff, it is important to note that both had their bodies destroyed in the Korean war. They fought for a WASP society to which their bodies never truly belonged and lost them following white people's orders and desires. Their bodies were a property of a white society and were used according to its needs. As far as Frank is concerned, his body is preserved from the annihilation of the war. However, it suffers several injuries during the war and after his release from the army. Throughout the novel, there are several examples of Frank's body being subjected to violence from white people and of him getting involved in fights, during which he usually manages to defeat the rival. Unlike what happens to his friends, it seems that the whites never manage to destroy or possess in any way the space of his body.

The most striking and dystopian dimension of the space of the body, however, is seen through the main character's sister (Cee). There are different layers in which we can perceive the lack of control that Cee has over her own body: firstly, in terms of her relationships and, secondly and mainly, in terms of the power the doctor for whom she works has over her body. He uses her reproductive system to conduct experiments with the aim of finding out the role of wombs, as Sarah notices:

> What she didn't know was when he got so interested in wombs in general, constructing instruments to see farther and farther into them. Improving the speculum. But when she noticed Cee's loss of weight, her fatigue, and how long her periods were lasting, she became frightened enough to write the only relative Cee had an address for. (113)

The doctor uses a black woman because he follows a racist ideology which claims white superiority. This dystopian element of the narrative can only happen to an Afro-American character, because its basis is racism. Furthermore, the fact that her body is a possession of others clearly displays an analogy to slavery.

Furthermore, it is not by chance that the character who struggles the most to possess and control her own body is a woman, because, at the time – and even nowadays – women usually did not have a say on what to do with it, especially concerning their reproductive system. As Angela Davis has stated in her book *Women, Race and Class,* "women's desire to control their reproductive system is probably as old as human history itself" (229). In Morrison's work, it is rare to find a male main character; most of her protagonists are female. In *Home* the protagonism of the female figure is not cast aside: Cee is the character who makes the narrative happen; it is because of her that Frank crosses America and that we get to know his story.

Another important aspect of the novel concerning the bodies of black people is the fights that oblige men to kill one another. Those events show the lack of humanity which is attributed to them and how they undergo a process of reification and bestialization.[5] Their bodies are a possession of other people and they do what they are told to, which is also what happens with Cee, for she obeys the doctor who also bestializes and dehumanizes her, as a follower of theoretical racism: "She was always in awe with the crowded bookshelves. Now she examined the medical books closely, running her finger over some of the titles: *Out of the Night*. Must be a mystery, she thought. Then, *The Passing of the Great Race,* and next to it, *Heredity, Race and Society*" (Morrison 65). All these titles, which are part of the doctor's personal library are works which declare that the white race is superior to the black and which promote what is called scientific racism.

The heterotopic dimension reinforced by the analysis of the space of the body shows that this instance of spatiality offers those people a place of their own - the place of Otherness, as established by Foucault - a space in which they can resist, with the exception of Cee's case, as her body is constantly violated by white people. This space, though, is not heterotopic and utopian; on the contrary, it is a heterotopic dystopian space. The scientific experiments on Cee, the war – that annihilates the body – and the fights between men that, as well as leading to death, signify an apocalyptical scenario in which death is seen as a spectacle, reinforce this characteristic of the heterotopic spaces in the novel and also bring up the dystopian dimension of the novel.

The last space to be analyzed in this article is the space of the mind. This is an example of the heterotopic space *par excellence* because it is a space of difference, that accommodates what is outside of the hegemonic and promotes resistance.

However, if not owned by the individual to which it belongs, it is the worst form of subjugation that someone might face.

Concerning this specific space, there are two characters who deserve special attention: Frank and Cee. Frank uses his mind as the one place to which no one can have access, especially the white; if there are physical spaces of which he is not allowed to be a part, no one is allowed to be a part of what happens in the space of his mind. This difficulty in getting to know Frank, which is highlighted by the fact that his own sister does not actually know him, may also have to do with the fact that he has a disturbed and confused mind, because he suffers from PTSD. Cee, on the other hand, shows us the complete opposite of what happens to Frank: everyone knows what is on her mind.

Frank's sister is never able to have access to other people's minds and is constantly being fooled and diminished by them – for example, by her boyfriend, her grandmother Lenore and the doctor. Unlike other characters, she is not able to see beyond appearances. Furthermore, if on one hand she is never able to access the spaces of other people's minds, on the other, her mind is a space to which everyone has access. She is often manipulated into believing what other people tell her, not only concerning their intentions, but also her identity. This lack of ability to own her mind is, again, an analogy to slavery. This is made clear in the following passage, towards the end of the book: "Look to yourself. You free. (...) Don't let Lenore or some trifling boyfriend and certainly no devil doctor decide who you are. That's slavery" (126).

Sexism and racism both turn subjugated individuals into alienated people, capable of very little self-awareness. Therefore, Cee, as the most important female character, appears in the novel so we can go further in the analysis of issues concerning feminism and gender, in addition to race. African-American women always had to deal with the disruptive effects of both racism and patriarchy. The "racial suicide" theory, which was very common until the 20th century in America, as Angela Davis explains in detail in her book *Woman, Race and Class,* is a good example of what black women have dealt with.[6]

Thus, after performing a close reading of the novel, through the use of conceptual tools, it is shown that, even though *Home* is neither a utopian or dystopian novel, Morrison makes it possible to find several dystopian elements in her novel. It is also important to conduct this analysis in order to show that, if we were to read such a

novel and what is represented there as happening to white people, we would not hesitate to consider it as a dystopia. However, as we are dealing with the black community, the situations which they go through, as the ones represented in Morrison's novel, which are constantly underestimated and neglected by the WASP society, are only too true and historically based to be dystopian. Moreover, if that scenario is only possible in white people's imagination, for the Afro-American community that is daily life.

Therefore, I hope that this essay will help to raise awareness concerning the need to read Afro-American literature, especially Morrison's, through a point of view that shows that one cannot detach it from the context of intense racism that has been established as a form of politics by white society, especially in the USA. Furthermore, I hope that it also becomes clear that, in order to understand such conflicts, it is important to adopt spatiality studies as a tool for analyzing social relations and their impact.

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[1] For more information see: *Spatiality* by Robert T. Tally Jr. and *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre.

[2] According to Kevin Hetherington in his text "Two Castles" from the book *The Badlands of Modernity*, "Heterotopia signify not through resemblance, as in the way a metaphor works – one being used to resemble the other – but through similitude, more an example of metonym" (42).

[3] See Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space:* "In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions, the actions of subjects both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act. From the point of view of these subjects, the behaviour of their space is at once vital and mortal: within it they develop, give expression to themselves, and encounter prohibitions; then they perish, and that same space contains their graves. From the point of view of knowing *(connaissance),* social space works (along with its concept) as a tool for the analysis of society" (33-34).

[4] For more on this topic, see Baccolini and Moylan.

[5] "Man's animality, animality within and against man - hence the systematic 'bestialization' of individuals and racialized human groups - is thus the means specific to theoretical racism for conceptualizing human historicity" (Balibar 57).

[6] The theory of racial suicide was used by some of the movements of the African American community against the right of black women to use contraceptive methods, claiming that this would provoke a racial suicide of the community. Davis was one of the most active militants of this right for women, though.

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O título pode também ser abreviado. Neste caso, deve indicar-se, entre parênteses, a abreviatura a usar logo na primeira ocorrência do título:

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Os títulos abreviados devem começar pela palavra que é usada para ordenar o título alfabeticamente na lista de "obras citadas".

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Em todos estes casos, na lista de "Obras Citadas" deverá aparecer:

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton UP, 1957.

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2.1.3. Livros anónimos

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5. Publicações de edição eletrónica

Para a referência a publicações de edição eletrónica deverão ser seguidas as normas de referência acima indicadas para livros, volumes de artigos e revistas periódicas, acrescidas de:

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Eaves, Morris, Rober Essick, and Joseph Viscomi, editors. *The William Blake Archive*. Library of Congress, 28 September 2008, www.blakearchive.org/blake/. Accessed 20 November 2007.

5.1. Revista eletrónica

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Em Defesa da Utopia." *Via Panorâmica: Revista Electrónica de Estudos Anglo-Americanos/An Electronic Journal of Anglo-American Studies*, no. 1, 2008, pp. 3-12, http://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/5168.pdf. Accessed 10 January 2009.

Schmidt-Nieto, Jorge R. "The Political Side of Bilingual Education." *Arachne@Rutgers*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2002, n. pag, www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/projects/arachne/vol2_2schmidt.html. Accessed 12 Mar. 2007.

Nota:

Usar as seguintes abreviaturas para informação desconhecida:

n. p. no publisher given	Ex:	n. p., 2006, pp. 340-3
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n. pag. no pagination given	Ex:	U of Gotham P, 2006, n. pag.

Para estas e outras ocorrências, consultar:

MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. Eighth Edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2016.