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SUMÁRIO

APRESENTAÇÃO

O número 39 da *Revista de Estudos Anglo-Americanos* apresenta uma seleção de artigos sobre temas variados dos Estudos Literários e Linguísticos. Os ensaios sobre literatura abrangem diversos gêneros, sob perspectivas teóricas diferenciadas. No primeiro bloco, constituído por quatro artigos, o foco é a poesia de autores de diferentes nacionalidades, analisados sob o viés do comparativismo. Em "A Estetização da Violência: a Palavra Ígnea de Sylvia Plath e Ana Crisitina Cesar", Sigrid Renaux analisa o rompimento com o gênero lírico na poesia de Sylvia Plath e Ana Crisitina Cesar, a partir do uso da imagem violenta em seus poemas.

O artigo de Solange Ribeiro "Intermidiality in Elizabeth Bishop´s Poetry" utiliza os conceitos de intermidialidade, iconotex e écfrase na análise de três poemas de Bishop sobre o Brasil, revelando a visão da poeta sobre o Brasil e a relação entre a sua poesia com as outras artes, "como instrumento de crítica histórica e social". Ainda sobre poesia, no artigo "Charles Simic´s Uses of History", Maysa Cristina Dourado apresenta as relações entre o público e o privado, história pessoal e história coletiva no livro *Wonderful Words, Silent Truth* (1994). A autora focaliza as fronteiras entre história e ficção na obra de Simic. Fechando esse primeiro bloco, o artigo de Miguel Ángel Montezati "Simith´s Angels", analisa o uso dos anjos na poesia e desenhos de Stevie Smith, focalizando a violência, a crueldade e o cinismo destas figuras.

No segundo bloco sobre Estudos Literários, temos o trabalho comparativo de Thais Flores Diniz "The Role Of Storyboards in Stanley Kubrick´s *Eyes Wide Shut*", que nos apresenta uma análise aprofundada da interrelação entre a produção do filme *Eyes Wide Shut* e dos *storyboard*s utilizados no filme em questão. Fechando a sessão sobre literatura e outras mídias, temos o artigo de Debora Scheidt "Irony and the Status of the Australian Hero in

True History of the Kelly Gang, by Peter Carey". Debora Scheidt analisa o uso da ironia no romance de Peter Carey a partir de uma discussão teórica sobre a ironia.

Os dois últimos artigos deste número se inserem na área de estudos linguísticos. Em "Language as Vernacular Cultural Performance in Black Communities in Cuba and the USA", Antonio D. Tillis examina o uso da linguagem como um método de fomentar a performance cultural nas literaturas da Américas, concentrando-se sobre as modalidades linguísticas de descendentes africanos em Cuba e nos EUA. Já no artigo "Cross-cultural Communication in the EFL Writing Class" Tânia Gastão Saliés utiliza conceitos da linguística cognitiva, retórica intercultural e teoria da comunicação intercultural para discutir especificidades da escrita em EFL em sala de aula. Desejamos a todos uma excelente leitura.

Os Editores.

A ESTETIZAÇÃO DA VIOLÊNCIA:
A PALAVRA ÍGNEA DE SYLVIA PLATH E ANA CRISTINA CESAR

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ABSTRACT: The conflict which is waged, according to Benjamin, between what is expressed and expressible and what is unexpressed and inexpressible will be come the starting point for a double consideration in regard to the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Ana Cristina Cesar.First, the violence of poetical language – the impulses which operate inside their creative process, as both try to break with the canonical word and with the literary conventions of the lyrical genre. Second, the aesthetics of violence – the different forms and images of violence which permeate their everyday life and their social and cultural context, in overt or hidden ways, as both reveal and thus denounce this recurrent contemporary theme.

KEYWORDS: Contemporary American and Brazilian poetry. Aesthetics. Violence.

RESUMO: O conflito que reina, segundo Benjamin, entre o que é expresso e expressável e o que não é expresso e inexprimível irá se tornar o ponto de partida para uma dupla reflexão em relação à poesia de Sylvia Plath e Ana Cristina e Cesar. Primeiro: a violência da linguagem poética – os impulsos que operam no interior do processo criativo –, ao ambas tentarem romper com a palavra canônica e com as convenções literárias do gênero lírico. Segundo: a estetização da violência – as diversas formas e imagens de violência que permeiam seu cotidiano e seu contexto sócio-cultural, de forma velada ou declarada –, ao ambas exporem e assim denunciarem esta temática recorrente na contemporaneidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Poesia norte-americana e brasileira contemporâneas. Estética. Violência.

"No interior de toda estrutura lingüística reina o conflito entre o exprimido e o expressável por um lado, o inexprimido e o inexpressável por outro. Quando se visualiza este conflito, é na perspectiva do inexprimível que se percebe logo a essência última espiritual. (...) Pois a linguagem é, efetivamente, não apenas comunicação do comunicável mas simultaneamente, símbolo do não comunicável."

(Walter Benjamin)

Como fontes de reflexão sobre o universo da violência, as artes – e, em específico, a literatura – sempre exerceram sua tarefa não só de representar e expressar esta realidade, mas também de tomada de posição, pois "a verdadeira compreensão dos fenômenos humanos só se verifica a partir de uma posição que a consciência ocupa em todo conhecimento" (LEENHARDT, *apud* LINS, 1990: 17). Apesar de a violência não ser "apanágio de uma época" (ODALIA, 1983:17) é de consenso geral, neste início de século – e por esta razão ainda afetados e impregnados pelos acontecimentos a partir da Segunda Guerra Mundial –, a constatação de Ronaldo Lins, em *Violência e Literatura*, de que "o século da bomba atômica é, também, como não poderia deixar de ser, o século dos temas e das narrativas explosivas. É o século em que nos indignamos contra a opressão querendo solucioná-la mesmo enfrentando a dor. Que outra literatura esperar de nossa força criativa?" (LINS, 1990: 26).

Dentro desta postura de aceitar a arte como *imitação* e *intervenção* na realidade como também do conceito de que a arte, como a magia, surgem na crista de uma tensão, ao ambas lutarem contra a morte, o teórico afirma que é das relações entre os dois pólos máximos da existência – a vida e a morte – que tiramos a gênese do processo de criação artística e,

também, sua forma.[1] Isto nos faz admitir que há uma violência fundamental no próprio princípio da criação artística, que se apresenta com duas faces, uma *resultante* e outra *determinante* (LINS: 1990: 29-30).

Considerando o objeto literário "a partir de suas relações com a visão de mundo do autor e de sua época, bem como a sua concepção sobre a arte e sua função" a fim de "entender o texto criativo em sua profunda complexidade", ele também argumenta que a transformação da palavra – como recurso técnico – em forma, ocorre no momento em que passa a ser considerada de acordo com sua significação (ou significações), quando, no meio de uma frase e de um parágrafo, cercada de uma multiplicidade de significações, ganha, pela soma e pela combinação, a configuração sólida de um anel invisível onde percorrem pensamentos, dúvidas e constatações, formando um todo maior que seria o universo ficcional ou poético (LINS: 1990: 84).

E, ao se concentrar na especificidade do poema lírico, constata que, mesmo que este possa se apresentar como uma composição fechada em si mesma e beneficiar-se de uma análise de sua estrutura voltada apenas para a organização interna de seus elementos, a significação se realiza muitas vezes nos elementos do poema cuja esfera dava a impressão de estar vazia e livre de qualquer contato com o mundo exterior. Ressaltando que é do atrito entre dois elementos contrários – a presença do compasso, da repetição, no sentido da permanência; e a aceitação da acidentalidade de sua existência, no sentido da solvência – que surge a chama, a maestria com que o artista manipula esses dois elementos, conferindo ao poema lírico a dimensão de sua importância pela via da ambiguidade, Lins pondera, entretanto, que o analista deve ir ainda adiante. Deve estudar a complexa malha de relações nas quais aparece a lírica, porque há sempre uma violência dentro da violência e o que

[1] Todas as referências simbólicas usadas neste trabalho foram tiradas desta obra e/ou do **Dictionary of Symbols**

representa o principal ponto de atrito no interior dos elementos que compõem um poema deve estar ali como referência de um dado concreto da realidade. Pois a criação do poema lírico realiza-se em função de um único indivíduo que, em conflito com um mundo hostil, refugia-se na beleza da palavra, seu material de trabalho, para expressar a consciência de sua fragilidade (LINS, 1990: 86-8).

Partindo desta dupla perspectiva – de que a arte surge na crista de uma tensão, de que existe uma violência no próprio processo de criação artística e de que o atrito surgido no interior dos elementos de um poema lírico tem sempre como referente um dado concreto da realidade – este trabalho pretende investigar, na poesia de Sylvia Plath e Ana Cristina Cesar, como se configura não tanto a violência como "apanágio de nossa época", como temática recorrente na contemporaneidade. Pois, mesmo se absorvidas e personalizadas principalmente na obra de Plath – como nos poemas "Daddy" e "The Munich Mannequins", citando os mais conhecidos – as catástrofes sócio-políticas de nosso século são para ela, em última análise, metáforas da aterrorizante mente humana, da luta particular que levamos a cabo uns contra os outros diariamente (NEWMAN, 1970: 52-3).

Pretende, ao invés, investigar como se configura a violência de sua linguagem poética: os impulsos e conflitos que operam no interior de seu processo criativo ao ambas tentarem, de maneiras diferentes, romper com a palavra convencional e o texto canônico através da manipulação da linguagem cotidiana e da criação de novas metáforas e assim renovar as convenções literárias do gênero lírico; e, simultaneamente, investigar como se dá a estetização da violência nas diversas imagens que permeiam sua realidade interior como também seu cotidiano, de forma velada ou declarada.

Mesmo pertencendo a contextos históricos, sociais e culturais diferentes – Sylvia Plath, considerada a melhor poeta norte-americana do século XX, cuja poesia transcende o rótulo de "confessional" pela maestria com que domina e transforma suas experiências,

escreveu seus poemas entre 1956 e 1963, enquanto que Ana Cristina Cesar, cuja poesia é hoje "pedra de toque para toda poesia que se quer nova" (CESAR, 1985: contracapa) fazia parte do grupo de poetas "marginais" dos anos 70 no Rio, escrevendo até 1983 – ambas se aproximam. Não só pelo fato de terem realizado "essa fusão de poesia e vida, de 'confissão e ficção'" como comenta Freitas Filho em relação a Ana Cristina, (CESAR, 2004: 103) e de Ana Cristina ter traduzido e comentado poemas de Plath (CESAR, 1999: 204-16). Mas, principalmente, por Ana Cristina ter estabelecido com Plath "uma espécie de interlocução" (CARVALHO, 2003:17), através do processo de criação artística, visualizado sempre como transgressão ao código vigente e como externalização de um conflito que, além de ocorrer entre as relações que o poema estabelece entre seus elementos intrínsecos e extrínsecos, como argumenta Lins, ocorre simultaneamente, segundo Benjamin na epígrafe acima, "entre o exprimido e o expressável por um lado, o inexprimido e o inexpressável por outro"(86). É esta inexprimível "essência última espiritual" – que Benjamin visualiza através desse conflito – expressada nos textos de ambas as poetas que tentaremos captar, através da análise de "Words" de Sylvia Plath e de trechos de poemas de Ana Cristina.

A violência da linguagem poética em Sylvia Plath

Se a violência, definida por Arendt como "nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power"(ARENDT, 1970: 35), implica sempre em constrangimento físico ou moral, uso da força, coação e, como ato, remete-nos às múltiplas acepções de violar – ofender com violência, infringir, transgredir, estuprar, violentar, profanar, poluir, devassar, revelar – todas essas acepções emanam evidentemente do exercício de um poder, de uma força que transgride algo, que passa além de, como *transgredere* conota.

Em Sylvia Plath, esta transgressão – em nível de linguagem poética – torna-se visível em sua manipulação da palavra lírica, ao criar uma constelação de metáforas que levam ao

extremo a conceituação desta figura de pensamento ou tropo de dicção como o "transportar para uma coisa o nome de outra", percepção de "semelhança na dessemelhança", pois a metáfora, como "o princípio mais vital da linguagem", "situa-se no centro do ato de representar simbolicamente a realidade e do ato de submeter seu produto, o texto, ao crivo do julgamento" (MOISÉS, 1999: 325-6). Como confirma Mendonça, "o domínio consciente da palavra na obra de Sylvia Plath é fato indiscutível, como o é o seu domínio sobre as figuras de linguagem, mormente a metáfora" e, adiante, ressalta ainda que "no desenvolvimento de suas concepções sobre a metáfora, Sylvia revelará uma importante inovação técnica: um *cluster* de metáforas, superposição de imagens aparentemente desconexas que se fundem e refundem" (MENDONÇA, 1994: 132-3).

Este transporte como transgressão e transfiguração, presente em todo o cânone plathiano, recebe concretização específica em "Words" – um dos poemas mais analisados pelos críticos e paradigmático de sua poética como um todo. Como observa Newman, o termo 'confessional' – aplicado geralmente à obra de Plath – não é apropriado para seus últimos poemas ["Words" foi escrito dez dias antes de seu suicídio] , pois há neles um esforço em ir *além* da angústia do "eu" em direção ao estabelecimento de uma voz nova, mais impessoal, editorial, mesmo profética (NEWMAN, 1970:52-3), voz essa que se manifesta claramente na estrofe final deste poema.

A preocupação de Plath com a palavra como instrumento de trabalho já transparece em poemas anteriores, como "Words for a nursery", "Last words", "Words heard", "Poem for a Birthday", "Poem for three voices", "Metaphors" e "Poems, potatoes", entre outros, mas é em "Words" (PLATH, 1988: 270) que esta preocupação atinge seu ponto culminante, ao transformar este instrumento abstrato de trabalho em arma concreta de luta: o machado. Como comenta Axelrod,

"Words" (*CP 270*) once again allegorizes the poet's problematical relationship to her poetry (...). The poem's images alter alarmingly, evading our preconceived categories with a discordant dynamism suggestive of the grotesque. (...) "Words" deliberately exposes its status as verbal play through an endless process of figuring, disfiguring, and refiguring. This improvisational linguistic dance of arbitrary images acknowledges the *mise en abîme* of poetry. (AXELROD, 1990:72-3)

Em "Words", poema composto de quatro quintetos, em versos livres –

WORDS	PALAVRAS
Axes	Golpes
After whose stroke the wood rings,	De machado que fazem soar a madeira,
And the echoes!	E os ecos!
Echoes travelling .	Ecos partem
Off from the centre like horses	Do centro como cavalos.
The sap	A seiva
Wells like tears, like the	Jorra como lágrimas, como a
Water striving	Agua lutando
To re-establish its mirror	Para repor seu espelho

Over the rock	Sobre a rocha
That drops and turns,	Que cai e rola,
A white skull,	Crânio branco
Eaten by weedy greens.	Comido por ervas daninhas.
Years later I	Anos depois as encontro
Encounter them on the road –	Na estrada –
Words dry and riderless,	Palavras secas e sem rumo,
The indefatigable hoof-taps.	Infatigável bater de cascos.
While	Enquanto
From the bottom of the pool, fixed stars	Do fundo do poço, estrelas fixas
Govern a life.	Governam uma vida. (CESAR, 1980:211)[2]

– o próprio título já sinalisa para uma metalinguagem e uma metapoesia: "Words" encerra, em microcosmo, o duplo poder da palavra de destruir e construir simultaneamente, pois é das associações simbólicas da "palavra" como *logos* – "emanação criativa e destrutiva de uma deidade suprema" (de VRIES 1974: 508), "o eterno combate dos opostos: vida/morte,

[2] Adotamos a tradução de Ana Cristina, em vez da tradução de Rodrigo G. Lopes e Maurício A. Mendonça (ver Referências Bibliográficas).

luz/escuridão", "ato inicial" e "símbolo mais puro da manifestação do ser, do ser que se pensa e que exprime a si próprio"(CHEVALIER et GHEERBRANT, 1974, v.III: 365), que irá se projetar a grande metáfora a ser desenvolvida ao longo do poema – a palavra como instrumento concreto de poder, tanto para a vida/criação quanto para a morte/destruição.

Estas associações simbólicas já se concretizam na primeira imagem do poema, "axes". O fato de ser simultaneamente a única palavra da primeira linha torna a identificação entre "words" e "axes" imediata, identificação acentuada ainda por ambos os substantivos estarem no plural. O machado – como instrumento cortante formado por uma cunha afiada e fixa num cabo de madeira, que serve para rachar troncos reduzindo-os à lenha, cortar árvores, mas que também pode ser instrumento de suplício com que se decepa a cabeça dos condenados à morte – está simbolicamente relacionado com a guerra, pois a machadinha primitiva de batalha é equivalente à espada, ao martelo e à cruz; como hieróglifo egípcio, significa "deus", o que vem de encontro a outras associações simbólicas do machado como arma dos deuses, raio, trovão, "talhador de caminho" e morte ordenada por um deus; atributo divino, como o *logos*, o machado está simultaneamente relacionado com fertilidade e, no folklore, é considerado talismã para dar força.

Outrossim, o provérbio "o machado vai à floresta de onde emprestou seu cabo" ("the axe goes to the wood where it borrowed its helve") também se tornará relevante, neste poema, juntamente com as associações acima, sempre dentro da ideia de que a palavra/machado, manejada por uma deidade – o poeta – tem poder criativo e destrutivo. Se as palavras são machados e portanto instrumentos de poder e de violência, subentende-se que alguém deva estar empunhando-as para golpear, porque o machado e as palavras só ferem, destroem, ou criam, se usados por alguém e quando seus golpes atingem algo – em nosso contexto, a madeira. Percebe-se assim também como o confronto dessas duas imagens, do sentido literal e do figurado, do teor (*tenor*) – "words" – e do veículo (*vehicle*) – "axes" –

surge o novo sentido, através da base comum (*ground*) (LEECH, 1971: 151) de ambas as imagens: a identificação da palavra com o machado como instrumento de poder e de luta.

A partir desta imagem, na qual a força metafórica da concretude e especificidade de "axes", ao incorporar "words", anula a abstração da própria palavra "words", irá se desenvolver toda uma poética da violência pois, como a linha seguinte confirma – "after whose stroke the wood rings"–, o ato de golpear, o golpe como pancada por instrumento cortante ou contundente é sempre um ato violento, com a intenção de ferir, matar, destruir. As expressões "to kill a man with one stroke of one's sword", "the stroke of a hammer", ou mesmo "finishing stroke" (golpe de misericórdia), corroboram a força e o poder da palavra "stroke".

O fato de a madeira retinir após receber os golpes do machado nos lembra que o cabo do machado é feito do mesmo material que ele está destruindo e um cabo nada mais é do que o prolongamento do braço que o maneja. Assim, a violência da palavra é sobre si mesma, destruindo-se e construindo-se a cada novo golpe de um deus, assim como o tronco de madeira é destruído para dar lugar a novas árvores ou para ser usado como material de construção. Este ato violento, simultaneamente destrutivo e construtivo, que paraleliza o pulsar da imaginação no ato da criação poética, pois "o pensamento é violência" (DOMENACH *apud* MORAIS, 1969: 21), é ainda enriquecido pelas associações simbólicas contidas em "wood", tanto como "madeira" (tronco), quanto como "floresta". Como material, a madeira, é, como a árvore, símbolo materno, associada ao princípio vital,o que nos remete ao tronco como surgindo da terra e portanto manifestação da natureza; como alimentadora da chama sagrada – da sabedoria, da vida e morte – a madeira precisa sempre estar sendo golpeada como uma bigorna para a chama continuar acesa e, por extensão, para a poesia – chama sagrada – renascer sempre nova, pois são os golpes que fazem a madeira como matéria prima retinir/gemer, em nova associação de violência com fertilidade.

Se numa primeira leitura "wood" se refere à madeira de um tronco de árvore como corpo, que é golpeado pelo machado, a referência a uma floresta está também implícita em "wood", pois um golpe na madeira de uma árvore atinge e ressoa por toda a floresta. Consequentemente, as conotações simbólicas da floresta como moradia misteriosa de um deus e portanto o primeiro templo do homem, cenário dos primeiros rituais de fertilidade e encantamento, também estão implícitos na madeira que ressoa, através dos golpes de machado, com todas essas associações sagradas, mágicas e ritualísticas.

A elas podemos ainda acrescentar associações literárias específicas, como as mencionadas por Axelrod, para quem "echoing wood" de Plath retoma "an echoing wood"de Roethke, o "dark wood of my life" de Dante, a árvore de Whitman que "utters joyous leaves", as "vowelled trees" de Thomas, a árvore cortada de Lowell e o poema "A Pact" de Pound – que descreve os poemas de Whitman como madeira nova quebrada. O crítico inclusive visualiza nesta imagem a mutilação, por parte de Plath, dos textos de seus precursores, o poema destarte exemplificando a estratégia final da poeta em desapropriar o poder linguístico masculino (AXELROD, 1990: 75). Entretanto, parece-nos que a referência de Dylan Thomas – um dos poetas preferidos de Plath – à floresta como "written woods", conectados com a "tree of words" – a poesia – nos fazem vislumbrar neste tronco que ressoa quando golpeado por palavras a própria imagem da poesia como *poiesis*, como ação de fazer, criar algo, o que é confirmado acima em relação à madeira.

O fato de a madeira reagir sonoramente quando golpeada, faz lembrar que "to ring" é verbo onomatopaico, imitando o som ressoante e claro de um metal vibrando (sino, trombeta, moeda), enquanto o substantivo "ring" denota não só um som metálico ou vibrante, ressonância, mas também timbre de voz, o que nos remete a todas as acepções de "to ring": soar – produzir som, propalar-se, ser pronunciado–, ressoar – repercutir, soar de novo, ecoar, ser sonoro, estrondear – , tinir – soar aguda ou vibrantemente (vidro ou metal) – e

retinir– tinir por muito tempo, ressoar, impressionar vivamente o ânimo (como a voz que retine no fundo da alma), fazer soar ou ecoar. Todas elas ressaltam a produção de vibrações sonoras surgidas do atrito/conflito do golpe do machado com a madeira e o ressoar das mesmas, e, por extensão, sua repercussão na floresta – com toda sua carga simbólica –, como também seu retinir em nossas almas.

Esta sonoridade continua na linha seguinte, "and the echoes!", pois a palavra "echoes", antecipada fonologicamente por "and", além de denotar repetição de som por reflexão das ondas sonoras e imitação, artifício pelo qual as últimas sílabas de um verso são retomadas no outro, também nos remete mitologicamente à ninfa Eco que, rejeitando as propostas de Pan, é destroçada pelos pastores enlouquecidos pelo deus e retém apenas o poder da canção. Este poder se concretizará não só nas duas linhas seguintes como se amplificará ao longo do espaço e do tempo poema, pois tanto em nível sonoro quanto de conteúdo, os ecos das palavras/machados continuarão ressoando pelas linhas – confirmando a tendência da energia metafórica de se estender e assimilar outros elementos (PREMINGER, 1974: 494) – e serão reencontrados mais tarde pelo poeta no final do poema. O ponto de exclamação, visando reconstituir os recursos rítmicos e melódicos da língua falada, enfatiza a admiração da *persona* do poeta pela sonoridade continuada da palavra/machado que, golpeando, faz retinir infindamente o espírito da madeira, esta *alma mater* que é simultaneamente uma "tree of words".

Nas duas linhas seguintes, "Echoes travelling/off from the centre like horses", "echoes" é repetida, desta vez como sujeito da oração e portanto não mais apenas como resultantes dos golpes de machado, como gritos de dor emitidos pela madeira ao ser destroçada como a ninfa Eco, mas adquirindo independência e poder próprios, ao partirem do centro como cavalos. O verbo "travelling off", no sentido de viajar, mover-se, avançar, propagar-se, afastar-se – em relação aos ecos – já implica em movimento sem retorno,

enquanto o gerúndio acrescenta a este movimento continuidade infinda. Estes ecos que "partem do centro como cavalos" também nos remetem novamente à madeira, ao seu cerne ou centro nervoso, pois "kéntron" é o ponto que está a igual distância de todos os pontos de uma circunferência ou da superfície de uma esfera e portanto conota profundeza e o centro da Terra, de onde vem a tronco. Simbolicamente, este "centro" de onde partem os ecos pode significar o estado primordial, matéria primeira, o espírito, o olhar interiorizado do Eu, acrescentando assim à madeira uma qualidade humana, pois os golpes atingiram também seu espírito. Resgata, ainda, por analogia, a imagem deste "anel invisível" cercado pela "multiplicidade de significações" das palavras que formam o "universo poético", na citação de Lins transcrita acima (LINS, 1990: 84), e que depois partem dele, ecoando interminavelmente.

A comparação "like horses" novamente concretiza a sonoridade e a celeridade de "echoes" na imagem do tropel de cavalos partindo em todas as direções. Além de cavalos e patas serem imagens recorrentes na poesia de Plath, as múltiplas associações simbólicas do cavalo tornam esta comparação ainda mais significativa e plurivalente: pois os ecos, como os cavalos – atributo e montaria dos deuses, corpo, com o espírito como cavaleiro – evocam a figura do poeta/deus, que, após golpear seu material de trabalho, a madeira, faz esta enviar seus sons/ecos em todas as direções, através desta montaria dos deuses, comandada pelo espírito que impregna as palavras. Por ser considerado animal sagrado e estar relacionado com fertilidade, liberdade e força, o cavalo também é energia física e mental e fonte de inspiração poética, acrescentando assim aos ecos dessas palavras, que partem como cavalos, a função de servir de inspiração poética, pois os ecos, por extensão também de textos de poetas anteriores, continuam reverberando e partindo deste centro continuamente golpeado por palavras. A pertinência do dinamismo dessa imagem é confirmada pelo comentário que Plath faz sobre seus poemas: "I am not worried that poems reach relatively few people. As it is,

they go surprisingly far – among strangers, around the world, even. Farther than the words of a classroom teacher or the prescriptions of a doctor; if they are very lucky, farther than a lifetime". (NEWMAN, 1970: 320)

A energia e violência que impregnam as metáforas desta primeira estrofe é ainda ressaltada pelos paralelismos sonoros entre as palavras, provocando a aproximação semântica das mesmas (JAKOBSON, 1960: 371): words/axes/echoes/horses têm o /z/ plural idêntico, caracterizando uma rima imperfeita que assim enfatiza, por semelhança sonora, a metaforização do abstrato em concreto – words> axes, echoes> horses – como também a força semântica contida na concretude de axes/horses. A terminação /ing/ em rings/travelling também ressalta a reverberação sonora contida no sentido de ambos os verbos, enquanto que a aliteração axes/after/and, em posição inicial nas três primeiras linhas, destaca a reverberação da vogal aberta /ae/ de "axes" nas linhas seguintes, como se através do som visualizássemos novamente a ação dos golpes de machado, que em seguida ressoam mais duas vezes em "echoes". Todas esses "ecos", mais a assonância off/horses, whose/wood e a rima imperfeita stroke/like, além de enriquecer sonoramente a estrofe e contribuir para a aproximação som/sentido, confirmam o depoimento de Plath sobre o que significa a arte da poesia:

> Technically I like it to be extremely musical and lyrical, with a singing sound. (...) I think there should be a kind of constriction and tension which is never artificial yet keeps in the meaning in a kind of music too. (...) now I like to work in forms that are strict but their strictness isn't uncomfortable. (...) I'm much happier when I know that all my sounds are echoing in different ways throughout the poem (BLOOM, 1989: 81)

Na segunda estrofe, o efeito dos golpes das palavras/machados como instrumentos de violência faz-se sentir não mais através da repercussão dos sons/gemidos/ecos (rings/echoes) que os golpes provocam no corpo/tronco da madeira, simultaneamente "árvore de palavras" e portanto material de poesia, mas através do derramamento do sangue, da seiva da madeira. A comparação do jorrar da seiva com lágrimas – "the sap wells like tears" – confirma que a seiva – fluído de vida, com associações simbólicas de sangue e semen – brota, em forma de lágrimas, quando o tronco é ferido por golpes. Por sua vez as lágrimas, além de conotarem pranto e concretizarem a dor provocada pela violência exercida contra o corpo da madeira, são também simbólicas de fertilidade – "as lágrimas dos deuses" são a chuva – e portanto as lágrimas deste angue da madeira conotam outrossim que a violência da palavra não só destrói mas pode renovar pela dor, tornando-se simbólica do ato criativo. Como Plath já afirmara no poema "Kindness", "The blood jet is poetry, / there is no stopping it." (PLATH, 1988: 270).

O próprio verbo "to well", no sentido de jorrar, fluir, brotar, verter, atribui por contiguidade à "sap" o mesmo sentido de "well" como poço de água, fonte, manancial poético do qual brota a seiva fertilizante, confirmando desta maneira as conotações simbólicas da seiva.

A comparação seguinte – like the /Water striving/ To re-establish its mirror/ Over the rock/ That drops and turns/ – amplia ainda mais a imagem da seiva jorrando como lágrimas, ao incluir a da "água lutando/ para repor seu espelho/ sobre a rocha /que cai e rola", como se a seiva também tentasse, assim como a água por cima da rocha cambaleante, restabelecer o equilíbrio do tronco, que fora alterado com as machadadas desferidas pelas palavras na madeira. Esta nova comparação é ainda consolidada pelas associações simbólicas que a água tem em comum com a seiva, pois se a seiva é fluído de vida, a água é matéria prima da qual

procede a vida, amplificação esta que paraleliza a relação madeira/tronco com a floresta: da parte ao todo.

Novamente o dinamismo e a energia contidos nos verbos "strike" e "travelling", retornam na imagem da água lutando, forcejando, empenhando-se – "striving" – para "restabelecer seu espelho sobre a rocha que cai e rola", trazendo à tona a semelhança estrutural e conceitual entre o espelho das águas e o espelho: este, como superfície lisa que reflete a imagem dos objetos e portanto simbólico de reflexo do eu interior, da alma e das memórias inconscientes; aquele, como água, simbólico de transição entre o elemento fluido e o sólido, entre a vida e morte, como também de conhecimento, memória e o inconsciente. Esta sobreposição água/espelho acrescenta à seiva, como fluído de vida e manancial poético, as associações simbólicas dessas duas imagens, pois o manancial poético é formado também pelas memórias inconscientes que os golpes de machado arrancam da madeira.

E, como simbolicamente o eco tem a mesma função do espelho – reflexo de nosso eu interior, sentimentos e memórias – retornamos à imagem sonora da primeira estrofe, pela sobreposição desses simbolismos. Esta mesma sobreposição acontece em relação à comparação dos ecos partindo do centro como cavalos, pois o cavalo também está associado ao inconsciente, à compreensão intuitiva e simboliza o eu em sonhos, projetando assim a íntima relação existente entre imagens aparentemente tão díspares – palavras /machados /ecos / cavalos – e, por outro lado, entre seiva/ lágrimas/ água/ espelho – relações essas que nos lembram Sartre, em "Por que escrever?":

> (...) todas as relações que ele [leitor] estabelece entre as (...) palavras, lhe garantem uma coisa: elas foram expressamente procuradas. Ele pode até fingir que existe uma ordem secreta entre partes que não parecem ter relações entre si; o outro [autor] o precedeu

> neste caminho e as desordens mais belas são efeitos da arte, isto é, são ainda ordem. Ler é indução, interpolação, extrapolação e a base dessas atividades repousa sobre a vontade do leitor (...). (SARTRE, 1972: 379).

Nesta luta infinda entre o estático – projetado pela procura da água por equilíbrio – tentando se sobrepor ao dinâmico – projetado pelo movimento da rocha que cai e rola, que por sua vez é ressaltado pelo enjambement unindo a segunda à terceira estrofe – a imagem da rocha, com conotações de durabilidade e imortalidade, é agora violentada pela sua metaforização em "A white skull,/ Eaten by weedy greens", recuperando assim suas associações simbólicas com os ossos da terra, como a primeira forma sólida da Criação. Mas este "Crânio branco/ Comido por ervas daninhas" – que já foi receptáculo da vida e do pensamento e que agora simboliza a morte, mas também, como a rocha, aquilo que sobrevive à morte e, assim, indestrutibilidade e imortalidade – tem suas associações simbólicas ainda acrescidas e problematizadas por ser igualmente receptáculo de transmutação. Esta associação é corroborada por "eaten by weedy greens", as ervas daninhas conotando não só vegetação e, portanto, cheias de vitalidade, mas também o fato de nunca poderem ser totalmente erradicadas, porque pertencem à terra. Em outras palavras: o crânio é simultaneamente rocha, indestrutibilidade, receptáculo de vida, morte, ossos da terra e constante transmutação entre morte e vida nova, através das ervas carcomendo-o e por estar sempre cambaleante, em movimento, como rocha.

Todas essas associações semânticas ainda são reforçadas por paralelismos sonoros que aumentam a relação som/sentido, ao diminuir a arbitrariedade do signo linguístico, como a assonância "eaten/weedy/greens", aproximando as três palavras como se formassem um só conceito e ressaltando a cor verde como inerente a "weed"; a rima parcial mirror/over

enfatizando a supremacia do espelho sobre a rocha, a repetição da consoante líquida /r/ em /rock/drops mais a assonância rock/drops enfatizando o movimento de cair como inerente à rocha; a aliteração wells/water/weedy aproximando a imagem da água com a das ervas submersas que carcomem o crânio. Todos eles também acresentam à estrofe como um todo uma sonoridade mais sutil do que a proporcionada por uma rima tradicional.

Se até agora visualizávamos o percurso da palavra poética em suas constantes transformações/metáforas, temos, repentinamente, na linha seguinte, uma pausa temporal. Ela precede o aparecimento do eu poético/poeta, em seu reencontro com essas mesmas palavras na estrada, agora secas e sem rumo, mas ainda num infatigável bater de cascos: "Years later I/ Encounter them on the road – / Words dry and riderless,/ The indefatigable hoof-taps." Estes "anos depois", denotando a passagem do tempo, colocam o poema numa segunda etapa: o futuro, olhando para o passado. E neste confronto com as palavras – pois "to encounter" significa não só encontrar, deparar-se, mas também enfrentar o inimigo, travar luta, chocar-se com – , o eu poético/ poeta percebe que as palavras que já foram golpes de machado e ecos não são mais suas. Já estão secas – sem seiva e portanto áridas, vazias de sentido, sem energia ou ressonância, sugerindo imagens/ metáforas mortas– e sem cavaleiro – a inspiração poética metaforizada nos golpes do machado e associada simbolicamente ao cavalo está sem rumo, pois o poeta, como cavaleiro – o Eu racional tentando manter o Id sob controle – está ausente e assim ouve-se apenas "o infatigável bater de cascos". Ou seja, as palavras/ecos de um poema continuam em galope infatigável, mas sua força e ressonância que partia de um centro – da alma da madeira golpeada – perdeu-se e se transformou num bater seco de cascos, como à distância. Assim, se as primeiras metáforas criadas foram como golpes na madeira, esta precisa novamente ser violentada por novos golpes do poeta/deus para ser revitalizada com outros sons e sentidos.

Shelley já percebera isso, ao comentar sobre a linguagem dos poetas, em "A Defence of Poetry":

> Their language is vitally metaphorical; that is, marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until words, which represent them, become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thought instead of pictures of integral thoughts: and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse". (SHELLEY, 1961: 229-30)

E o expressivo simbolismo da estrada – da vida, da aventura, da experiência – se enriquece mais uma vez com a imagem das palavras vazias e sem rumo ecoando infatigavelmente por esta via pública, e portanto no domínio de todos, abertas a novas interpretações. A própria palavra "indefatigable", polissilábica, com uma articulação mais enfática que as outras, projeta a expressividade incomum desta qualidade atribuída ao bater de cascos/ecos.

Este encontro é ainda enfatizado por outros paralelismos sonoros: a repetição de /i/ em like/ like/ striving/white preparando sonoramente o aparecimento do eu poético, como se ele já estivesse subrepticiamente presente no poema; a rima interna later/encounter sugerindo que o "encounter" é conseqüência natural de "later"; "years", rimando internamente com "tears", remete-nos sonoramente ao conteúdo da segunda estrofe, deste modo recuperando-o e assim enfatizando o contraste entre as palavras plenas de seiva e as palavras, anos mais tarde, secas e sem rumo; o quiasmo dry/riderless, evidenciando que "dry"está contido em "riderless", sugerindo que as qualidades negativas de ambas as palavras se sobrepõem numa única imagem abstrata, assim como "words" antes de se metaforizar em "axes"; a aliteração road/riderless juntamente com a repetição das consoantes /d/ e /r/ em road/words/dry/riderless

formando um núcleo semântico entre a estrada e os ecos das palavras secas e desorientadas; e a repetição de f/t/ em indefatigable/hoof-taps, como se "hoof-taps" estivesse contido em "indefatigable" ou, invertidamente, como se "indefatigable" fosse uma qualidade intrínseca de "hoof-taps". Todos esses efeitos contribuem, mais uma vez, para a aproximação semântica dessas palavras.

Se o novo enjambement entre a terceira e a quarta estrofes põe em evidência o estado deplorável em que o eu poético encontra as palavras – "words dry and riderless" – o que ainda é visualmente ressaltado por estarem na primeira linha da quarta estrofe, o comentário final do poema transita desta perda da fertilidade e do poder das palavras para um plano metafísico, ao comentar que "while/ from the bottom of the pool, fixed stars/ govern a life".

Como a conjunção "enquanto" deixa claro, a visualização da imagem "do fundo da lagoa estrelas fixas governam uma vida" é concomitante não só com a ação imediatamente anterior – as palavras secas e desgovernadas ecoando infatigavelmente – mas retoma também por analogia as ações passadas, como a imagem da água lutando para se recompor sobre a rocha cambaleante. Este contraste entre o movimento dessas imagens anteriores e imobilidade contida na imagem final provoca mais um choque visual e semântico nos leitores: a percepção de que, por um lado, na superfície da água – como conhecimento, memória e alma da poesia – o embate continua, ao ela tentar retomar sua superfície espelhada sobre o rolar da rocha/ crânio – receptáculo de transmutação como a própria metáfora – e, portanto, da poesia procurando restabelecer seu equilíbrio sobre as novas metáforas que caem e rolam constantemente sobre ela. Por outro, a percepção de que, apesar da luta, é das profundezas da lagoa que as estrelas, refletidas como num espelho nesta lagoa insondável e imóvel, governam a vida, assim como a poesia – reflexão sobre a vida e simultaneamente reflexo dela – é governada por palavras fixas, com destino predeterminado e portanto sem possibilidade de criar novas metáforas.

A interpretação destas últimas linhas está apoiada no fato de que a palavra "bottom" em "from the bottom of the pool", denotando tanto a parte sólida sobre a qual se acha uma grande massa de água como o fundo da lagoa, quanto a profundidade de um abismo, leva-nos ao sentido figurado de "bottom" como essência, vindo do fundo da alma. Deste modo, "from the bottom of the pool" recupera o sentido de "alma" contido em água, alma escondida no fundo desta lagoa, pois "pool" também denota o ponto mais fundo e parado num rio e portanto, em linguagem figurada, conota voragem, abismo, numa sobreposição de imagens com "bottom". Simbólico de conhecimento cósmico, reflexão e, em psicologia, de consciência universal, esse "fundo da lagoa", inalcançável, imponderável e imóvel, nos fornece pois esta nova imagem da água em profundidade, em contraponto à imagem da água em sua superfície. Ambas as imagens confirmando que, mesmo com toda a violência e energia dispendida pelas palavras para renovar a linguagem poética, mesmo assim o que governa a vida/poesia são as estrelas fixas.

A própria multiplicidade do simbolismo das estrelas nos permite aprofundar a interpretação que pode ser dada a elas, mesmo se a referência intertextual a *King Lear* –

> It is the stars,
>
> the stars above us, govern our conditions;
>
> Else one self mate and mate could not beget
>
> Such different issues. (*Lear* 4.3.34-37)

- já direcione este simbolismo a partir do texto shakespeariano: a fala de Kent atribuindo o contraste entre a personalidade de Cordélia e a de suas irmãs às estrelas, pois são elas que regem nossos destinos. Como fontes de luz e portanto simbólicas de espírito e do conflito entre forças espirituais (da luz) e as materiais (das trevas), as estrelas refletidas no espelho da lagoa, entretanto, não estão acima de nós e em movimento, como em *Lear*, mas

invertidas e fixadas no espelho das águas, como se este as tivesse absorvido. Deste modo, se as estrelas em *Lear* governam o destino dos homens – em astrologia, as estrelas acima do horizonte por ocasião do nascimento de um homem moldam seu destino– as estrelas em Plath – fixas, determinadas – também "governam uma vida", mas, por estarem no fundo da lagoa e portanto abaixo do horizonte, tornam o simbolismo das estrelas em *Lear* ainda mais negativo, visto que esta posição em astrologia simbolizaria uma época desfavorável no destino do homem.

O fato de o poema terminar com a palavra "vida" e assim sobrepor-se ao conceito de poesia, como visto, demonstra que todo o movimento contido nas quatro estrofes acaba na imobilidade das estrelas no fundo da lagoa, de onde elas governam nossas vidas e, em consequência, a vida de nossas palavras.Se a história de nossas vidas – como o conjunto de nossos atos, desde o nascimento até a morte, está predeterminado pela força das estrelas imutáveis que governam nosso destino – já de antemão desfavorável pelo fato de elas estarem cravadas no fundo da lagoa – estas estrelas tornam-se também metafóricas, como já dito, das palavras com sentido fixo, determinado, que nos governam, e das quais não podemos nos libertar, a não ser através do esforço e da violência da criatividade do poeta, desferindo golpes com as próprias palavras como instrumentos de poder, criativo e destrutivo. E, por extensão, também metafóricas dos textos canônicos, imutáveis, como a intertextualidade com Shakespeare deixa entrever, numa nova reviravolta semântica das imagens.

A expressividade desta última estrofe é ainda realçada por paralelismos sonoros como a assonância hoof/pool enfatizando o contraste entre movimento e imobilidade das duas imagens; a repetição do grupo consonantal kst/st em "fixed" e "stars" aproximando as duas palavras, como se fixidez/determinismo fosse qualidade inerente às estrelas; simultaneamente, a repetição da consoante surda /f/ em indefatigable/ hoof/ fixed/ life unindo

toda esta última estrofe sonoramente, e assim ressaltando o contraste entre luta e inércia que caracteriza o poema.

Esta poética da violência que percorre e ecoa através de todo o poema – e que tematiza o poder do poeta de transformar uma palavra em ferramenta de luta, golpeando a "árvore de palavras", o corpo da linguagem/ poesia para produzir novas palavras, que por sua vez irão ecoar incessantemente até perderem a seiva e seu contato com o cavaleiro e se tornarem abstratas e perdidas – e sugerindo, por extensão, que a palavra precisa ser constantemente golpeada por novos poetas a fim de recarregá-la de energia, tornando-a ígnea, esta poética leva-nos agora a fazer uma reflexão sobre a palavra metafórica, já definida acima.

Se refletirmos sobre as metáforas em "Words" iremos perceber que a transferência metafórica aconteceu pela identidade e equivalência que o poeta intuiu e estabeleceu entre a palavra/teor e o machado/veículo como instrumentos de poder/base da metáfora. E todas as metáforas da primeira estrofe – palavras> machados> madeira> ecos> cavalos – concretizam o ato da criação poética como impregnado de dinamismo – golpes, violência, ressonância, movimento – até que, com o passar do tempo, esgotadas suas possibilidades semânticas e de direção, mas ainda ecoando, o poeta as reencontra, como a quarta estrofe expressa, para que elas possam ser manipuladas pela fúria criativa de um outro poeta que as faça novamente fazer ressoar e partir à procura de outros rumos. Em contraposição, a imagens da segunda e terceira estrofes, apesar de partirem também da imagem da madeira, através da seiva/sangue, criam uma segunda série de metáforas que concretizam a amplificação deste conteúdo da poesia: seiva> lágrimas> água> espelho, projetando a luta da poesia como superfície espelhada em acomodar essas novas rochas/metáforas que rolam dentro de seu leito e mais uma vez metaforizados no crâneo, receptáculo de transmutação. Assim, mesmo que a imagem final caracterize-se pela inércia no fundo da lagoa e pelas estrelas/palavras fixas que

governam a vida como poesia, a luta da palavra poética contra a inércia continua, num eterno vir-a-ser. O poema portanto, como incessante "transportar para uma coisa o nome de outra", torna-se a concretização da própria metáfora, em seu incessante transportar do conteúdo de uma palavra para outra, identificando-as e equivalendo-as através da energia e violência de suas imagens.

A violência da linguagem poética em Ana Cristina Cesar

Como Sylvia Plath, Ana Cristina Cesar também se refere à palavra poética e à poesia em diversos poemas, tais como "Primeira lição","eu penso", "nada, esta espuma", "houve um poema", "Vacilo da vocação", "a poesia pode me esperar?", "estou sirgando", "Poesia", "Flores do Mais", entre outros [3]. E, em canto paralelo a "Words", alguns deles também conceituam a poesia como ato dolorido, ferida, violência metafórica projetada em palavras, demonstrando a afinidade existente entre ambas as poetas em relação ao ato poético, simultaneamento criativo e destrutivo. Esta violência inerente à poesia de Ana Cristina já havia sido percebida por Freitas Filho, ao comentar, em relação à afirmação de Ana Cristina "escrevo in loco, sem literatura":

> Quem escreve assim, situada e sitiada pela contingência, entre "ficção e confissão" (...), tem que "desentranhar", (...) do corpo geral e cotidiano da prosa e da fala, o poético que se descobre. Os raros que possuem esta percepção sabem que a poesia nesse estado de latência somente se deixa supreender em plenitude quando a violência que reduz sua quantidade, paradoxalmente, amplia e concentra seu extrato, seu leque de significados, o número de suas raízes, agora expostas, como as de uma planta que se arranca do vaso". (CESAR, 1999: 7)

[3] Para os poemas sem título, usamos a primeira linha dos mesmos, em letras minúsculas.

Como também Silviano Santiago já havia ressaltado em relação a Cesar, "a poesia aparentemente confessional de Ana Cristina vale como corrosão e vale como construção "(CESAR, 2004:114), observação que se aplica também à obra de Plath e, em específico, a "Words", como visto.

Em "Contagem regressiva" (CESAR, 1985: 160-4), escrito alguns meses antes de seu suicídio, a linha "Os poemas são para nós uma ferida", mesmo descontextualizada, ressalta a identidade que o eu poético concebe entre poema e ferida, não só como lesão produzida num ente vivo por um choque, uma arma ou instrumento cortante, mas também em sentido figurado como mágoa ou dor intensa, golpe mental ou emocional sofrido pela sensibilidade, metaforizando novamente o ato criativo como doloroso e lembrando-nos, por analogia, do corpo/tronco de madeira ferido pelos golpes do machado/palavras, emitindo sons e vertendo lágrimas. Se em Plath partimos não só de uma imagem abstrata para uma concreta – palavras>machados –, mas simultaneamente para uma imagem relacionada com um instrumento de violência – o machado –, o mesmo ocorre em Ana Cristina, ao identificar o poema com uma ferida, que é tanto concreta, sentida como uma lesão corporal em consequência de um ato violento, como abstrata, sentida como mágoa, transformando-se assim em mais uma metáfora: poema>ferida>mágoa.

Uma concepção semelhante do poema como dor, acrescida da percepção de terror súbito, aparece em:

Eu penso/a face fraca do poema/ a metade na página/ partida

Mas calo a face dura/ flor apagada no sonho

Eu penso/ a dor visível do poema/ a luz prévia/ dividida/

Mas calo a superfície negra/ pânico iminente do nada (CESAR: 2004, p.25).

Neste poema, o contraste que o eu poético estabelece entre pensar e calar nas duas orações adversativas e paralelísticas projeta, na primeira oração, o dilema do poeta de poder, por um lado, imaginar/visualizar a estrutura física do poema na página e portanto dando uma feição ao mesmo – esta "face fraca", penetrável com o olhar; mas, por outro, não conseguir transmitir/expressar a "face dura" do poema, seu lado hermético, inviolável – esta metafórica "flor apagada no sonho".

O paralelismo da segunda oração amplia esta estrutura, ao apresentar o dilema do poeta desta vez como sendo capaz de pensar/imaginar a dor visível que consegue transmitir no poema – dor iluminada porque compartilhada com o leitor – mas não conseguir transmitir o pânico ante a não existência, metaforizado na "superfície negra", indicadora de trevas mais profundas ainda sob sua superfície e, portanto, pânico impenetrável pelo leitor. Este paralelismo nos remete mais uma vez a Plath, pois lembra a imagem da água em "Words", tanto na superfície, como na escuridão abismal que reina no "fundo da lagoa", com suas associações simbólicas de voragem, alma e consciência universal, revelando em ambas a mesma concepção do conflito em toda criação artística, expressa na epígrafe de Benjamin e já visto em relação a Plath: No interior de toda estrutura lingüística reina o conflito entre o expresso e o expressável por um lado, o inexprimido e o inexprimível por outro. Quando se visualiza este conflito, é na perspectiva do inexprimível que se percebe logo a essência última espiritual. (BENJAMIN, 1971: 86,97) . A epígrafe não só corrobora este dilema, mas o

coloca quase que como condição prévia para o criar artístico, sempre em conflito entre o comunicável e o não comunicável.

A metaforização do poema como corpo ferido aparece igualmente em:

Olho muito tempo o corpo de um poema
Até perder de vista o que não seja corpo
e sentir separado dentre os dentes
um filete de sangue
nas gengivas (CESAR, 1999: 89).

Mais uma vez a idéia de que o poema tem um lado palpável, concreto, como a madeira em Plath. Entretanto, esta fixação do olhar, "até perder de vista o que não seja corpo", faz simultaneamente o eu poético não enxergar mais nada além deste corpo, levando-o a sentir dentro de si próprio o escorrer do sangue nas gengivas. A imagem dos dentes – arma primitiva, mas igualmente fortificação do homem material interior – aliada à imagem das gengivas ensanguentadas – este tecido fibro-muscular, avermelhado e impregnado de sangue, este último com conotações simbólicas de paixão/sensação, vida, sacrifício, fertilidade – , metaforizam novamente a violência que atravessa o ato poético: o sofrimento que verte de um poema é transmutado para o próprio corpo do poeta que o experimenta através do sangue que escorre em sua boca, tão significativa e simbólica do poder da Palavra Criativa. O filete de sangue remete-nos, por isomorfismo, novamente à seiva que se encontra no interior do corpo/tronco de madeira e que também escorre, quando esta é golpeada, corroborando a concepção, em ambas as poetas, do poema como corpo que verte sangue quando ferido. Associação semelhante encontra-se também em "as palavras escorrem como

líquidos/lubrificando passagens ressentidas" (CESAR, 1985: 84), nas quais a comparação das palavras escorrendo "como líquidos" ressalta o valor curativo e o poder energético das mesmas, como o sangue e a seiva lubrificando as veias do ser humano e das árvores, a fim de vigorizar essas "passagens ressentidas", sofridas, trechos ou frases ressequidos e, portanto, sem vigor, numa outra reviravolta metafórica das palavras em Plath.

Talvez seja "houve um poema que guiava a própria ambulância" o texto que melhor expresse, como canto paralelo, a violência da transposição metafórica ocorrida em "Words" e projetada, como já enfatizado, através dos ecos das palavras partindo como cavalos pela estrada e continuando a ecoar mesmo após terem perdido a seiva e o rumo:

> houve um poema/ que guiava a própria ambulância/e dizia: não lembro/
>
> de nenhum céu que me console,/nenhum,/ e saía,/sirenes baixas,/
>
> recolhendo os restos das conversas,/ das senhoras, "para que nada se perca/
>
> ou se esqueça",/ proverbial, (notório, conhecido)/
>
> mesmo se ferido**,/** houve um poema/ ambulante,/ cruz vermelha/sonâmbula/
>
> que escapou-se/ e foi-se/inesquecível,/ irremediável,/ ralo abaixo. (CESAR, 2004: 52)

A metaforização que ocorre em "houve um poema que guiava a própria ambulância" sugerindo, por um lado, que o poema tem autonomia para achar seu próprio rumo, como um

ser humano, mas, por outro, que o carro que dirige é a sua própria ambulância – este veículo especialmente equipado para conduzir doentes e feridos –, leva à identificação do poema doente com o próprio veículo que dirige. Se pensarmos em termos de teor, veículo e base da metáfora, como visto em relação a Plath, percebemos que há uma sobreposição entre o teor – o poema – e o veículo – a ambulância – já que a base comum entre ambos é o movimento implícito num poema/ambulância. Isto é, a metáfora – este veículo de mudança – é a própria ambulância/veículo de transposição, levando o poema de um local a outro.

Esta personificação do poema como um ser doente que guia sua própria ambulância é em seguida ampliada ao se referir o poeta à tristeza do poema em não ter inspiração, nenhum poder sobrenatural que influenciasse seu estado de alma, pois não se lembrava "de nenhum céu" que o consolasse. E, portanto, ao transitar pelas ruas com sirenes baixas, incapazes de chamar a atenção dos transeuntes, o poema/ambulância, sem energia poética, apenas repetia o que já fora dito, provérbios comuns, "recolhendo os restos das conversas" como quem recolhe lixo nas ruas, equacionando a falta de inspiração poética com seu estado doentio e tristeza. Pois "mesmo se ferido" por golpes – a ideia de violência está implícita nesta imagem –, este poema não reagia, não conseguia ultrapassar-se em sua linguagem convencional e proverbial.

A história é recontada a seguir, com a imagem de "um poema ambulante" identificando o poema mais uma vez com um ser humano errante, caminhando automaticamente pelas ruas como um sonâmbulo, enquanto a imagem da cruz vermelha sobre fundo branco – indicativa da neutralidade das ambulâncias – confirma e concretiza a "neutralidade" deste poema, que não assumiu uma posição/feição definida. Seu final dá-se com a eliminação do poema, que "escapou-se e foi-se (...) ralo abaixo". Esta imagem – denotando tanto a abertura do ralo quando a parte do encanamento que fica imediatamente abaixo – metaforiza de forma chocante a supressão dos poemas mais fracos, que são tragados

pela corrente do esquecimento, assim como a água não aproveitada escoa pelo ralo. Mesmo assim, o poema permanece inesquecível – apesar de irremediável – para o poeta que o criou, numa sobreposição da figura do poeta com a de sua obra, salientando assim a íntima relação que se estabelece entre criador e criatura, como já visto em "olho muito tempo o corpo de um poema".

Como mencionado, este poema estabelece um diálogo com "Words" através da imagem do poema/ ambulância – perambulando sem rumo e quase inaudível até desaparecer, levando consigo os restos de metáforas sem vida própria – , em contraposição à imagem dinâmica dos cavalos em Plath – carregando as ressonâncias da energia metafórica das palavras em todas as direções, até elas também perderem a seiva e o rumo, num novo reencontro com o poema de Ana Cristina. Demonstra, portanto, mais uma vez a preocupação de Ana Cristina – como havia sido a de Plath – em caracterizar o ato poético como dinâmico e violento, cujas palavras precisam destruir as metáforas gastas para poderem criar novas metáforas, que por sua vez também se tornarão vazias um dia, num processo contínuo de revitalização da linguagem poética como vida/ morte/ ressureição.

Conclusão

Retomando algumas das considerações expostas na Introdução, partimos em nosso trabalho do princípio de que, além da violência real que nos circunda, tematizada pela literatura do século XX como maneira de intervir nesta realidade, existe também uma violência fundamental no próprio princípio de criação artística, resultante da tensão gerada pela luta das artes como fontes de vida contra a morte. E, no poema lírico, esta violência resulta, primeiramente, do atrito entre permanência e solvência – os elementos convencionais do gênero lírico e os elementos acidentais da existência do poema, expressos tanto nos paralelismos sonoros, sintáticos e semânticos que permeiam os poemas analisados, como na

força ígnea de suas metáforas. Resulta, também, das relações que a lírica estabelece com dados concretos da realidade – da abstração das palavras de um poema à sua concretização em imagens. Mas resulta, principalmente, do conflito entre o expresso e o expressável por um lado – como os cavalos de Plath e a ambulância de Ana Cristina, metaforizações da própria metáfora – e o inexprimido e o inexpressável, por outro – que permanecem no fundo de lagoa de Plath e subjazem à superfície negra de Ana Cristina, ambos tão simbólicos do não-comunicável.

Plurivalente, esta violência procede, finalmente, das relações que o poema estabelece com a realidade da palavra cotidiana, formalizando-a em instrumento de luta e assim fazendo-a recriar e reacender – através da destruição da linguagem lírica convencional e das metáforas sem vida – a chama da linguagem poética com sua multiplicidade de significações, mostrando-a como um constante vir-a-ser, um transgredir-se contínuo em sua luta para tentar exprimir o inexprimível.

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INTERMEDIALITY IN ELIZABETH BISHOP´S POETRY

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ABSTRACT: Starting from the preciseness and expressiveness of the descriptions in Elizabeth Bishop´s poetry, the essay relies on the concepts of intermediality, iconotext and ekphrasis for the analysis of three of the poet´s best known poems, "Arrival at Santos", "Brazil, January 1, 1502" and "The Burglar of Babylon". The three are read as evidence of the poet´s changing attitudes towards Brazil as well as illustrations of the role played by intermediality – the relation between Literature and the other arts and media – as tools for social and historical criticism.

KEY WORDS: intermediality; ekphrasis and cinematographic references in Elizabeth Bishop´s poetry; Elizabeth Bishop and Brazil; social and historical criticism.

RESUMO: A partir da precisão e expressividade da descrição na poesia de Elizabeth Bishop, o ensaio recorre aos conceitos de intermidialidade, iconotexto e écfrase para a análise de três dos poemas mais conhecidos da poeta, "Arrival at Santos", "Brazil, January 1, 1502" e "The Burglar of Babylon". Os três são lidos como manifestações das mudanças de atitude da poeta em relação ao Brasil bem como ilustrações do papel representado pela intermedialidade – a relação entre a Literatura e as outras artes e mídias – como instrumentos de crítica histórica e social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: intermidialidade; écfrase e efeitos cinematográficos na poesia de Elizabeth Bishop; Elizabeth Bishop e o Brasil; crítica social e histórica.

Since the publication of Elizabeth Bishop´s first books, *North and South* (1946) and *Poems* (1950), critics have insistently noted the preciseness and expressiveness of description in her poems, involving places, animals and objects of the outside world. These features, consistent with the emphasis on observation and description typical of North-American modernist poetry and with the general principles of high modernism – reticence, impersonality, objectivity – did not, however, exclude something less immediately evident, a

psychologizing, interiorizing turn, which distinguished Bishop from her contemporary fellow poets. The topographic description in many of her texts often looks like an excuse for self-expression. Under the guise of realist descriptions, her poems slide towards a subtle subjectivity, hinting at emotions and empathies absent, for instance, from the production of her friend, and, up to a point, mentor, Marianne Moore. As has already been commented (OLIVEIRA, 2002: 41-49), a lyrical persona lurks in seemingly "objective" descriptions – an aspect of Bishop´s poetry which in time came to be studied by critics, among whom David Kalstone and the Brazilian poet/critic/translator Paulo Henriques Britto.

Elizabeth Bishop´s poems about the Brazilian physical and human landscape can thus be taken as a special manifestation of her subjectivity. By that I mean the expression, in descriptive poems, of the poet´s changing attitudes towards the country which was hers for almost two decades, particularly her growing involvement with its physical and social landscape. An initially cool, detached description of touristic and exotic details gradually yields to an interest in Brazilian history, art and culture, an empathy with the sufferings brought by colonization to indigenous people and then – especially in her ballad "The Burglar of Babylon" – to a sensitive analysis of inequities still apparent in our social system.

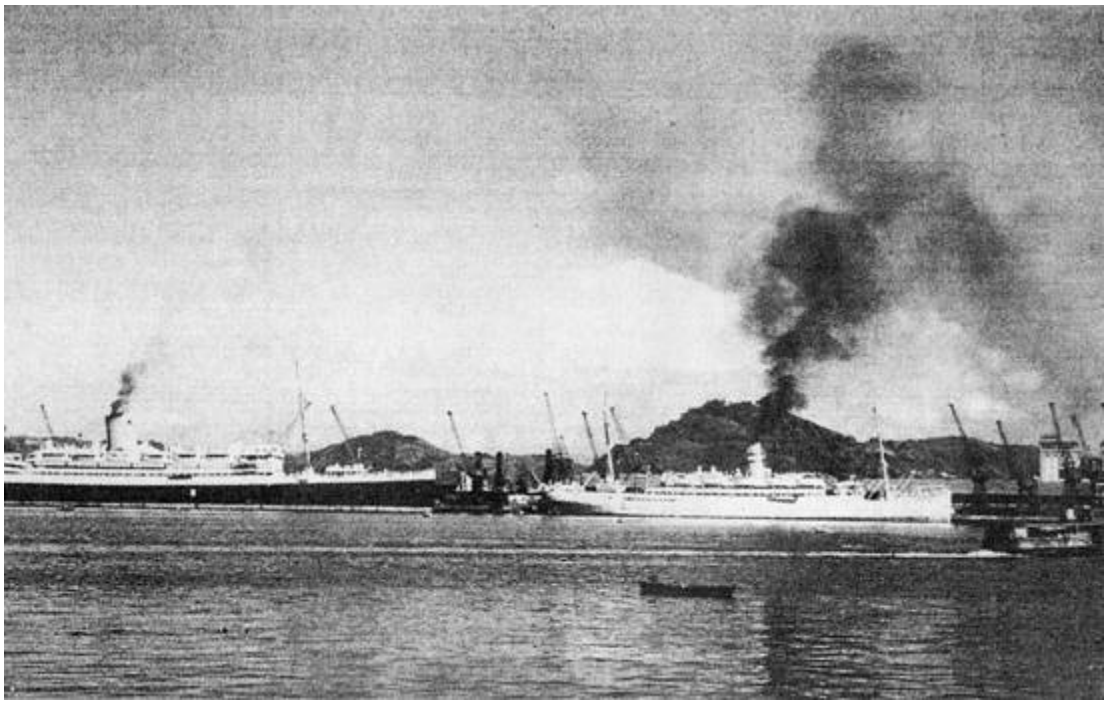
In this paper, I am initially interested in the poet´s attitude towards Brazil as illustrated by two of her best known texts, "Arrival at Santos" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502". Both can be read as examples of a literary phenomenon Liliane Louvel calls *iconotext:* a piece of writing saturated with plastic effects, a privileged space where visual and literary art cross (LOUVEL, 2006: 203). Working with linguistic signifiers, the writer emulates the painter´s brushstrokes. So much so that, offered to a painter, such texts could be transposed to the canvas. Iconotexts can exist in different scales, from the strongest pictorial impregnation – in which reference to a real or fictitious visual work is made explicit and developed – to the subtlest forms, in which painterly suggestions are, so to speak, diluted in the literary text.

Readers are led to represent to themselves the images embedded in the text and deduce their symbolic value or rhetorical intents.

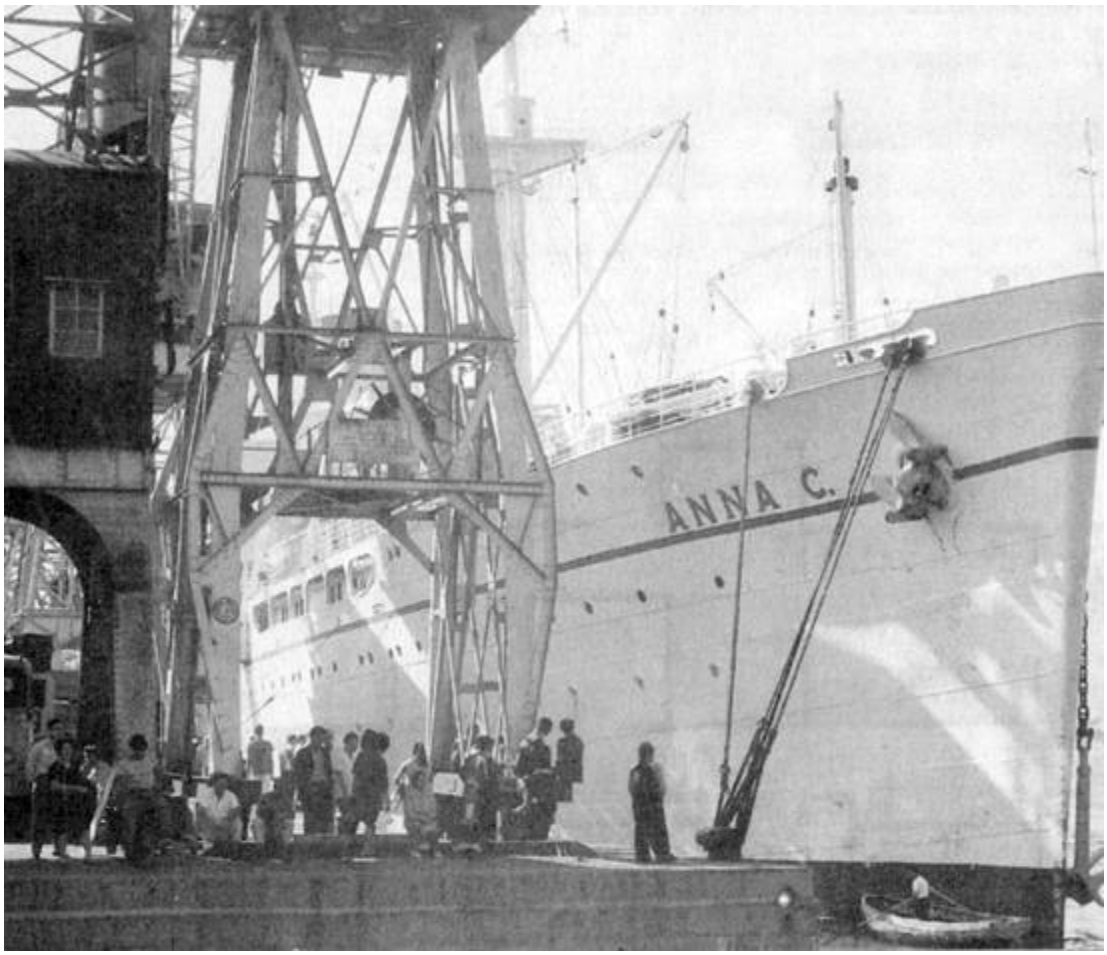
In a similar line, according to a better known terminology, both "Arrival at Santos" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502" can be taken as ekphrastic poems, "verbal representations of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system", according to Claus Clüver´s comprehensive definition (CLŰVER, 1997: 26). In fact, ekphrastic poems have long aroused critical interest, especially as literary transpositions of visual representations found in paintings, tapestries and photographs. These artworks may actually exist, even when not identified by a critic. Alternatively, they may be fictitious, or refer to no specific work, only to general aspects of an artist´s output. Not seldom, the allusion to the visual work consists of mere traces, or is restricted to a title, to a single reference, or then points to a generic model. To my purpose, the main interest of ekphrastic poems lies in the fact that they project the implied author´s response – an impression, a commentary, a meditation – to the intended visual work. They may also (and this is definitely true of Bishop´s texts) tackle extra-textual concerns, such as cultural, social and historical phenomena – precisely those aspects which, after the rise of cultural studies, have moved to the centre of critical attention. In such cases critics are invited to focus their attention on the way in which authors use the visual work to fulfill their rhetorical intent.

In both "Arrival at Santos" and "Brazil, January 1, 1502" the poetic persona comes out as the beholder of visual texts, revealing contrasting attitudes at different moments of Bishop´s Brazilian experience. The first poem, written in 1952, the year of the poet´s first arrival in Brazil, registers a tourist´s initial contact with the land. The poetic persona´s gaze is that of a curious, but cool, detached traveler. The eyes rest on dull, uninteresting details, as if taken by an absent-minded camera: "a coast", "a harbor", "some scenery", "mountains" "a little church", "warehouses", "a tender", passengers leaving the ship... The casual description

of the Brazilian coast evokes pictures of the port of Santos in the 1950´s, like those reproduced in José Girald´s book *Photografias e Fotografias do Porto de Santos* (1996). The black and white photos suggest what the poet may indeed have seen at her arrival, and may be taken as fitting metaphors for a newcomer´s disappointment at the absence of the vivid colors associated with tropical scenery.



The port of Santos in the 1950´s
From *Photografias e Fotografias do Porto de Santos*



The *Anna C*, Santos**,** in the 1950´s**.**
Photografias e Fotografias do Porto de Santos, 1996.

In this poem the factual description hardly disguises a muted disdain, as in the comments on the poor quality of Brazilian stamps and soap:

> the unassertive colors of soap, or postage stamps--
> wasting away like the former, slipping the way the latter
>
> do when we mail the letters we wrote on the boat,
> either because the glue here is very inferior
> or because of the heat

So also the description of the Brazilian flag ("a strange and brilliant rag") sounds anything but flattering. As it seems, the poetic voice did not even expect the country to have a flag at all.

> So that's the flag. I never saw it before.
> I somehow never thought of there being a flag

Whatever interest is expressed seems limited to the hope of finding some English speaker at the customs, who will let the tourists keep the drinks and cigarettes smuggled in their luggage:

> The customs officials will speak English, we hope,
> and leave us our bourbon and cigarettes.

The condescending stance and the poem´s seeming simplicity do not exclude stylistic sophistication. Elegantly turned phrases invite readers to take the poetic attitude. Unusual adjectival usage betrays the voice of the poet tourist – "meager diet of horizon", "self-pitying mountains (…) sad and harsh", "frivolous greenery", "uncertain palms". Plants and lifeless objects are granted attributes properly used of humans. It is of course the poetic persona, not the palms or mountains that feel "self-pitying", "sad", "uncertain". The revealing, anthropomorphizing tone, frequent in Bishop´s descriptive poems, is supported by the poetic voice, which finally acknowledges her half-suppressed emotions, her

> immodest demands for a different world,
> and a better life, and complete comprehension
> of both at last.

"A better life", it seems, the new country indeed brought the poet, or, at least, the possibility to yield to emotions suppressed in her native Puritan surroundings. "Complete comprehension" is always of course impossible. However, as time when on, Bishop´s poetry began to register a vision increasingly less incomplete of herself and of Brazil. Her personal life begins to be timidly used as material for her poetry, just as her descriptive poems more and more reveal changes in her attitude towards her new surroundings. "Arrival at Santos" typically ends with the line "We are driving to the interior". In fact, the woman who lurks under the poetic mask leaves Santos and travels inland. But she also moves to her own inner self, and experiences a progressive understanding and assimilation of the country that welcomes her. The second poem analyzed in this paper, "Brazil, January 1, 1502"**,** turns out a particularly interesting illustration of this process as well as of ekphrastic poetry at the service of historical and ideological criticism.

As a matter of fact, "Brazil, January 1, 1502"**,** sounds totally different from "Arrival at Santos". The gaze, no longer that of the disappointed tourist, is now that of the interested explorer, absorbed in the study of the landscape, the art and the history of the country. Besides, in the very first verse the plural "Januaries" makes clear that the poetic persona is concerned with more than the particular events which took place in Brazil during the Portuguese colonization. The poem first concentrates on what might have been the Portuguese invaders´ initial impressions of the land, but then moves on to the poetic self´s interpretation of ensuing events. In some verses, the description sounds like a recapitulation of sad occurrences common to all colonial practices, such as the enforcement of alien beliefs and the cruelty to natives, women in particular. For both purposes ekphrasis proves a most convenient tool.

To begin with, the poem may be taken as an intersemiotic transposition of a visual work of art, a tapestry whose precise identification has not been traced, but which can be

clearly related to certain Gobelin tapestries based on cartoons reproducing paintings of seventeenth-century Brazil. We may here remember that the Gobelins were a family of dyers who, in the middle of the 15th century, established themselves in the Faubourg Saint-Marcel, Paris. In 1602, Henry IV of France rented factory space for his Flemish tapestry makers on the current location of the Gobelins Manufactory adjoining the Bièvre river. In 1662 the works in the Faubourg Saint Marcel, with the adjoining grounds, were purchased by Jean-Baptiste Colbert on behalf of Louis XIV and made into a general upholstery factory, in which designs both in tapestry and in all kinds of furniture were executed under the superintendence of the royal painter, Charles Le Brun, who served as director and chief designer from 1663-1690. On account of Louis XIV's financial problems, the establishment was closed in 1694, but reopened in 1697 for the manufacture of tapestry, chiefly for royal use. [4]

As the Brazilian historian Carla Mary S. Oliveira (2001: 21, n. 52) reminds us, in the seventeenth century some drawings representing Brazilian landscape were taken to Europe and used decades later as a basis for two series of tapestries woven at the Gobelin factory This fact explains the allusion to the art of tapestry in the epigraph of "Brazil, January 1, 1502". The kind of artwork Elizabeth Bishop certainly had in mind when she used the reference to tapestry in the epigraph can be exemplified by "Les Pecheurs" ("The Fishermen") – a tapestry from the Manufacture Royale de Gobelins, probably after a design by Albert Eckhout and Frans Post. The reference to Eckhout is more than justified: as court painter to the colonial governor of Dutch Brazil, he created many works similar to "Les Pêcheurs, life-size paintings of Amerindians, Africans, and Brazilians of mixed race in support of the governor's project to document the people and natural history of the colony. A lot of interesting information as well as images of this and other tapestries have been made

[4] The explanations from this paragraph were drawn from several entries on Wikipedia.

available by the curator and art historian Esther Schreuder in her site http://estherschreuder.wordpress.com/. Here is one of these images, in fact of "Les Pêcheurs":

"Les Pecheurs". Available at http://estherschreuder.wordpress.com/ acess on March 13, 2012.

"Les Pêcheurs" is one of a series of eight named *Les Anciennes tentures des Indes*, which became a gift from one sovereign to another: only the richest people could afford tapestries, which were exceptionally expensive to produce on account of the materials, labor and time involved. Tapestries from the *Anciennes tentures des Indes* series decorated the palaces of Louis XIV, of the Knights of Saint John on Malta, of Peter the Great at Peterhof near St.Petersburg and many other royal residences. "*Les Pecheurs"* shows three Indians and an African woman with a basket of flowers. They are not ethnographic portraits but representations of people going about what Europeans imagined was their ordinary occupations, in a setting that looks like an exotic version of paradise. A number of elements in this composition, such as the large palm tree to the side of the scene, are based on Albert Eckhout's painting *African woman*.

Unlike her counterpart in the painting, the woman in the tapestry does not wear European jewellery and her headgear is different. So also she has flowers and plants in her basket, whereas in the painting it contains fruit.

The cartoons for the *Les Anciennes tentures des Indes* series were probably drawn by Albert Eckhout himself or by the renowned tapestry weaver Maximiliaan van der Gucht. In her book *Visions of Savage Paradise* Rebecca Parker Brienen suggests that, as early as the 1640s, Prince Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, Governor-General of the Dutch colony in Brazil from 1637 to 1644, may have informed Eckhout and Frans Post of his plans to have tapestries made from the artworks painted for him by the two artists. But how did the tapestries come to be in Louis XIV´s hands? The explanation has to do with the fact that in 1678 Prince Nassau-.Sigen shipped a number of drawings, some 40 paintings, cartoons, animal skins, stuffed birds and other objects to Paris. He was in serious financial straits and hoped that Louis XIV would buy these items in order to commission the celebrated Gobelin factory to make tapestries based on them. The Prince emphasized the value of the Brazilian

collection as something novel and totally distinctive. In a letter to Louis´ minister Simon Arnaul de Pomponne the Prince wrote:

> …on peut former une tapisserie pour meubler une grande sale ou galerie, ce qui serait une chose tres rare, qui ne se trouve plus au monde [...] ce beau pays de Bresil lequel n'a pas son pareil dans le ciel […] voyant la grande difference entre l'Europe et l'Afrique"…

The collection was accepted, even though the tapestries were not made until seven years after Prince Nassau-.Sigen had died. A total of eight series were made, until the cartoons were worn out, when a new series, based on the old one, was designed by Alexandre-Francois Desportes.

This detour about tapestries made after Dutch drawings has been necessary to explain the allusion to tapestry in the epigraph of Bishop´s poem "Brazil, January 1, 1502". The epigraph reads: "embroidered nature... tapestried landscape. --*Landscape Into Art*, by Sir Kenneth Clark". The reference can be traced to the art historian Kenneth Clark´s book on the origin and development of landscape art, and gives witness to the knowledge of Brazilian art and culture that Elizabeth Bishop had been acquiring: she had certainly been reading about Brazilian art. In the poem itself, the description strongly suggests paintings by the artists mentioned above, who were brought to Brazil by Nassau-.Sigen: Albert Eckhout and Frans Janszoon Post (the first European artist to paint South American landscapes.) Both Eckhout and Post registered the human and topographic Brazilian landscape during the Dutch occupation. In the poem, the poetic persona gazes on one of these landscape tapestries. Such as the Gobelin tapestry "Les Pecheurs", it represents the local flora and fauna, as well as the native inhabitants.

Bishop´s text invites readers to imagine the Brazilian landscape such as it may have struck the invaders´ eyes on the date announced in the title – "Brazil, January 1, 1502" – when the Portuguese arrived at Guanabara Bay, which they mistakenly took for the mouth of a great river in what was to become the city of Rio de Janeiro. The descriptive details take thirteen of the fifteen verses of the first stanza and twelve of the twenty-first of the second, which corresponds to fifty per cent of the 153 lines of the whole poem. The reader can hardly refuse the invitation to "enter" the "painting" offered by the vivid ekphrastic construction. I quote:

> big leaves, little leaves, and giant leaves,
> blue, blue-green, and olive,
> with occasional lighter veins and edges,
> or a satin underleaf turned over;
> monster ferns
> in silver-gray relief,
> and flowers, too, like giant water lilies
> up in the air--up, rather, in the leaves--
> purple, yellow, two yellows, pink,
> rust red and greenish white;
> (…)
> A blue-white sky, a simple web,
> backing for feathery detail:
> brief arcs, a pale-green broken wheel,
> a few palms, swarthy, squat, but delicate;

The poetic voice seems intent on demonstrating how far the poet´s pen can emulate the painter´s brush. The silent poetry in the painting (or in the tapestry based on it) indeed becomes a speaking picture. The reader cannot help being taken by the painterly minutiae of the description, its careful attention to forms ("simple web", "feathery detail", "brief arcs"),

textures (“silver gray relief”, “satin underleaf”), size (“big leaves, little leaves, giant leaves “,”giant water lilies”, “monster ferns”) movements (flowers that seem to rise in the air), spatial arrangements (plants in the lower plane, the sky higher up), shades of color (“blue-green”, “two yellows”, “rust red”, “greenish white”, “blue white” “pale green”), subtle analogies (plants which suggest feathers, garlands which evoke wheels), chiaroscuro effects (the “swarthy” palms, in contrast with the “blue- white sky”).

In this static description – the first part of the poem – Literature, an art of time, seems to give up its temporal dimension, in order to emulate the two-dimensional tapestry, an art of space. In the “verbal tapestry” (Ashley Brown´s apt formulation,1991, p. 230) pictures spring up, “fresh as if just finished/ and taken off the frame”. No art lover reader can help placing this as an allusion to meticulous Dutch paintings of seventeenth-century Brazil, as in some landscapes by Frans Post. Several of them include illustrations of the Brazilian flora and fauna, as well as of its inhabitants, and might indeed have become a model for Gobelin tapestries.

Would it be possible to claim that in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" the poetic persona´s interest lies only in the richness of the ekphrastic description, which would prove useful to botanists, as, for instance, nineteenth-century drawings of Brazilian flora and fauna by nineteenth-century artists/naturalists/botanists like Auguste de Saint-Hilaire (1779-1853). A careful reading of the poem suggests a decisively negative answer.

Let us go back to the first three verses. They inform the reader that the vision of nature offered in the "verbal tapestry" is that of the landscape the poetic persona imagines to have struck the Portuguese eyes when they took sight of the great tropical forest.

> nature greets our eyes
> exactly as she must have greeted theirs:
> every square inch filling in with foliage

The ninth verse of the second stanza similarly evokes the world of the conquerors – a world merged in the Christian notion of sin, usually of a sexual nature. This becomes explicit when the attention is drawn to something in the foreground, precisely called "Sin:" five sooty dragons near some massy rocks". Those dragons are, in fact, lizards in heat, about to pursue a female.

> Still in the foreground there is Sin:
> five sooty dragons near some massy rocks.
> The lizards scarcely breathe; all eyes
> are on the smaller, female one, back-to,
>
> The female dragon seems to be receptive, as shown by
>
> her wicked tail straight up and over,
> red as a red-hot wire.

This description has its roots in Elizabeth Bishop´s daily life in Brazil. In a letter to Marianne Moore, she tells her friend how she amused herself watching lizards´ sexual play in the porch of the house she shared with Lota Soares in Petropolis. However, in the poem, the reference to the lizards chasing the female is not a mere picturesque detail: it acts as a sort of dramatic presage, anticipating something similar about to happen in the human world, the Portuguese invaders´ persecution of native women. Having left behind their sophisticated European background, with its "lovers' walks", "bowers", "cherries to be picked", its "lute music", the invaders, described as "Christians, hard as nails", now long for a "brand-new pleasure". They are out to chase Indian women, like the black lizards in pursuit of the female. At this point the static description – suitable for the intersemiotic transposition of pictures in a two-dimensional tapestry – suddenly yields to narrative, with its necessary temporal element. Accordingly, the poetic persona implies that the tapestry she describes resorts to the device traditionally used by arts of space to emulate the temporal dimension – the suggestion of movement, which obviously supposes a previous and a posterior position. Thus, in their sexual sport, which ironically, they practice soon after Mass, the conquerors

> ripped away into the hanging fabric,
> each out to catch an Indian for himself—

The transparent metaphor of "ripping into the hanging fabric" leaves no doubt about the Portuguese invaders´ behavior: they "rip", that is, rape, defenseless Indian women. From the rapists´ perspective, the resisting natives are "maddening little women", whose cries can hardly be distinguished from that of the tropical birds around.

That is clearly not the poetic persona´s viewpoint. Ironically, she focuses on a detail: the brutal conquerors see no contradiction between humming songs associated with religious rites and their violence against Indian women. *L'homme armé*, which they carelessly hum, a

French secular song from the time of the Renaissance, was the most popular tune used for musical settings of the Ordinary of the Mass. This ironic juxtaposition of rape and Christian rituals points to a shift in perspective. From the Portuguese viewpoint, it moves to that of the poetic voice, attuned with the raped women´s circumstances. Vainly trying to evade their persecutors, they are represented as figures "retreating", "retreating" behind the hanging fabric – that is, running away to try and find refuge in the forest.

The poem thus sums up a little drama, whose background is sketched in the initial static description, suitable for visual representations. The temporal dimension typical of Literature is recovered by the dramatic narrative of the invaders´ sexual violence against Indian women. The poetic voice thus recapitulates a fact tiresomely repeated in the history of colonizations: the conquest of the land has always been coupled with the sacrifice of women. This gave us José de Alencar´s Iracema. In French Literature, the "honey-lipped virgin" comes back to life as Chateaubriand´s Atala. So also, as he formulates his "Malinche complex", Otávio Paz evokes the Mexicans´ violated mother, symbolic of so many rapes in conquered lands. In the same line, a Moçambique poet, Noêmia de Souza, exclaims

> Ó minha África misteriosa e natural / Oh my mysterious and natural Africa
> minha virgem violentada, / my violated virgin,
> minha mãe! /my mother!

If "Brazil, January 1, 1502" shows Elizabeth Bishop´s increasing penetration into Brazilian art and history, it simultaneously underlines her sympathy for the victims of the historical process. As the poem implies, Europe´s "dream of wealth and luxury" could only come true in the New World at the expense of the crushing of the weaker by the stronger. The

poem is also an apt illustration of how much ekphrastic poetry, a liminar creation between Literature and the visual arts, can serve historical and ideological criticism.

In her ever deeper plunge into Brazilian life and culture, Elizabeth Bishop will return to other aspects of the same theme – the pleasures of the few being paid for by the suffering of the many. Among other poems, "The Burglar of Babylon" – in fact a long ballad in the traditional format – turns on a similar question, only now the literal colonization focused in "Brazil, January 1, 1502" is replaced by the symbolical colonization grounded on race and social group. In the ballad, the social inequities of contemporary Brazil take the centre of the stage, replacing the historical foundations of Brazilian life in "Brazil – January 1, 1502."

The ballad of course does not belong to the ekphrastic genre featured in the two earlier poems. An intermedial approach to its analysis is supported by the concept of intermedial reference, proposed by Irina Rajevsky in her study about intermediality in Literature. As Rajewsky reminds us, a textual construction may remain purely literary, and yet evoke effects typical of another art, as in the musicalization of fiction or in ekphrastic poetry itself. According to this view, the intermedial reference in "The Burglar of Babylon" is to the cinema. As we shall eventually see, the implied author´s viewpoint moves from place to place or character to character, as in films.

The poem was Elizabeth´s response to actual facts published by newspapers in Rio de Janeiro where, in the mid 1960´s, she had come to share an apartment with Lotta Soares. From the window of the apartment the poet could watch events similar to those narrated in the poem: the spectacle of policemen going up the hill in order to hunt delinquents living in a slum called "Babylon". The English text was first published in *The New Yorker*, in November 1964, and a translation by Flávio Macedo Soares appeared almost simultaneously in Rio de Janeiro, in *Cadernos Brasileiros* (BROWN, 1991: 235).

From the start, the poetic voice makes explicit the theme of the ballad: the “terrible stain” in Brazilian social life:

> On the fair green hills of Rio
> There grows a fearful stain:
> The poor who come to Rio
> And can't go home again

There is little doubt about the nature of that stain: the yawning financial and educational gap between social groups, which tempts poor young men born in the slums to risk their lives in order to traffic drugs. Such is the object of the poem´s criticism, rather than the crimes committed by the central character in the ballad, a young man called Micuçu. The sympathy for the criminal emerges in the moving description of the dogged persecution that ends in his death. The same applies to the ambivalence of the images used to portray both Micuçu (who has just escaped a maximum security prison) and the policemen who hunt him down. The poetic voice does not disguise her sympathy for the fugitive. He is indeed a “a burglar and killer”, but with redeeming humane traits. As a matter of fact he risks and finally forfeits his life because, instead of hurrying to a safe hiding place, he goes back to the slums in order to say goodbye to his foster mother, the aunt who brought him up.

> He did go straight to his auntie,
> And he drank a final beer.
> He told her, "The soldiers are coming,
> And I've got to disappear."
> (…)
> "Don't tell anyone you saw me.
> I'll run as long as I can.
> You were good to me, and I love you,
> But I'm a doomed man."

Micuçu is thus a loving, grateful son. Besides, unlike the colonizers described in Brazil, “January 1, 1502”, he is no rapist. The poem explicitly says “he never raped”. The images of the policemen who persecute him prove just as ambivalent. In a way they represent law and order, society´s defense against crime. However, in the poem, they also recall death and corruption, as suggested by the buzzards that precede the helicopters full of policemen flying over the slum.

A buzzard flapped so near him
He could see its naked neck.
He waved his arms and shouted,
"Not yet, my son, not yet!"

An army helicopter
Came nosing around and in.
He could see two men inside it,
but they never spotted him.

The buzzards announce the arrival of the soldiers, just as in “Brazil, January 1, 1502”, the lizards chasing the female prefigure the Portuguese raping Indian women. The sad irony is that Micuçu´s persecutors are in a way his brothers: they belong to the same social group as their prey. This is made clear by the death of the commanding officer, who is accidentally hit by a bullet shot “in a panic” by one of his own soldiers. The officer “was from Pernambuco”, a state in the poor Brazilian northeast, “the youngest of eleven” children. Like so many slum dwellers, he was “a Severino”, a general nickname for poor migrants. As a poorly paid policeman, he certainly also lived in the slums, dangerously close to the criminals he had to hunt.

But the soldiers were nervous, even
with tommy guns in hand,
And one of them, in a panic,
Shot the officer in command.

He hit him in three places;
The other shots went wild.
The soldier had hysterics
And sobbed like a little child.

The dying man said, "Finish
The job we came here for."
he committed his soul to God
And his sons to the Governor.

They ran and got a priest,
And he died in hope of Heaven
--A man from Pernambuco,
The youngest of eleven.

The reader is again reminded of the “terrible stain” in a society that throws its victims against one another. Micuçu and the policeman die almost simultaneously, like the brothers that they in fact are. The officer´s death thus merely anticipates that the criminal, who vainly tries to escape. He had planned to hide in an abandoned fort dating back to the days of Villegaignon (the reference constitutes another evidence of Bishop´s interest in Brazilian history, her knowledge of the sixteenth-century´s French invasion). But the plan fails miserably. After a sleepless night, in the light of an ugly yellow sun, “like a raw egg on a plate”, Micuçu is at last mortally hit. His death, following close upon that of the policeman, seals the conflation of two complementary roles: the condemned man and his executioner, the persecutor and his prey, the hunter and the hunted one.

Micuçu´s death leaves everybody relieved, except for his aunt. Desperate, she explains:

> "I raised him to be honest,
> Even here, in Babylon slum."

The woman´s words may be read as an implicit comment on the virtual impossibility of educating children in the slums. In such surroundings, what can be expected from a young man "raised to be honest" by a well-meaning mother? Will he choose to work hard for a few coins, when consorting with a drug dealer will bring him something in his eyes close to opulence? No wonder many prefer the more attractive hypothesis: to make money by catering to the vice of rich people, the same who, from the safety of their apartment windows, point their binoculars to watch the soldiers swarming up the hills.

As mentioned above, from the perspective of interart or intermedial studies, the ballad offers an additional interest: the implied narrator´s viewpoint changes boldly, as a filming camera. Horizontally, it focuses on events taking place among the slum dwellers, or in Micuçu´s aunt´s bar. The reader is told how

> Children peeked out of windows,
> And men in the drink shop swore,
> And spat a little cachaça
> At the light cracks in the floor.

The viewpoint then shifts to a vertical direction, from the top of the hill to the goings on of people on the beach below:

Far, far below, the people
Were little colored spots,
And the heads of those in swimming
Were floating coconuts.

The camera next focuses on the women on the streets below, who turn their eyes to the top of the hill, trying to follow the police hunt taking place up there:

Women with market baskets
Stood on the corners and talked,
Then went on their way to market,
Gazing up as they walked.

So also other observers gaze up at the drama unraveling in the slum:

Rich people in apartments
Watched through binoculars
As long as the daylight lasted.
And all night, under the stars

In "The Burglar of Babylon" Elizabeth Bishop´s growing empathy with the underprivileged reaches its climax. The poem, which has been called "the best and most human of modern ballads" (BROWN, 1991: 235), thus makes up a kind of final landmark in the journey undertaken in "Arrival at Santos", and carried on in "Brazil, January 1, 1502". Otherwise, the analysis of cinematic references in the ballad illustrates the kind of contribution that studies of intermediality may offer to the reading of literary texts.

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CHARLES SIMIC'S USES OF *HIS*-STORY

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ABSTRACT: This article consists of three sections. The first aims at presenting brief theoretical considerations on the issues of public history and autobiography. The second focuses on a synopsis of the North-American poet Charles Simic's memoir entitled "In the Beginning..." which is part of his book **Wonderful Words, Silent Truth** (1994). The third explores the interplay between his private history and the collective history of this century, observing closely some key aspects, such as the use of a child's perspective, the use of the comic to report the tragic, and the device of fragment in narrative. In doing so, I will be illustrating the fragility of boundaries between history and fiction, considering biography a fictional construction, since it is a made-up story, which does not necessarily lack truth.

KEYWORDS: Charles Simic, history, fiction, poetry, autobiography.

RESUMO: Este artigo consiste em três seções. A primeira pretende uma breve apresentação sobre as considerações teóricas a respeito de história pública e autobiografia. A segunda apresenta um resumo das memórias de do poeta norte-americano Charles Simic intitulada "In The Beginning...", que é parte de seu livro **Wonderful Words, Silent Truth** (1994). A terceira parte explora as interações entre a história do poeta e a história coletiva desse século, concentrando-se em alguns aspectos chaves, tais como, o uso da perspectiva da criança, o uso do cômico para reportar o trágico e os fragmentos usados como recursos literários durante a narrativa. Ao final, pretendo ilustras a fragilidade das fronteiras existentes entre história e ficção, considerando a biografia uma construção ficcional, mas que não se distancia da verdade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Charles Simic, história, ficção, poesia, autobiografia.

Ghosts move about me

patched with histories.

(Ezra Pound)

Introductory considerations on public history and autobiography

In "Metaphors of Self: the meaning of autobiography", the critic James Olney defines autobiography as an attempt to describe a lifework, in matter and content as well, which cannot be separated from the writer's life and his personality. Olney says that "what an autobiographer knows, of course, or what he experiences, is all from within: a feeling of his own consciousness and the appearance of others surrounding him and relating to him more or less, in this way or that" (OLNEY, 1981: 35).

Olney affirms that if one places autobiography in relation to the life from which it comes, it becomes not only a history of the past or only a book currently circulating in the world; but also, intentionally or not, "a monument of the self as it is becoming, a metaphor of the self at the summary moment of composition" (OLNEY, 1981: 35). Metaphor, in his concept, is essentially "a way of knowing": "to grasp the unknown through the known, or let the known stand for the unknown and thereby fit that into an organized patterned body of experiential knowledge" (OLNEY, 1981: 31).

In regard to the interweaving of history and autobiography, Olney argues that if autobiography is in one sense history, then one can also say that history is autobiography. He observes that,

> The makers of history [...] could find in their autobiographies the destiny of their time achieved in action and speech; and the

> writers of history organize the events of which they write according to, and out of, their own private necessities and the state of their own selves. Historians impose, and quite properly, their own metaphors on the human past. (OLNEY, 1981: 36)

Olney endorses the conception that history is not an objective collection of facts but rather it is the historian's point of view on the facts, "a point of view that, taken as sum of what he has experienced and understood, reveals to us the historian" (OLNEY, 1981: 36). As readers, he says, we go to history, as to autobiography and poetry, to learn more not only about other people and the past but about ourselves and the present. Olney adds that the autobiographer not only repeats his past experience but also reconstructs this experience. Thus "symbolic memory" and imagination become necessary elements of a true recollection. The autobiographer, he concludes, "who draws out of the flux of events a coherent pattern, or who creates a sufficient metaphor for experiences, discovers in the particular, and reveals to us, the universal" (OLNEY, 1981: 45).

Charles Simic's autobiography "In the Beginning... " (1994) largely mediates between public history and personal history, and it is indispensable to help us account for this same combination in Simic's other works. Asked about the relation between his autobiography and history, in an interview with Bruce Weigl, Simic quotes Emerson who said: "There's properly no history, only biography." And adds, "[t]here's History too, independent of my life and your life. I'm more interested in history than in autobiography" (WEIGL, 1996: 222).

"In The Beginning…": A Memoir

Charles Simic starts the memoir of his childhood by placing the reader in time and place. The year is 1943, his country was at war, and occupied by German forces. The

Germans first bombed Belgrade in April of 1941 when he was just three years old. He asserts that he does not remember many things about that day, but he remembers the night the Gestapo came to arrest his father, who was lucky to be soon released. In 1944, the English and the Americans started bombing his hometown again. “We approved of American and the English bombing of the Germans,” he said, “I never heard anyone complain. They were our allies. We loved them” (SIMIC, 1994: 6). In addition to the German occupation, a civil war was going on in Yugoslavia. Royalists, Communists, Fascists, and various other political factions were fighting one another. Simic’s family was divided between the Royalists and the Communists.

In the same year, after an Easter Sunday full of bombing raids, Simic’s mother, who was pregnant at that time, decided to leave Belgrade, since it was dangerous to remain in the city, and they went to live with his grandparents, in a summerhouse not far from his hometown. As the fight was intensified and there was too much indiscriminate killing, they went to a farther village. But they had to come back to the grandfather’s house in mid-October when they were warned about the coming of the Germans. When the Russians liberated Belgrade, Simic and his mother got back to their apartment. Soon, his mother would get a cot in the basement of a private clinic, and he was entrusted to the care of one of his mother’s aunts, the only relative they had left in the city. Her name was Nana, and Simic refers to her as “the black sheep in the family” (SIMIC, 1994: 9). Of the time with his aunt, Simic alternates joyful and tragic memories. He recounts his adventures with his friends roaming the neighborhood, climbing over the ruins and playing with war junk from dead soldiers. He also remembers that Belgrade quickly became the city of the wounded: “One saw people on crutches on every corner” (SIMIC, 1994: 11). He adds that the Russians had a formula for every serious leg wound: amputate the leg.

By the time his brother was born, he and his mother had come back home, and Simic started school in the spring of 1945.The Communists were in power and he said that people tried to do brainwashing in school: "[the man] said there was no God [...]" (SIMIC, 1994: 15). Meanwhile, Simic's life on the streets was getting difficult, and he started stealing with older boys, both for profit and for fun: "I was usually the one to make the snatch, since I was the smallest and the fastest" (SIMIC, 1994: 16). He recounts that, at that time, most food was rationed, and if one took someone's monthly portion, it was considered a crime. There was too much poverty and too much hunger everywhere.

The first time Simic's family left Belgrade for Austria was in the fall of 1945. As the border was closed, and they could not cross illegally, they came back to Belgrade. At the second time, they crossed the border, but got into the hands of an American-Austrian border patrol, that handed them over to the English Army, who drove them back to Yugoslavia, where they were under arrest by the Yugoslav border guards. Then, for two weeks, they were transported from prison to prison until they reached Belgrade. His mother was kept in prison for four months, while he and his brother were sent home to their grandfather's house. Besides the picture of devastation, Simic remembers that "[e]verything looked different," and "[Yugoslavia] was no more the same country." Simic also remembers the time they had almost nothing to eat: "I remember coming back from school one afternoon, telling her I was hungry, and watching her burst into tears" (SIMIC, 1994: 21).

Among his happiest memories, there were the moments he used to spend with books: "My friends read too. We liked Westerns, mysteries, adventure stories, comic books... I read Zola, Dickens, and Dostoevsky [...] I loved the Serbian folk ballads and poems [...]" (SIMIC, 1994: 23). Simic first experiences with reading dates from very early, as he declares: "By the time of ten I was in love with books [...]" (SIMIC, 1994: 23). He credits his continuous need of reading to the fact of his father having a large library. Since then, he says, "the need to

read has never left me. I still read all kinds of books on all kinds of subjects" (SIMIC, 1994: 23). Music is also part of his cheerful memories. He affirms that his radio was always on, and since he discovered American jazz, he could not get enough of it. Reading and imagination would lead him into the world of Johnny Hodges, Lester Young and Billie Holliday.

By June 1953, his mother told him that they would leave at once. She had finally got their passport, and had decided to leave for Paris to stay with her brother while they waited for the visa. Her plans were to join his father later, who was already living in America. For one full year, in Paris, Simic slept on the floor of a tiny room, and then he realized how poor they were. When he enrolled in school, he felt inferior. The teachers kept giving him zeros until he gave up. In his opinion, the only advantage of being in school was that they got free lunch there.

Simic remembers that his only entertainment in Paris was walking, and eventually he went to the movies with some bad boys from his school. Nevertheless, he affirms that the most important thing he did in Paris was studying English: "I worked hard. I liked the language immediately" (SIMIC, 1994: 36). By June of 1954, they had received their American visas. He was optimistic, but not completely. Since he had flunked everything in French school, he wondered if he would not be a failure in America too.

On August 5, they left Paris in the cheapest class of the boat The Queen Mary. From that journey, Simic remembers the contrast between his family and the elegant ladies and men in dark suits smoking cigars. Rich people, who never lost their composure, not even when there was a storm. Since his first sight of the Statue of Liberty and the island of Manhattan, he instantly fell in love with America. He says: "It was incredible and wonderful! The trash on the streets, the way people were dressed, the tall buildings, the dirt,

the heat, the yellow cabs, the billboards and signs [...]. It was terrifically ugly and beautiful at the same time! I liked America immediately" (SIMIC, 1994: 40).

After the expected gathering with his father, Simic's day was full of many good surprises: the television set in their hotel room, American food, new clothes and shoes, among others. Simic's relationship with his father was always a very frank one: "The ten years that we didn't see each other made it difficult to reestablish our relationship on a father-son basis. It was much easier to be friends, to talk like friends" (SIMIC, 1994: 42).

Later, Simic attended a high school in Elmhurst Queens, and had a part-time job in a small company that supplied special crews for airplanes. He remembers that with his payment he bought a cheap phonograph and his first jazz records. On Sundays, he used to go to Manhattan and to the movies. Simic's liking for America was deepening each day and he was beginning to feel very comfortable there: "I am surprised how quickly we felt at home in the United States" (SIMIC, 1994: 45).

Because his father was transferred, in June of 1955 they moved to Chicago. They moved to Oak Park shortly after that. While a student at Oak Park High School, a suburban school with caring teachers and motivated students, Simic began to take a new interest in his courses, especially literature. Soon, he would reveal himself a voracious reader. Influenced by the teachers, he started to read Joyce and many other contemporary classics, as well as contemporary French poets. In addition to that, he used to go to the public library every day. He also took an interest in painting, and discovered modern art and its aesthetics. He remembers that he started to write poems at school and that it all began with his wanting to impress his friends, but then, in the process of writing, he found out a part of himself, an imagination and a necessity to verbalize certain things, that he could not afterwards forget.

After graduation in August of 1956, he worked in a full-time job as an office boy for the *Chicago Sun Times* while attending college at the University of Chicago at night. At that

time, he decided to move from his parents' house and to get a basement for himself. Later, as he got promoted to a proofreader, which gave him an excellent salary, he bought many books, jazz records, and started painting again.

He then started to make friends in the neighborhood and got to know girls at the University. Poetry continued to be his ambition, and he was introduced to the poems of Lowell and Jarrell, and to the works of Stevens and Pound. He also used to go the Newberry Library to read the French Surrealists and literary magazines: "I'm amazed by the change I underwent in that four to five year period. One moment [...] I was an unremarkable Yugoslav schoolboy, and the next moment I was in Chicago writing poetry in English, as if it were the most normal thing to do" (SIMIC, 1994: 52).

Simic's first poems were published in the winter 1959 issue of the Chicago Review. He recalls his unsteady position at that time: "One month I was a disciple of Hart Crane, the next month only Walt Whitman existed for me. When I fell in love with Pound I wrote an eighty-page long poem on the Spanish Inquisition." (SIMIC, 1994: 52) Between 1959 and 1961, he churned out a number of poems, but according to him, except for a few poems, it was all bad. When he was in the Army, in 1962, he destroyed them all: " I still wanted to write poetry, but not that kind" (SIMIC, 1994:53).

Simic's *his*-story

Along Simic's autobiography we hear about his birth in Belgrade, the Second World War and his life under the Nazi occupation, the Yugoslav Civil War before his escaping to Paris, and then to the U.S. when he was fifteen, and many other crucial facts linking his story to a larger history. Throughout his memories, we can recognize that a double perspective — the child's and the adult's — is subtly and regularly interwoven. It is an adult narrating, but

an adult who is capable of reliving the child's perspective and voice. This happens, for example, in the passage, in which he remembers his lifelong insomnia:

> I was supposed to be asleep. Come to think of it, I must have been afraid to be alone in that big room. The war was on [...] Terrible things happened at night. There was a curfew [...] I see myself on tiptoes, one hand in the curtain, wanting to look but afraid [...] My father was late and outside the roofs are covered with snow. (SIMIC, 1994: 3-4)

Along the first part of his memoir, Simic recreates the child's language using short sentences and simple words, to tell us about the war game and its paradoxes, among which his experience living the horrors of the war and yet having to be a child. In the following passages, he describes his and his friends' necessity of living their childhood in that catastrophic context:

> In the meantime, my friends and I were playing war. All the kids were playing war. We took prisoners. We fell down dead. We machine-gunned a lot. Rat-tat-tat! How we loved the sound of machine guns [...] This kind of playing drove the grown-ups crazy. There was already so much real shooting in the world, and now these kids with their imaginary guns! [...] I had a friend [...] who could imitate an air-siren perfectly. Every time his parents left him at home alone, he'd stand on their sixth floor balcony and wail. People on the street would threaten him first, then plead with him to stop. He wouldn't. Instead, he'd get even louder, even more inspired. We thought it was all very funny. (SIMIC, 1994: 5)

Simic's innocence as a child stands in contrast with the desolation of war, that emerges permeated with uncertainty, violence, and hunger. Nevertheless he uses humor and

irony as a means to avoid the *cliché* of the usual narratives which deal "only" with the horrors of war, and the worn-out discourse of sentimentality. The child's voice mixed with his sense of humor acts as a release, soothing his sense of loss. Later, he describes life during the Russian liberation as a challenging experience, as in the passage where he remembers wandering with his friends and taking ammo belts, helmets, and war-junk to play with, from the bodies of German soldiers:

> I was happy. My friends and I [...] roamed the neighborhood, climbed over the ruins, and watched the Russians and our partisans at work. There were still German snipers in a couple of places. We'd hear shots and take off running. There was a lot of military equipment lying around. The guns were gone, but there was other stuff. I got myself a German helmet. I wore empty ammo belts. (SIMIC, 1994: 10)

It is clear that all that scene of violence and hunger does not really frighten the little boy, who usually went for days without food, hid in shelters, and played on the rubble-spattered streets with ammunition from soldiers' corpses. In fact, he was glad, as he declares, in an interview with Sherod Santos:

> The truth is, I did enjoy myself. From the summer of 1944 to mid-1945, I ran around the streets of Belgrade with other half-abandoned kids. You can just imagine the things we saw and the adventures we had. You see, my father was already abroad, my mother was working, the Russians were coming, the Germans were leaving. It was a three-ring circus. (In: SIMIC, 1995: 68)

But of course not all was adventure. Along with the intensification of the fighting there was a lot of indiscriminate killing, some in the neighborhood: "After I found some bodies in the roadsides ditch near our house, I was not allowed to go out anymore. Our neighbors were executed in their own home. The people across the street just disappeared" (SIMIC, 1994: 8).

Although Simic's father had spent a considerable time apart from him, he had a great influence on Simic, especially if we consider his cultivated sense of humor, as we can confirm in this passage when Simic introduces him:

> One night the Gestapo came to arrest my father... He was saying something, probably cracking a joke. That was his style. No matter how bleak the situation, he'd find something funny to say. Years later, surrounded by doctors and nurses after having suffered a bad heart attack, he replied to their 'how're you feeling sir' with a request for some pizza and beer. The doctors thought he had suffered brain damage, I had to tell that this was normal behavior for him. (SIMIC, 1994: 4-5)

Like his father, Simic never separates humor from seriousness and quite often he selects and juxtaposes dazzling images and blends horror and fun. His observations about his life in Belgrade are filled with wisdom and humor, often irreverence, and a certain irony, as when he talks about the time when the English and the Americans started bombing Belgrade:

> The building we lived in was in the very center of the city [...] near the main post office and parliament. A dangerous place to be. That's what we realized in the spring of 1944 [...]. It was Easter Sunday (a nice day to pick for a bombing raid)...the windows were

> open, since it was such a beautiful spring day. 'The Americans are throwing Easter eggs,' my father said (SIMIC, 1994: 5-6).

When asked by Weigl about this issue of humor in his work, he quoted Horace Wallop, who said: 'The world is a comedy for those that think, a tragedy to those that feel" (213), and added that since we are capable of both, he cannot see a literature which excludes one or the other: "Look at most of our leaders in political and intellectual life with their vanity, gullibility, greed, malice – they could be stock characters out of classical comedy," (WEIGL, 1996: 213) he concludes. When asked by Santos if those days are the origin of his constant sense of humor, he declared:

> I'm the product of chance, the baby of ideologies, the orphan of history. Hitler and Stalin conspired to make me homeless. Well, then, is my situation tragic? No. There's been too much tragedy all around for anyone to feel like a Hamlet. More likely my situation is comic... One has just to laugh at the extent of our stupidity. (In: SIMIC, 1995: 68)

"Perhaps," Helen Vendler analyzes, "for one who as a child saw World War in Yugoslavia, life will always be overcast by horror; and yet for one who escaped destruction, life will also seem charmed, lucky, privileged" (VENDLER, 1995: 20).

Simic's autobiography demonstrates periods of trouble and perplexity. Nevertheless, it is not only centered on what went wrong. Besides presenting the pitiful reality, he also presents the ironic side of history: the war that kills is the same that saves, as we can see in the following passage:

> Now the tragic farce begins. The Russians in those days had a cure-all for every serious leg wound: amputate the leg. That's what they told my uncle they were going to do. He was very unhappy, crying even, while the doctor cheerfully reminded that he still had one leg left. Anyway, they strapped him to the field operating table and got ready to cut the leg, when all hell broke loose. Grenades, bombs flying. The tent collapsed. Everybody ran out, leaving him there. When the shooting was over, they came back but they were no longer in the mood for the operation. He ended up, somehow, on a farm, where he was exceptionally well nursed by the kind people who lived there, and so on. End of that story. (SIMIC, 1994: 12)

In his essay "Cut the Comedy," Simic argues that comedy says as much about the world as tragedy does, and "in fact, if you seek true seriousness, you must make room for both tragic and comic vision" (SIMIC, 1997: 40).

Simic writes vividly and insightfully about his immigrant experience, moving to stay ahead of the war and bad economics. Life in exile is experienced as a salvation, and America is the place of happiness for the young boy. He discovers a new life and a new history in postwar. The interplay of the child's and the mature voice ceases by the end of his memoir, when he starts talking about his adult life, his feelings about his first days in New York, sleepless nights, dreams, and other poets. The poet reflects on his peculiar relation with the past and learns not to take things for granted. The war was experienced as loss of points of reference as well as a great deal of illusion and idealism. For him, anything is possible in this century. He wrote: "My previous life has taught me that making plans was a waste of time. My father used to ask me jokingly, 'Where are we going to immigrate next?' Anything was possible in this century" (SIMIC, 1994: 53). If the experience of loss destroyed the child's illusion that all is permanent, paradoxically such experience also supports the adult existence. Life, to Simic, is still unpredictable. According to Matthew Flamm, in his essay "Impersonal

Best: Charles Simic Loses Himself," Simic writes "about bewilderment, about being part of history's comedy act, in which he grew up half-abandoned in Belgrade and then became, with his Slavic accent, an American poet" (In: WEIGL, 1996: 166).

Throughout his memoir, Simic reconstructs history as well as his history, and trying to understand what has happened to him and to his life, many times he transports himself to the past, and from past gets into the present: "Someone else *was* pacing up and down in the next room [...] It *was* dangerous even to peek between them at street [...] I *see* myself on tiptoes [...] My father *is* late [...]" (SIMIC, 1994: 4).

Often Simic recalls time, place, circumstances, emotions, bringing back some facts of memory and neglecting others, because some things are better to forget: "Did we leap into a ditch by the railroad track, or was that some other time? How many of us were there? I remember my mother but not my father... My film keeps breaking. An image here and there, but not much continuity" (SIMIC, 1994: 4). Images, feelings and reminiscences are brought back through the language of his new country, and retold as a way to resist the destiny of exile and defend him against the power of forgetting, as he says, "Writing brings it back. There's the logic of chronology, which forces one to think about what comes next. There's also the logic of imagination. One image provokes another without rhyme or reason--perhaps with plenty of hidden rhyme or reason! I have to believe that" (SIMIC, 1994: 30).

In Simic's case, even after a number of years of writing, things do not come out easily. It requires patience, a "monastic solitude," an obsession to cultivate what he calls "madness," as he declared in an interview with George Starbuck: "Madness... means *your own sense* of reality, your own sense of yourself existing in this world. *Consciousness* of yourself existing in this world" (In: SIMIC, 1995: 45).

Throughout his memoir, Simic dramatizes scenes of subhuman lives, political violence, resignation, destruction, hunger, and exile, and establishes a strong link between his

life and the collective one. Historical precision enters the picture along with people, places, and dates, as we can see in these passages:

> The war is on. The year is 1943. (SIMIC, 1994: 3)
>
> It was a relief when the Russians finally came... It was mid-October 1944. (SIMIC, 1994: 8)
>
> There was a time in 1947 or 1948 when we had almost nothing to eat. (SIMIC, 1994: 21)

What these passages indicate to us is that the author intends to portray something that really happened, but the most important, in this case, is the imagination of the author, which is at work, not in producing an imaginary scene, but in bringing together these various elements to portray something real. Talking about his war poems to Starbuck, he declared:

> I don't wish to come out and say 'I've seen this and that.' I've seen terrifying sights. But on the other hand, I wasn't very unique in that. Everyone else was there. They saw the same thing. Men hung from lampposts, whatever. There would be another falseness. All those things did not really astonish me at that time [...] If you were writing a poem about it, one really has to capture that complicated game. That innocence. One can't say, 'I turned over dead Germans to get hold of their holsters.' Because it wasn't like that at all [...] There was something there, which I can't quite name, but I felt touched and disturbed. But it wasn't any of the obvious things: that here was a dead man, that this was War. (SIMIC, 1995:35- 6)

Most of Simic's memoir echoes the history of the world's inhumanity and how it continues to mean in the present. Recent events in Yugoslavia reflect his own story. His childhood experience is repeated and multiplied today by more than a million children

displaced by the civil war. Simic describes the human condition in a century of mass destruction. His story mixes with the current atrocities in the former Yugoslavia. He says:

> It seems to me that all those events still go on [...] I think every tragedy, every event, some place on some scale continues. It is still current. It is still present. You cannot say, 'Well, this was in the past, but we live different.' Or, 'I live differently.' It still goes on, as vivid as it ever was. (SIMIC, 1994: 36)

Simic's memoir not only joins past history but is also in constant dialogue with history's continuity. More than a half century after the Second World War, one can see all those atrocities everywhere. In his essay "Orphan Factory," Simic establishes a link between his childhood and recent tragic events in the region of Yugoslavia. He says, "Today when I watch the war in Yugoslavia on TV, I have the feeling I'm watching the reruns of my childhood [...] The bombed buildings, the corpses lying in the streets and Sarajevo, the crowds of refugees are all frighteningly familiar" (SIMIC, 1997: 23).

Simic's reminiscences of the massacre of innocent people in his homeland during the war are repeated up to our time. In his essay "Open Wound," Simic comments about the siege state of Sarajevo in the years 1992 and 1993, and says that, like him and his friends in the past, these children are also playing among the ruins. But obviously there are differences, whereas Simic and his friends used to "sell" gunpowder, these children from our present days are selling cigarettes. He adds that, in the present, there are also many "sniper victims lying in the streets, people with arms and legs blown off, corpses wrapped in plastic, wrecked churches and mosques, crowds of refugees on the run" . As in his homeland, "every window is broken, every street strewn with rubble" (SIMIC, 1997: 87).

Simic is aware of the fact that all this is part of our routine, and he says in this same article: "One sits at the breakfast table sipping coffee and turning the pages of the daily

newspaper only to come to a photograph of a child killed in the street, lying in a pool of blood" (SIMIC, 1997:87). But, differently from most people that seem not to care anymore, he argues that the poet must be aware, otherwise he will live in a "fool's paradise" (SIMIC, 1997: 125).

Asked by Santos to comment about his engagement to historical issues, he reaffirms what he had advocated in his essay "Notes on Poetry and History," when he says that, despite everything, one must give true testimony of his condition. He says, "The world is mean, stupid, violent, unjust, cruel [...] Well, what do you say to that? And you must say something... I'm uncomfortable with poetry which just keeps telling me how wonderful nature is, or how much the author is misunderstood" (SIMIC, 1995: 76).

The question of individualism is present in Simic's arguments, and he is totally against the egotism and narcissism of some contemporary poets that insist on putting themselves at the center of their poems, and do not comment on the real world. Simic's "I" often seems impersonal: "It doesn't seem necessary for me to equate that "I" with myself," he states in an interview with Rick Jackson, and adds: "I've always felt that inside each of us there is profound anonymity. Sometimes I think that when you go deep inside, you meet everyone else..." (SIMIC, 1995: 62).

In an interview with Wayne Dodd, Simic reaffirms his engagement, "I feel a certain responsibility toward other lives [...]" (SIMIC, 1995: 26) and reinforces his concept that a poet who ignores the world around him, and keeps talking about himself all the time, is miserable, since every day in the world millions of children and adults are maimed or die of hunger and disease caused by the wars, or are left with emotional problems, which they have to bear for the rest of their lives.

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STEVIE SMITH'S ANGELS

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ABSTRACT: Angels appear regularly in Stevie Smith's poems and drawings. The latter show disturbing, cruel or cynical figures, whereas the former exhibit a wider range of considerations. Nevertheless, the predominant sensation is that angels are rather disquieting than helpful beings. Thus an uneasy tension is created between God and (His) angels who, according to traditional lore, are His messengers, therefore subordinated to Him. In Stevie Smith's poems angels do not in general fit regularly in the orthodox pattern. The purpose of this paper is to analyze these contradictory insights and to examine the accompanying drawings. A classification of different "types" of angels is presented, which does not necessarily match the categories known through traditional angelology. Since discussions of Stevie Smith's stance as regards religious feeling and dogma are accessible in an extensive bibliography I intend rather to contribute a specific treatment of angels within the general framework of Stevie Smith's concern with religion.

KEYWORDS: Stevie Smith angels religion poems drawings

RESUMO: Os anjos aparecem regularmente nos poemas e desenhos de Stevie Smith. Os segundos mostram figuras perturbadoras, cruéis e cínicas; os primeiros exibem uma categoria maior de considerações. Porém, a sensação que predomina é que estes anjos são mais seres inquietantes que auxiliares. Cria-se, desta maneira, uma tensão entre Deus e [Seus] anjos, que, de acordo com o conhecimento tradicional, são mensageiros e, por isso, subordinados a Ele. Nos poemas de Smith os anjos não se adaptam normalmente a esse padrão. Às vezes parecem se comportar de maneira completamente autônoma em relação a Deus; às vezes aparecem interferindo mais nas relações entre os homens e Deus que colaborando nelas. O propósito deste artigo é analisar estas visões contraditórias e examinar os desenhos que acompanham os textos. Apresenta-se uma classificação de "tipos" de anjos, que não necessariamente correspondem às categorias conhecidas pela angelologia tradicional. Na bibliografia sobre Smith há discussões a respeito da posição da poetisa diante do sentimento religioso e ao dogma. Com este artigo procuro contribuir para um tratamento específico dos anjos dentro do marco geral do interesse de Stevie Smith pela religião.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Stevie Smith; anjos; religião; poemas; desenhos.

That angels occur frequently in the poems of Stevie Smith is indeed notable. The word appears more than fifteen times throughout the *corpus*. Four titles of her poems include the word *angel* (one of them in French, *anges*). Many of the illustrations or drawings by Stevie Smith represent winged "human beings"—*i. e*., humanoid figures having either

evident features from the common iconography for angels, or some touches that make us suspect that they are actually angels. The number of poems concerned with supernatural creatures increases significantly throughout her output if ghosts, witches, spirits, and personifications are counted. Because Stevie Smith shows an insistent concern about matters religious, not only in her poems but also in her novels as well as in other writings, the occurrence of angels seems to be logical. Angels, according to traditional angelology, are messengers—*i. e*., mediators between God and men. Stevie Smith no doubt became aware of angelology through the many theological books she read and frequently reviewed for several magazines (*e. g.*, SMITH*,* 1983: 129, 158, (*a*); SPALDING, 1988: 215-216).[5]

Traditional angelology, even the portion restricted to the Christian doctrine, has become a complex matter. The Christian lore about angels derives from the Jewish one. The general meaning of angels as messengers has been enriched and qualified. Significantly in *Luke* 22:43 an angel fortifies Jesus during the Agony in the Garden, whereas in *Matthew* 28:5 an angel speaks at the empty tomb after the Resurrection of Jesus. In *Matthew* 4: 11, after Jesus has been tempted by Satan, the Gospel says that the "angels came and ministered unto Him". These passages illustrate the fact that angels behave as mediators between God and men, and that they perform different offices. The ending "*-el*," characteristic of many proper names of angels, means God. Although their names are masculine, they are obviously neither male nor female.[6] The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) declared that angels were created and that men were created after them. ("Angels": 1). This declaration implies that angels are not omniscient or almighty, attributes that belong exclusively to God. The statement also

[5] According to contemporary interviews and surveys (2002, 2008) more than 60% of British, American and Canadian people, particularly young ones, declared that they believed in angels. ("Angel": 8)

[6] Stevie Smith takes advantages of this ambiguity, which is a common feature device in her writings. (Huk, 1999: 510) Angels sometimes are sometimes represented as male, sometimes as female, and sometimes as undistinguishable in terms of gender.

indicates that angels are superior to men. *Psalm* 8:6 says "Thou hast made him (man) a little lower than the angels". Angels can also punish and destroy following God's commands. For example, the pestilence which devastated Israel is attributed to an angel (2 *Sam* 24: 15-17). Likewise *Revelation* 9:15 depicts devastating angels. Evil angels are usually attributed to fallen angels, *i.e*. the ones that according to Church tradition rebelled against God and were consequently banished from Heaven, as Milton narrates so vividly. One of the earliest individualizations of the fallen angel is Satan, who asks God for permission to tempt Job (*Job* 2). This means that even as evil-doers fallen angels are utterly subordinated to God. The following passage in *Zechariah* 3:1 may help to clarify the meaning of some images and concepts shown by Stevie. It says: "Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right to oppose him." Of note is that this pair of angels–one good and one evil–is sometimes transformed in such a way that the two appear as evil or mischievous in Stevie's poems and drawings. In any event, the theological concept about angels is clearly developed in the course of time accompanied by the gradual unfolding of God's revelation. Pope John Paul II emphasized the role of angels in Catholic teachings in his 1986 address entitled "Angels Participate In History Of Salvation", in which he suggested that modern mentality should come to see the significance of angels. ("Angel": 4)

My purpose here is to examine in Stevie Smith's poems and drawings the different ways angels behave with respect to God and to human beings. Since some angels cannot be termed "orthodox" according to traditional Christian doctrine, a provocative question that I propose here is why Stevie chooses them as spokesmen (or spokeswomen) of heterodox points of view on such subjects as the purposes of the Creation, human fate, sin, and the like eschatological issues. It is my contention that Stevie Smith, a keen observer of human

behaviour, uses traditional and popular lore about angels to propose a specific, sometimes cynical, insight into human actions.

Unorthodox and Negative Angels

My first example is "Tableau de l'Inconstance des Mauvais Anges". The first line shows these creatures as the “brightest and best”, but the last states that “they will do as they will”. Human beings are subordinated to these angels, whose power appears absolute. God is not mentioned, but traditional angelology states that all angels, even the malignant ones, are subjected to God. (DAVIDSON, 1971: xvii; COOGAN, 2009, Part Six). The notion that the brightest angels “show us no ill” is qualified by the somehow ominous statement that “they wait on our footsteps”. The drawing shows a winged female creature floating above mountains during the night. A star and a crescent moon are represented. An extra gap is provided between the text and the drawing because the former speaks of “sons of the morning”, a clear indication of light; whereas the latter suggests a nightly apparition. The countenance of this angel is in fact mischievous, and the sharp angles of the wings give the figure the appearance of a menacing bird. Angels have been traditionally represented as winged. Saint John Chrysostom refers to the significance of the wings: “They manifest a nature’s sublimity. That is why Gabriel is represented with wings. Not that angels have wings, … the wings attributed to these powers have no other meaning than to indicate the sublimity of their nature”. (“Angel”: 4). The Roman Catechism according to the Council of Trent says that angels are represented as human beings and sometimes they have wings, so that the faithful may understand that they do what God commands them to do. (*Catecismo de Trento*: III, 2, 19). Traditional iconography shows round-winged angels, whereas the sharp, bat-like wings are a common feature in the representation of the fallen angels. That these *mauvais anges* might be compatible with the protector angels seems improbable. Since traditional angelology emphasizes the connection between angels and light (DÉNYS

L'ARÉOPAGITE, 1970: 151), Guardian Angels, or any others, must have light and day as their customary environment. Evil angels should accordingly be associated with darkness. Stevie Smith's *mauvais anges*, however, are "brightest" and "sons of the morning". In other poems Stevie's consideration of angels is openly negative. In "The Violent Hand" the angel is qualified as "most cynical" and he opposes the speaker particularly when the former grabs the speaker's rosary. The "violent hand" does not belong to the angel but, paradoxically, to the woman who grips the rosary. The angel dangles "out of reach from me". The rosary is a form of devotion implying concentration and veneration to the Virgin Mary. The smiling angel proves to be inimical to this devotion and, as such, threatening to the woman. This angel must be a fallen or an evil one, unless he personifies some mischievous tendency of the woman who cannot pray in the proper manner. The idea of clutching the rosary with a violent hand suggests that the woman is searching desperately for some religious object in order to resist the angel's attack. The drawing placed over the text is eloquent. The depiction shows the entrance of a church, a row of seats or a staircase culminating in an altar in the rear part. The foreground is occupied by two female figures: on the left, a woman whose outstretched arm and hand give the impression that she has just released the rosary; on the right, an "angel" with the sharp wings typically portrayed by Stevie. The face is a bit disdainful. The rosary is hanging from the left hand. The ring and pinky fingers are folded whereas the other fingers make the gesture of benediction typical of the Byzantine icons. A religious image is seen on the left side of the church depicting the Virgin holding her Child. The angel, nevertheless, prevents the woman from praying.

Hierarchical Angels

The main evidence for Stevie Smith's notion of the angelic hierarchy, paradoxically enough, is a poem in which angels seem to disobey God. "No Categories" is pervaded by a theological atmosphere. The very beginning, "I cry I cry / To God who made me", has

reminiscences of the *De Profundis* psalm. The speaker invokes God, contrasting Him with the angels: He is the one "who created me"; they are those "who frustrated me". Angels not infrequently impersonate shortcomings in Stevie's poems: whatever is dogmatic, rigid, and dictatorial is rejected by her. "That is what the Creator meant", refers to the "Angels' scholarly grimaces", while "exasperating pit-pat" indicates the surprising gulf that divides God from His distinguished creatures. The poetic voice invites the angel to perform a similarly contradictory action: to "aspire higher" and "to be like us/ or those next below as, / or nearer the lowest /or lowest."— *i. e.*, giving the impression that the higher these angels should aspire, the lower will be their status. Since the difference between human beings and angels is that angels are pure spirits, the poet's command entails a *reductio ad absurdum*: angels will prove to be better to the extent that they become worse, *i.e.,* subject to the limitations of the flesh. Addressing these unpleasant creatures the poetic voice declares: "Oh no no, you Angels, I say / No hierarchies, I say". The celestial hierarchy described by Denis the Areopagite consists in the transfer of light and intelligence from the higher members to the lower through the successive triads of intermediate levels.[7] In Stevie Smith's poem, hierarchies do not constitute a presence of love, but an entity of oppression.[8] We may guess that these angels are in fact human beings who command other people to "do this and that" and admonish them. Doing away with those categories would be tantamount to dethroning these unpleasant personages and making them "be like us".[9] In Smith's poem the contrast between God and the angels is most clear. If these angels embody human behaviours—*i.e*., if

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[7] This is what the *Catholic Encyclopedia* says about St. Denis the Areopagite: "Though the doctrine it contains regarding the choirs of angels has been received in the Church with extraordinary unanimity, no proposition touching the angelic hierarchies is binding on our faith". ("Angels": 4)

[8] In Stevie Smith's writings we can find textual evidence for a censuring or satirizing of authoritarian or dogmatic behavior.

[9] Perhaps these personages can be compared to the ones that Shakespeare depicts in sonnet 94, "Who moving others are themselves as stones / Unmovèd, cold and to temptation slow". Shakespeare's sonnet, though, is ambiguous because of the difficulty in ascertaining which of the temperaments is the "recommended" one.

the winged creatures are human beings disguised as angels—their interpretation would be allegorical. In my opinion, these angels are best being considered as angels *per se*. The awkward theological element would be that they are interfering with God rather than collaborating with Him. The last stanza reveals another contrast: one between God's indifferent, even humorous behavior, ("laugh[ing] aside") and that of the angels, whose main characteristic is pride. The poetic voice invites God to do away with these angels. That these angels are proud is not surprising: this attitude is consistent with the narrative of rebellion. Pride is the taproot sin in traditional theology insofar as that transgression embodies all the other sins by implying that the sinner wants to supplant God. No trace in Stevie's poem, however, can be found indicating that she is referring to rebellious or evil angels. The notion that "this is not what the creator meant" suggests that when God created the universe, the angels were the primary object of His decision, although He "laughed to see them grow fat". Since the poetic voice urges the angels to "plod on", the sense is that these fat creatures are worldly and of palpable substance; *i. e*., are deprived of their most conspicuous and traditional characteristics of levity and grace. Dismissing hierarchies or categories entails the abandonment of the hierarchical organization of celestial beings. The hierarchy put at stake here, however, seems to be the one that makes angels superior to men. At all events, that God's collaborators or messengers are in fact heavy and authoritarian beings who interfere with human life is striking. The illustration features a somehow grotesque angel. Its wings appear directly on its shoulders, not on its back, be it male or female. Two arms can be seen behind as if arising from the very wings themselves. The arms are grasping the angel's halo, which is not thin and circular, but rather big and irregular: perhaps a stone or a massive weight. As happens not infrequently, the drawing corresponds accurately to the depiction of the angels in the poem.

A triadic, but also heterodox, presentation of angels is found in the poem "From the Coptic": an animate lump of red clay is successively addressed by three angels.[10] Long lines organized in couplets, one stanza in monorhymes and a tercet for each angel help contribute to create a psalm-like, even liturgical atmosphere. The red clay is described as formless and lazy. Since some etymologies claim that "Adam" means "red clay", the strange creature that is kneeling on a tomb might be interpreted as the first man. This Not-yet-Man is summoned by the first angel, who urges him to become Man foretelling him a predictable fate: he will alternate happiness with pain. The second angel repeats the same, while the red clay remains under the falling rain refusing to become a man. The rain obviously suggests that the clay may be disintegrating, thus descending to an inferior stage, to that of the "formless". The third angel repeats the conjuring, but also identifies himself as the Angel of Death, *i. e.*, the one who shall warrant the end of the "future bones" of the prostrate clay. When the clay listens to its definite vocation, it becomes Man, and as Man declares the Angel of Death to be his friend. The poem can be read in a sort of Heideggerian key: Man is a-being-in-order-to-die. Like Mr. Simpkins, (in "Mrs. Simpkins"), who cannot stand the idea of an afterlife, the red clay is satisfied only when the third angel predicts his final extinction. Stevie and her critics have extensively written about Stevie Smith's sense of death (SMITH, 1983: 110, 112 (*a*); SPALDING, 1988: 15, 273, HUK, 2005, *et al*). The final impression is that Death is the very justification of Man. Two puzzling elements remain to be interpreted. The first is the drawing: Stevie's stereotypical angels here are tall and wear a kind of petticoat. Their heads are bald, manly, and severe; one of them is glancing aside. The "red clay", in contrast, is turning its head towards the angels but is kneeling on a tomb. A small (proleptic) crucifix can

[10] The presence of an angelical triad is supported by Denis the Areopagite and undoubtedly by popular lore and iconography. Neither the Catechism of Trent nor the modern Catechism, however, states anything about this number to refer to angels. On the other hand, the triad of Archangels must have impinged upon the general idea of "three".

be seen on it, and the red clay's hands are clutching the stone. The crucifix reveals that the stone is in fact a tombstone. Does the crucifix suggest a further commitment on the "red clay's" part? What is the purpose of featuring a crucifix when, to begin with, no man has yet died since "red clay" = Adam is the first man to be created? The second puzzle is the title: "From the Coptic" suggests a translation. An extinct language of Egypt, Coptic might correspond to some exotic place in which the Creation is described in *Genesis*. Is there a Coptic account of the creation of Man? Did angels intervene in that creation? This possibility does not sound plausible. If Christ was a man only, Death had an absolute power on him: in this way Christ (*i. e.*, the crucifix) and Red Clay-Man would share man's conclusive destiny, *i. e.* death. These three angels can nevertheless be understood as messengers of God, thus subordinated to Him, and prepared to submit their terrible questions for Man's consideration. Notwithstanding, Man's final decision would be contrary to the Biblical account of the creation of Man, because only after the Fall did Man become mortal.[11] In the last analysis, we never know if Stevie Smith supports the Coptic doctrine or not.[12]

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[11] It should be noticed that the same episode narrated in "From the Coptic" occurs in a short story written by Stevie Smith, "Sunday at Home". One of the characters, Greta, is talking with Glory, her friend: the conversation touches on some concerns about Hell, the Christian idea of punishment, mortality, and the like. Greta mentions a reading of the Coptic which reproduces in a prosaic way what is poetically stated in "From the Coptic". There are slight differences, however: in Greta's account the angels coax red clay trying to make it stand up and be Man. Red clay refuses the offering of the ups and downs during life. After an interruption by Glory, Greta finishes the tale: the Third Angel is the one who promises death. Then red clay agrees to become Man. The background of this conversation is twofold: on Greta's part, a peculiar worry about evil, war, and the use of force beleaguers her, and Death does not prove to be an escape from evil. Glory's trouble derives from her thorny relationship with her husband, Ivor. In the end the Christian idea that death is not forever makes Glory hopeless. The basic coincidence between this passage and the poem reinforces the notion that these angels, if subordinated to God, belong to the type *mauvais anges*: they do not tell exactly the truth; and when one of them manages to persuade red clay to become Man, this persuasion happens under the promise that Death shall be the end of everything —which contention is just the opposite of what Christian doctrine affirms. At all events, Ivor dismisses the Coptic manuscript as spurious and ends his laconic comment saying "all bosh".

[12] The Archangel Michael is the object of a special devotion in the Coptic Church. One can guess that the three angels who visit the red clay are in fact the three Archangels, Michael along with Gabriel and Raphael. Nevertheless, none of them can be Death according to Christian dogma.

“Absent” (Intertextual) Angels

The poem “Fuite d'Enfance”, in the collection *Tender Only to One*, deserves some consideration even though no angel is mentioned. Angels here are found intertextually with Shakespeare's Sonnet 144 being the hypotext. The sonnet refers to two loves who are in fact angels representing the man and the woman who, along with the poet, form a *ménage à trois*. “Fuite d'Enfance” evokes provocatively the first line of the Shakespeare sonnet. The former starts “I have two loves”; the latter, “Two loves I have of comfort and despair”. Whereas in the sonnet one angel is good —the male one— no positive impression can be derived from Stevie's presentation, it declaring that “one is my father // And one is my divine”. In fact, the girl who speaks in the first person seems to be oppressed by the two and does not know which one to follow. The drawing shows a small girl flanked by two male, ugly figures. The two male heads are almost at the same level as the girl's, as though she were being “lifted”. In a way, these figures can be interpreted as Guardian Angels, but neither of the two a good one. The idea of adult patronizing oppression is clearly felt both from the lines of the poem and from the drawing. It is interesting to observe that according to traditional angelology each human being is accompanied by an angel who protects and guides that individual (*Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica,* 1993: 89). There is o doctrinal evidence that an evil angel is also there to tempt a person. The distinction between good and bad angels appears in the Bible, but clearly no conflict or dualism can be cited; the confrontation takes place on Earth between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the Evil One. (“Angels”: 5). Stevie shows the girl almost overwhelmed by two malignant forces, regardless the fact that one is her father and the other, her divine.

Allegorical Angels

In certain other poems an angel can personify some abstract entity. “The Choosers” features the Angel of Posterity. The poem is a satire on artistic or poetic reputation. The Choosers are the ones who decide on poetic values, *i. e.*, the critics. The poetic voice in the first person is included in this group. They, however, are contrasted with that of the Great Ones —*i. e*., those who are going to assess the definite value of an artistic creation. The latter are in turn chosen by the Angel of Posterity. The first group of judges becomes irrelevant in comparison with the second. The poem contains a significant turn in the last stanza: the poet complains that England cherishes “her arts in this wise”: using some folk refrains, like “with a hey-ho and a yah”, the poem satirizes English tastes or the way these tastes (the Choosers’) condition the arts. In any event, the contrast between the two types of judges is highlighted through the intervention of the Angel of Posterity, who contributes a transcendental judgement of the poetic merits. Thus, the figure of the angel resembles those angels sent by God to provide revenge, justice, or punishment—for example the one who will come to purify the world, as in *Revelation* 9: 11 (the “angel of the bottomless pit”). Stevie's angel is not so majestic, but all the same administers justice in matters of poetic fame. We can obviously read Stevie's own dissatisfaction in this poetic complaint.

Another example is “How do you see?”, a long invective against Christianity, which religion in the poet's opinion is not more than a fairy story: if the Spirit of God must be in fact the Spirit of Good, then the poet finds many contradictions, particularly in the example of the Catholic faith. After considering what *Genesis* says concerning the Spirit of God, the poetic persona discusses the figure of Christ as Redemptor, Savior, Son of God, Perfect Man, and God. There is only one occurrence of angels. The poet researches into the cause of the doctrine of salvation and of damnation. Those that are damned must prepare for “the devil

and his angels". This happens to be compatible with the notion that the Devil has the fallen angels at his command and is prepared to inflict eternal punishment on sinners.[13]

Legendary Angels

The "matter of England", together with a ghostly intervention of a mysterious angel, occurs in "The English Visitor". Here Stevie Smith has cultivated the folk ballad, telling macabre stories of frustrated love and posthumous retaliation. A facet of mocking appears obvious in Stevie's recycling of the old lore: the last lines, uttered by the angel and justifying the lady's behavior, are clearly ironic: "she is not less sorry than you are // only she was brought up differently". The poem is built upon the contrast between a Scottish dead man and his English lover. The Scottish mountainous landscape is opposed to the "busy town", which location the female partner would prefer for her lover's tomb. People react against the English visitor, who is in turn chased out of the cemetery. She eventually is transformed into what seems to be a buzzard. The transformation of lovers into birds that manage then to achieve a transcendental union is a topic in traditional balladry and classical mythology. The problem here is that the "English visitor" flies alone while asking why people are so hostile to her. Thus, the people's curse or prohibition to see the dead man again is countermanded by the angel, who ensures that the woman will think of him freely. The angel's intervention serves the purpose of mitigating the differences between the two cultures, life-styles, and creeds. This angel is neither godly nor devilish. The slightly malicious remarks of the first stanzas stress the incompatibility of the two sensibilities and the common repulsion for foreigners. Stevie's resorting to an angel seems to serve the purpose of calming down the natives,

[13] The agents of punishment, however, are not necessarily the evil angels: in *Matthew* 13: 41, angels are sent by the Son of Man to punish ill-doers; whereas in *Matthew* 25: 41, ill-doers depart "into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

although that she is holding her tongue in her cheek while telling this tale is not difficult to imagine.

A strange legend whose protagonists are a man and (possibly) the angel of Death is the one depicted in "The Crown of Bays". The story starts *in medias res*: some people seem to be celebrating a man by giving him a crown of bays. The man turns to the Winged Form—*i. e*., the Angel, who introduces himself as "the Angel of the Considered Bays". The man decides to follow the angel and therefore must be dead. The man is eventually stabbed by the angel. While agonizing, the man recollects his past life showing repentance. The angel leaves the corpse with the following words: "Briefly // In my opinion for what is with you, you die trivially".[14] The angel has posed a conundrum, and the idea may be applied to the very poem itself. The whole tale appears as a kind of frustration about life, not only social life but also "National Beauties", to which the man must say farewell. The last comment by the angel indicates that even the man's voluntary death is trivial, as though nothing were worthwhile, neither in life nor in death. The figure of this angel is consistent with many others presented by Stevie: the angel as an uncompromising, implacable being.

Angel of Death

The coupling of "angel" with "death" attracted Stevie Smith. Such an association is not necessarily a sign of evil. Death is not a frightening apparition in Stevie Smith's experience but rather a synonym of definitive liberation. Whereas in biblical and folk lore "Angel of Death" evokes a sinister, retaliating presence, normally associated with punishment or transcendental justice, Stevie brings about the figure of an angel who sometimes restates order, human justice, and peace. This type of restatement is what happens in "Angel Boley". It is proleptically tricky that she picks the proper name "Angel" to refer to

[14] The drawing represents a very annoyed and grotesque angel.

the lady “Angel Boley”, who turns out to be the Angel of Death in the very last line of the poem. Angel Boley forms part of a very queer triangle: her mother, Malady Festing, and (Angel's) husband, Hark Boley, contrive to attract the children of the neighborhood into their kitchen. There they kill them. This macabre activity recalls frightening folk tales and ballads about children killed by ogres, monsters, or witches. Angel Boley, who is extremely absentminded, has never paid attention to what is happening in her own house. The poetic persona states that her absentmindedness stems from a desire to ignore her awful relatives. (She is not absentminded after all). The clue is given by the middle of the poem: “I know now, she said, and all the time I have known / What I did not want to know, that they killed all children”. The reputation of the sinister family is poor in the village. Angel verifies that the villagers make a sign to protect themselves from evil, but they do not protect their children. Angel promises that “Mother Lure and my husband Hark” will kill no more children. Their faces become dark at the moment when Angel reveals that she is the Angel of Death. The poem raises some critical issues: one is to conjecture why the husband and mother are chosen by the poet to plot such macabre activities. Is there any hidden symbolic meaning in these characters? There might be an answer in the mother's name: “Malady Festing” can be understood as the illness of celebrating killing people: a festival is a celebration of something.[15] The son-in-law's name is more opaque: “Hark” is in fact an archaic word meaning “listen”.[16] One possibility may be that she is the principal celebrant of these atrocities and he, as a weak imitator, is just listening/harkening to *her* and going along with the whole thing. Another problem concerns the villagers' psyche. According to Angel they are “selfish wretches”. They are afraid of witchcraft, but they do not prevent their children from being lured by the evildoers. Angel's declaration of her real identity as the Angel of

[15] The suffix *-fest* indicates the same, or else an intense immersion in an activity (*e. g.*, *songfest*).
[16] But “Listen to illnesses” is probably a farfetched deciphering of this strange association.

Death results in a decisive change in her personality. Her reputation with respect to the murderers was that she was half-witted and never knew "or wanted to know, what was going on around her". At the moment of her proclamation, though, she becomes clever and determined: she gathers poisonous mushrooms and kills her mother and husband. Then she goes to the police and declares herself guilty although she has saved many children. The dead children are not to appear; their parents are afraid. Conveyed to an asylum, Angel merely states, "I am the Angel of Death". Soon she dies and the townspeople have an inscription written on her tombstone: "she did evil that good // Might come". Attempts to erase the inscription fail. The words reappear. A vigil is placed on the grave, but the words recur on the tombstone. Eventually the Vicar accepts that the hand of the Lord is there and the tombstone is left in peace. The format of Stevie's narrative is that of a legend, particularly the one of the etiological-type —*i. e*, one that "explains" a phenomenon that everyone can currently see. What I want to stress in this instance is the performative quality of Angel's declaration. Whether she proclaims herself the Angel of Death because she has become clever or whether she does so after uttering her decision to avenge the murdered children is difficult to ascertain. At all events, Angel's new consciousness is inextricably bound to an act of speech. The revengeful exterminator Angel is sent by God to punish the impenitent evil doers; and as such Angel Boley, or the Angel of Death, achieves what presumably God has told her to do. The supernatural intervention is shown in the last part of the poem with the narration on the failure to remove the epitaph. This miracle is reminiscent of the narration of Jesus's burial, in which a vigil "fails" as well. The conclusive prayer of the poem, "May God be merciful" reverberates with the awesome atmosphere of the traditional folk legend.[17]

[17] It is interesting to observe how Stevie manages to give the real, historical event a legendary aura. Her poem is indeed based on the 1966 murder case in which a man and a woman, whose names are not the ones that Stevie uses in her poem, were convicted for the sadistic killings of two children. (SPALDING, 1988: 291)

Ironic Angels

A different turn in angelic functions is shown in "The Galloping Cat". The poem illustrates two recurrent issues in Stevie Smith's writing: her concern about animals along with and her preoccupation with morals. Animals embody human behavior but the moralistic aspect of her work is not so explicit. Moreover, Stevie Smith mixes the description of the animal with apparently nonsensical remarks as well as sayings. The first person cat "likes to // Gallop about doing good", implying a strange combination of actions. The general meaning is clear: this animal is a well doing cat. His good intentions are contradicted by a mysterious figure who opposes him just because he is a well-doer. Then, another mysterious voice pities him and he feels a soft stroke on his head, whereupon he becomes suddenly bald. The phrase "a martyr of doing good" shows Stevie's clear irony. The angels appear with their conventional paraphernalia: "a swoosh // As of wings" and a shining halo. The angels do not encourage the cat to do well, rather the opposite: they stand in the cat's path. The poet becomes suspicious: is this cat a well doer after all? What are the implications of a demand to have "An experienced eye of earthly sharpness" in order to do good; and what is exactly the implication of, as it were, galloping to do good? Finally, why is the cat chosen among other animals to perform good deeds?[18]

Irony or black humor pervades "The Toll of the Roads". The poem depicts somebody killed in a car accident. The angels pity him. The drawing shows three distressful figures but only one has wings. Tolley, the person, is lying on the street and a presumptive traveller is seen in the back seat of a car. The angels' grimaces suggest that they really failed to protect "poor Tolley", "a simple creature without a thought in his head".

[18] Stevie Smith wrote extensively on cats in "Cats in Colour", included in *Me Again*.

The poem “Will Man Ever Face Fact and not Feel Flat?” has some intertextual links with *Hamlet*, particularly the line “Oh what an artistic animal is our little Man", which might recall Hamlet's “What a piece of work is man” (II, 2, 303). Stevie's poem displays a triad which is not very far from the Renaissance worldview: God, Nature, and Man. Man, *nexus et naturae vinculum*, is frequently depicted in a very uncomfortable stance. In Stevie's impression what man causes in nature is rather pitiful and scornful since he is so weak. Then an angel intervenes to say that this tender creature (Man) needs love. Man turns out to be a destroyer, but natural beings start to admire him. God intervenes declaring that man's true need of love is the love for God; if not, “for lack of love he'll die”. A little breeze brings about the frustrating conclusion: “It is wonderful how he can // Invent fairy stories about everything pit pat”. This wind, “older than all infamously strong” seems to be more powerful than God and his angels. There is a hint that God, the angels, the need for love, and other associated elements are but fairy stories invented my men. The angel, however, is the one who needs to justify man when perceiving man's violence. The angel weeps for him, suggests an explanation, and is eventually neglected by God Himself; who, for His part, happens to be derided by the breeze.

Angelical Angels

A significantly different status of angels is displayed in the poem “Angel Face”. The invoked angel here is a type of eerie or dreaming being, an idealized lover and a beneficent creature. The poem's atmosphere is pervaded by the whiteness of falling snow. In the first person, the poet asks the angel to love her whereas the angel's face beckons telling her to “Come soon”. Thus, there is a vertical tension: the lady demands the angel to come down, since its face is “so close above me”; while the angel summons the lady to come soon, *i. e*. to join him in the air. The angel's second intervention, as imagined by the lady, is to “Come away”; but this stanza describes him as “appealing, teasing // Smiling”; and there is a certain

seductive, even deceptive, hint in the angel's voice. Eventually we learn that the lady herself might be deceived by her own imagination: when doubt arises, she tells the angel to love her and to cover her “in thy bosom”. This angel can therefore be the Guardian Angel. The doubt about her vision can imply a doubt about faith, and her search for protection has a traditional religious suggestion close to the bosom of Abraham or God, entailing definitive calmness and relaxation. The couplets, feminine endings, and repetitions contribute to a support of the sensation of peace. “Angel face” is far from the turbulent and macabre overtones of the poems already commented on. This one seems so simple that a child could possibly be imagined as uttering it. Nevertheless, in terms of Stevie's attraction for death, a more serious reading is probable. In this instance, the lady asking the angel to love her and to cover her in his bosom would become equivalent to an oblique way of asking the angel (of death) to take her away. This reading does not appear to be inconsistent with the whiteness and vacancy of the landscape.

The orthodox notion of angels reappears in “Why do you rage?” The poetic persona challenges someone else who is raging against Christ, he who is Love. The poem states that before Christ “the angel's brightness grows dark”. Stevie is taking from traditional angelology the notion of light, which characteristic in that lore becomes more tenuous as the angelical hierarchy goes downwards. The seraphim (meaning “fire”) are the highest and mightiest of the angels but their light is not their own: God is the ultimate source of light (DÉNYS L’AREOPAGITE, 1970: 107; “The development of Jewish ideas of angels”: 1). Christ must be brighter than the brightest angels. The idea that God may feel disappointed about His creation is not remote in Stevie's work. Angels are bound to feel the same disappointment when they perceive Man's upsetting nature. Another orthodox view of the mythical rebellion against God is displayed in “Fallen, Fallen”. The rebel angel is identified with a falling star, possibly “Luciferum”. Stevie's diffident comments never disappear completely: the last line,

“A tale told by the fireside”, with a slight echo of Macbeth’s soliloquy, suggests that the whole myth might be, after all, just a legend.

Ominous Angels and black humor

The ominous deeds of certain angels are further explored in “A Man I am” and in “The Magic Morning”. In the first the sinister atmosphere is somehow checked by an angel. The speaker confesses that he has torn a newborn child's throat. After many centuries the wolf-man feels remorse and is apparently released from his sin by God (or whoever is “Him”), “before whom angel faces dim”. The strange creature is then transformed again into a man. His extraordinary longevity and cruelty can be associated with the Dracula legend, while killing children is an aspect this poem has in common with “Angel Boley”. The denouement in this poem is that of repentance and forgiveness whereas the outcome of the other is retaliation and superstition. The figure of the angel here, though, is less prominent than in “Angel Boley”, and the angel's function is to emphasize God's might and pity. Since God “takes the burden of man's sin”, this poem can be linked to the Christian creed without difficulty. If the Christian premise of redemption is evoked, the poem can symbolize the very history of humanity, men being wolves against each other until the Christ comes to redeem them.

“The Magic Morning” likewise shows again an ominous angel who focuses on the trespasser's horrible end. The legend involves Lady Marion, the Duke's daughter, and Charley Dake, who row across a mysterious lake. A swan admonishes Charley not to go on with the Lady. Eventually a dark angel appears flying across the Duke's park. Charley does not listen to this angel, who happens to be the “angel of consternation”, and he plucks a flower. So he must be drowned as punishment: while the lady returns safely to land, Charley is dragged away by the current. This angel can perhaps be equated to the archangel who guards the entrance of Paradise after the Fall preventing any soul from entering Eden. That Stevie Smith

treats the motif of the grove in a ballad-like way —*i. e*., as a threatening and dangerous place— becomes readily apparent.[19] Sinister news conveyed through an angel is exemplified in "Upon a Grave": this poem parodies the tune to which the work should be sung. The tune is "Upon a bank in the greenwood I lay". The angel, similar to the one who stops Abraham when he is about to sacrifice his son, comes from heaven to tell the speaker that her child is dead. Since the speaker is at that point on the grave and in a churchyard, one might think that the son is already dead and that the speaker is mourning him. In that instance the angel would not be reporting any news, but rather reconfirming a verified fact. An angel, however, would not seem to be necessary in such a circumstance. The lack of any indication of punctuation is puzzling: either the three last lines of the first stanza are part of the angel's speech, or they are uttered by the speaker. In the former possibility, the one who "singeth far away" would be the child, and the angel would go on saying "In death is sorrow dead"; in the latter, the one who sings far away would be the angel and the speaker would say "In death is sorrow dead." Both readings could obviously be combined as well. The macabre atmosphere of the poem contrasts with the lyrics of the tune inspiring it. Again, angels bring about ominous forebodings and tidings.

Black humor—a sardonic contemplation of mankind and of angels—is exemplified by the poem "No More People". The speaker, an aviator, reveals a close contact with angels. The airplane flies gently, but the angels, whose attributes are predominantly negative, are dispirited. In spite of being heaven-born they "plod the heavens over": their wings are sore and heavy. The pilot guesses that these angels had been "earth-born more and more". The earth-born speaker's lightness contrasts ironically with the heaven-born angels' density. The pilot speculates that the angels' diffidence might originate in their foresight of general

[19] The swan addressing Charley Dake may hearken back to the Swan-Lake legend.

destruction, perhaps with a hint concerning apocalyptical catastrophe. The anticlimactic end confirms that omen. The aviator drops bombs on a church. The sarcasm is intensified through the rhyme: “[no more] people” – “[church] steeple”. Why does the pilot choose the church instead of some other building and why does either he or she choose angels to highlight the contrast between the two flights? Stevie was not at her ease with institutionalized religion although she never abandoned the Anglican Church completely. The association with “No Categories” comes to one's mind. Whereas in that poem the poetic voice wishes that the angels had become more earthly, in “No More People” they seem to be indeed earthly; therefore lacking their aerial quality. The angels of the former are apparently too heavenly, too dictatorial, to be of any help for human beings; those of the latter too earth-like. The final result is the same: angels are not messengers from God, and they perform nothing to support and promote human souls. Stevie's angels personify human beings, especially those who effect spiritual oppression, as in her view the established Christian churches do.

Guardian Angels

The figure of an angel can be ambiguous. The accompanying drawing might help to decipher the true meaning. Some ambiguity derived from gestures nevertheless remains. This drawing pertains to a short poem, “Angel of Grace”. A child is talking with a joyful lady when the child's Guardian Angel takes him away. This child wonders where the lady is of whom he has grown "fonder and fonder". The first interpretation consistent with the drawing is, I believe, that the angel is interfering with the child: the lady is a benefactress and the *mauvais ange* prevents the child from obtaining pleasure or guidance from her in that capacity. In the drawing an elegant and smiling young woman appears; whereas the angel, another feminine figure, is grabbing the youth's arm and dragging him away. The boy smiles at the woman and offers an open hand to her. The quality of the angel is consistent with previous experiences of these creatures: they meddle in human affairs, notably discouraging

any hope and reminding human beings of hierarchies and dogmas. Nevertheless, since Stevie's writing is subtle and ironic, perhaps the opposite meaning can be entertained—*i. e.,* the lady is coaxing the child to follow her, whereas the austere angel intervenes to help the boy resist the fatal attraction. In the first instance the title becomes ironic: "Angel of Grace" is, as a matter of fact, "Angel of Disgrace" for the child. Nonetheless, the irony can be conceived of in a subtler way: since the two adult figures are women, the "angel of grace" would be the beneficent lady instead of the angel itself.

Any slight mention of an angel suggests that the poet may have the image of a traditional one in mind. The example is "But Murderous": a woman has killed her unborn baby to protect it against the evil that dominates life. The poet is severe in rejecting the woman. Stevie asks, "Did she think it was an angel or a baa-lamb // that lay in her belly furled?" The rejection implies the notion that a human being is not superior to the rest of those creatures that populate the world. In any event, the figure of the angel, coupled with that of the baa-lamb, is consistent with a somehow childish notion of "angelical" innocence and candor. That this angelic stereotype is not, however, the predominant perception of angels that Stevie exhibits is self-evident.

Drawings of Angels

I want to finish with a brief consideration of the drawings that "illustrate" certain poems, even though angels are not necessarily mentioned in those texts.[20] "A dream" depicts figures in a ballad-like, macabre situation: two angels are represented on the tombstone. Both of them are angry and crossing their arms, while the visitor looks rather silly and improvising an explanation. A star and the moon indicate that this incident happens in the night. In "Suicide Epitaph" another tombstone appears: a human being with a bleeding heart is on it

[20] The relationship between poems and drawings is a complex one: "For the most part, Stevie Smith's poems did not inspire her drawings, nor did her drawings inspire her poems". (BARBERA, 1985: 223)

and very nearby the figure of an angel dressed as a woman and pointing downwards with her swords. In "King Hamlet's Ghost" the figure of the King appears like an angel—*i. e.,* without any trace of the armed warrior that haunts the castle of Elsinore. His expression is somehow sad, and he holds a circular object that could be a mirror. Another illustration of angels is inserted between two poems in *Tender Only to One*, "Longing for Death because of feebleness" and "My Heart Goes Out". Both are concerned with death: a male angel is taking a female one by her hand. The female angel appears as dead or asleep. Leaving aside drawings that are undoubtedly representations of the Devil or of death, I emphasize here that the drawings of angels represent spirits that are normally evil or angry and that seem to be particularly interested in conveying human beings to the netherworld.

Conclusion

A poem is *poeisis*—a bringing-forth to reconcile thought with matter and mankind with the world: any quest for biographical evidence is accordingly suspicious. That the mention of angels can be taken as a poetic device without any implication of faith or the lack of it therefore would follow directly. Angels would be just messengers sent by God and sometimes independent supernatural beings, and not by definition under the Devil's command. It is difficult, however, not to take into consideration Stevie Smith's strongest attack on Christianity in her essay "Some Impediments to Christian Commitment":

> And I thought: How could a God of Love condemn anybody at all, even a person as wicked as the most wicked person could be, even a great angel so rebellious as Lucifer Star of the Morning Sky, to eternal fiery punishment? I began to think that a God of Love should rather slay altogether a creature gone irremediably wrong, than keep him alive to torment him for ever. I read my bible and I saw that the lofty Christ believed, too, and taught this monstrous

> doctrine of eternal hell: "depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels"…"and they went away into everlasting punishment." (SMITH**,** 1983: 155, *b*)

Stevie Smith's invective against Christianity touches central dogmas: the Incarnation, the dual nature of Christ, the doctrine of eternal Hell. All these denouncements inspired certain poems included in this article. Starting from biographical evidence, then, I would conclude that Stevie Smith was certainly at pains to accept and believe what she had been taught. If she really rejected these dogmas, which denial implies the rejection of an essential part of Christianity; angels would have been no more than a poetic device that she used at random. The very insistence on the topic of angles *per se*, however, leads me to the conclusion that Stevie was never plainly satisfied with her own invective, so that these issues continued to upset her. Nevertheless, Angels, leaving aside some ironical or slightly humorous touches, are almost always disturbing presences in her *corpus*, very seldom sent by a loving God and much more frequently the very ministers of evil.

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THE ROLE OF STORYBOARDS IN Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* [21]

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ABSTRACT: A film storyboard is a large section of the film produced beforehand. Although they are like comics, they are essentially different, serving as tools in the making of the film. They allow producers to visualize the scenes and find potential problems before they occur. Many filmmakers have storyboarded only certain scenes or haven't used them at all, but some have used it extensively in place of doing a script. This paper will examine the efficacy of the interaction between the production of Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* and storyboards by Christopher Baker, mainly the ones concerning the fantastic and dreamlike atmosphere of Arthur Schnitzler's *Dream Story* in scenes such as Alice's dream, the mask ball and the costume shop. I will try to compare parts of the storyboard with the abovementioned scenes in order to investigate their efficacy in conveying Schnitzler's story.

KEYWORDS: storyboard; film adaptation; Stanley Kubrick; *Eyes Wide Shut*

RESUMO: Chamamos de *Storyboard* uma parte significativa de um filme produzida previamente. Embora sejam como quadrinhos, são totalmente diferentes, e servem de ferramentas no fazer do filme. Permitem aos produtores visualizar cenas e encontrar possíveis problemas antes que estes ocorram . Muitos cineastas usam *storyboards* apenas para algumas cenas ou mesmo nunca o usam. Porém alguns têm usado *storyboards* extensivamente em lugar do roteiro. Este texto examina a eficácia da interação entre a produção de *Eyes wide shut (De olhos bem fechados)* e quadros de *storyboards* de Christopher Baker, principalment os que se referem à atmosfera fantástica e onírica do romance de Arthur Schnitzler, *Dream Story:* os sonhos de Alice, o baile de máscara e a loja de fantasias. Tentarei comparar partes da *storyboard* com as cenas mencionadas acima com a finalidade de investigar sua eficácia na tradução da história de Schnitzler.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Storyboard; adaptação fílmica; Stanley Kubrick; *De olhos bem fechados*.

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[21] This text, part of a project financed by FAPEMIG and CNPq, was first presented in a Portuguese shorter version at the XI ABRALIC (July 2008 São Paulo, Brazil) and also in English at the 8Th International Conference on Words and Images Studies **(**International Association of Word and Image Studies, Paris 7-11 July, 2008)

Introduction

As if it were a comic, a storyboard is an illustrated vision of how a film producer or director imagines what the film ought to look like. This is an effective way of communicating between producer or director and the rest of the team. It is like the plan of a building (or even the model) that will guide the work of the engineer (or workers) in a building. Storyboards guide the film or TV team in order to do that which the director has in mind. Differently from traditional scripts, which only describe the action and express the dialogue, storyboards also describe camera angles and visual transitions. The words of the script may be poetic, but the images of the storyboard are the very realization of that poetry in space (BEGLEITER, 2001: 3). Therefore, just as the screenplay is the script for the narrative of a story, the storyboard is the visual script.

Storyboards appeared to substitute cartoon scripts, since it is impossible to give an exact idea of something, such as, for example, "a funny expression on his face". Early on, cartoon producers began to realize that a drawing said much more than words and included more and more sketches to their scripts until drawing all the story became a routine procedure (SIMON, 2007: 6). First they had the habit of putting sketches on flannelgraph board which were later called storyboards. Later on these sketches replaced written texts which were reduced to a minimum, limited only to dialogues and simple camera instructions.

Nowadays storyboards are used to develop or throw out an idea, highlight the script or visualize it in its final form. They are common in filming live commercials and action scenes, acrobatics and special effects. It is meant to provide a visual flow of the story.

Because it is a pre-visualization technique, a drawn version of the film, it becomes a resource which is widely used by filmmakers. They are a series of sketches of the main sequences and allow producers a preview of scenes and potential problems even before they

arise. Some filmmakers make sketches of only a few scenes, but others make wide use of this resource, substituting the script. In this paper, I intend to examine the interaction between the production of the film *Eyes Wide Shut*, by Stanley Kubrick, and the storyboards drawn up by Christopher Baker, especially in the scenes that illustrate the atmosphere of dreams in Arthur Schnitzler's novel which inspires the film: Alice's dream, the masked ball and the costumes shop. I will try to compare Baker's sketches to scenes in the film to analyze the "intermediatic" process underlying the translation/"transcreation" which occurred.

Film adaptation

Stanley Kubrick's film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, is based on the novel by Viennese Arthur Schnitzler, *Traumnovelle,* written in 1926, and translated as *Dream Story*. The novel is the account of the trip of a man in the hidden paths of his own unconscious. It is set in Vienna, at the end of the 19th century and exposes the hypocrisy of bourgeois culture, by exploiting the desires, fantasies and repressed passions under the surface of an apparently happy marriage.

The protagonist of the novel, Fridolin, is a 34-year-old successful physician who lives with his wife Albertine and his daughter. The plot, which uses ideas from Freud and portrays Viennese society at the beginning of the century, shows the search of a physician in a marriage crisis, who lives two nights and a day of strange experiences – it is not clear if they are real or onyric. This is after his wife has confessed to a sexual fantasy with an officer. This revelation brings a great disquiet to her husband's mind. He then leaves and wanders the street at night. Dream and reality are mixed. After spending a night in orgies, the husband goes back home and his wife tells him a bad dream: he was being tortured and crucified while she was making love to the officer. Fridolin is outraged and considers the dream proof that his wife wants to cheat on him and decides to go after his sexual temptations.

In this search, he finds that strange things happen, disturbing him even further. On returning home the second night, he finds his wife asleep and, at her side on the pillow, is the mask he had used in the orgy of the previous night. Fridolin, repentant, tells her all his adventures, however, listening to him, she comforts him and they welcome the new day.

The dominating theme of the novel is psychological: it discusses issues of disloyalty, jealousy, guilt and focuses on the desires and fantasies of a couple. When confessing these intimate desires, they begin to deal with feelings of insecurity, betrayal and resentment. The tension between duty and desire is evident. In the end, the couple agrees that no dream is totally real life and that reality does not cover all of life.

There are some changes in the order of events and in the period and place: 20th century New York and 19th century Vienna. The environment of dream and fantasy however is common to both works.

Eyes Wide Shut starts with the couple getting ready to go to a party. The husband, Bill (Tom Cruise) and his wife, Alice (Nicole Kidman) show great intimacy and a great concern with their daughter. At the party the family structure begins to crumble when Bill becomes involved with two models and Alice becomes involved with one of the guests who courts her. Bill's affair is interrupted by a call from the host to assist a prostitute who is unconscious as a result of an overdose.

Next day at home the couple have a sincere talk. She tells him of a recent fantasy she had about a naval officer they had encountered on a vacation. Bill is disturbed by Alice's revelation, but the conversation is interrupted by a call to the deathbed of the father of a now-engaged female friend, who impulsively kisses him and tells him she loves him. He rejects her impulses and takes a walk down the streets of New York. He meets a prostitute and goes

to her apartment. Again he is interrupted by a phone call this time from his wife, after which he calls off the encounter.

Then he goes to meet, at the Sonata Café, his friend Nick, who he has met at the party. There he learns that Nick has a later engagement that evening where he must play the piano while blindfolded. To gain admittance to the place, one needs a costume, a mask and the password “Fidelio”, Nick tells him. Our doctor drives to a shop called "Rainbow Fashions" and offers money to the owner to rent him a costume at that time of the night. With the costume, Bill takes a taxi out to a country mansion where a quasi-religious sexual ritual is taking place. One woman comes to Bill, takes him aside and warns him that he does not belong there. He then meets another girl in whose company he walks through a few rooms where an orgy is taking place. The first woman insists that he is in danger for they suspect that he is an outsider but he refuses to go out. Bill is then taken to the masked, red-cloaked Master of Ceremonies who decides to punish him. The masked young woman who had tried to warn Bill now intervenes and insists that she be punished instead of him. As she is taken away, Bill is ushered from the mansion and warned by the red-cloaked Master not to tell anyone about what happened there.

Just before dawn, Bill arrives home guilty and confused, where his wife Alice is now awake and tells him of a troubling dream in which the Naval Officer emerged, stared at her, and the two of them began making love surrounded by many other couples doing the same. She then started having sex with many of those men and laughing at the idea of Bill seeing her with them.

The next morning, Bill returns to the mansion where he had been the previous night but is expelled. Then he goes in search of Nick. After locating his hotel the desk clerk there tells Bill that a frightened Nick had checked out a few hours earlier after returning with two

dangerous-looking men. Before going to work, Bill goes to return the costume and the shop proprietor offers his daughter for prostitution. As Bill has misplaced the mask, he is billed for it.

At home, Bill thinks about Alice's recounting of the scene while he watches her with their daughter. He also goes to the home of the prostitute with a gift but her roommate tells him that the girl has just discovered she has HIV. Worse of all, Bill discovers that the girl that "saved" him at the party the previous night was now dead.

When Bill returns home, he sees the mask he had rented on his pillow next to his wife. He breaks down in tears and, as Alice awakes, he decides to tell her the whole truth of the past two days.

The next morning they forgive each other, and conclude that dreams and actions of only one day will not reflect the truth about their lives.

As Schnitzler's story, Kubrick's film is therefore a critique to a society where married men betray their wives, revealing a cynical world, rotten and full of betrayal. But here also reality and fantasy are mixed and ambiguity remains, when we perceive the dream atmosphere that passes over both stories. As there are many indications that Bill's experiences are no more than dreams, I will try to show the role of Christopher Baker's storyboards in the production of the film, especially those related to the three scenes that portray this dream atmosphere: Alice's dreams, the costume shop and the mask ball.

Alice's dreams

The first episode analyzed is Albertine's dreams (Alice in the film). In the novel, the wife confesses to a sexual fantasy with an officer, when they were on holiday in Denmark. This greatly distresses her husband, who, on returning home after taking part in the orgy, hears his

wife's account of a nightmare related to the confession she had made: he was being tortured and crucified, while she was making love to the officer and other men.

Christopher Baker's four sketches shown below (fig. 1) may refer to some oneiric sequences from the novel *Traumnovell*. The woman portrayed is, certainly, Albertine/Alice (Nicole Kidman); the man could be Fridolin/Billm (Tom Cruise) or even the young Danish man, desired by the wife, since only these two male figures appear in her dream, the others being described by the novelist as an "infinite tide of nudity foaming against Albertine".

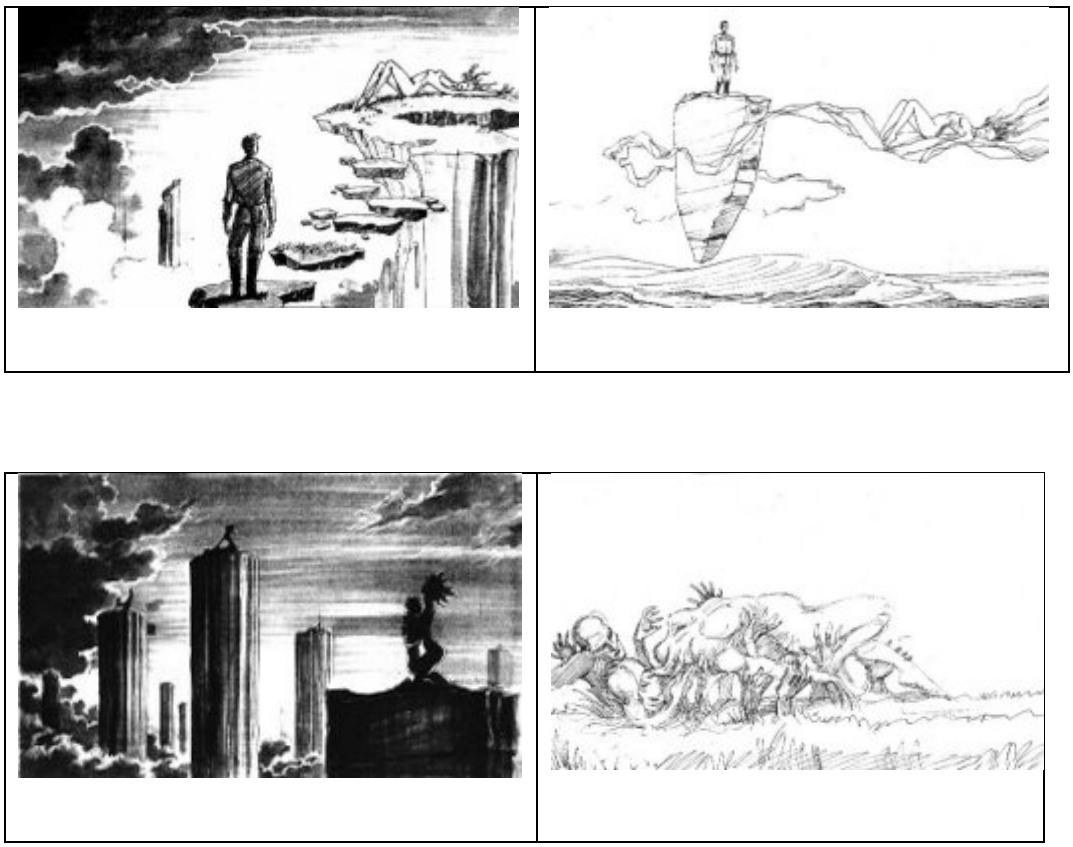

Fig. 1

In the account of the dream in the novel, Fridolin is dressed as a prince, with a golden dagger. Therefore, it is possible that the male figure in the sketch does not portray the husband. Schnitzler describes the man desired by Albertine simply as a young man in Denmark. If it is agreed that the clothes of the man portrayed in Baker's sketches are those of

a naval officer, then these drawings must be later than the filmmaker's decision about the final adaptation of the novel, which did not include the scene of the second account of the dream. In the film, Alice narrates with words both the fantasy and the nightmare.

Marit Allen, costume designer in the film, said that one of the scenes eliminated referred to the dream described by Schnitzler: "One of the scenes that I remember was never shot, but was present in the copy. It is the great scene of the dream, close to the end of the film. It was extremely complicated... Tom crucified... thousands of naked bodies making love... Stanley, obviously, did not think it was necessary and, setting it aside, decided not to shoot it "(Lo storyboard)[22]. Although none of the four sketches is a faithful illustration from Schnitzler's pages, the fantastic and vaguely disturbing atmosphere of the illustrations is the same as the novel. The dream sequence initially planned, as shown also in the sketches, is not present in images of the finished film, but only reported by Alice when she awakens.

Kubrich chose to create, in black-and-white flashbacks, only the scenes that refer to Bill's mind, obsessed with the narrative of his wife's fantasies. In several flashbacks, she is portrayed in the officer's arms, having sex ever more intensely, as we can see in the following frames (fig. 2).

[22] My translation: "Una delle scene che ricordo non fu mai girata, ma era presente nel copione, è la grande scena del sogno, verso la fine del film. Era veramente complicatissima... Tom crocifisso... migliaia di corpi nudi che facevano l'amore... Stanley evidentemente non l'ha trovata necessaria, e fui sollevata quando decise di non girarla."

Fig. 2

In the costume shop

The second scene I refer to is the costume shop. In the novel, this episode is described as follows:

> He led Fridolin up a spiral staircase to the storeroom. There was a pervasive smell of silk, satin, perfume, dust and dry flowers; here and there in the looming darkness red and silvery objects glinted; then suddenly a string of little lights came on between the lockers of a long narrow gallery stretching back into the gloom. To the left and right of them costumes of every imaginable kind were hanging: o one side there were knights, squires, peasants, huntsmen, sages, orientals, fools; on the other, maids of honor, courtly ladies, peasant women, chambermaids and queens-of-the-

night. Appropriate headgear was on display above the costumes, so that Fridlin felt as though he were walking down an avenue of gallows-birds on the point of asking one another for a dance. Herr Gibiser followed along behind him (SCHNITZLER, 1999: 38).

The drawings below (fig. 3) show two men walking through rooms full of clothes and costumes. These drawings could then refer to Gibisier's (Milich) shop during Fridolin/Bill's first visit.

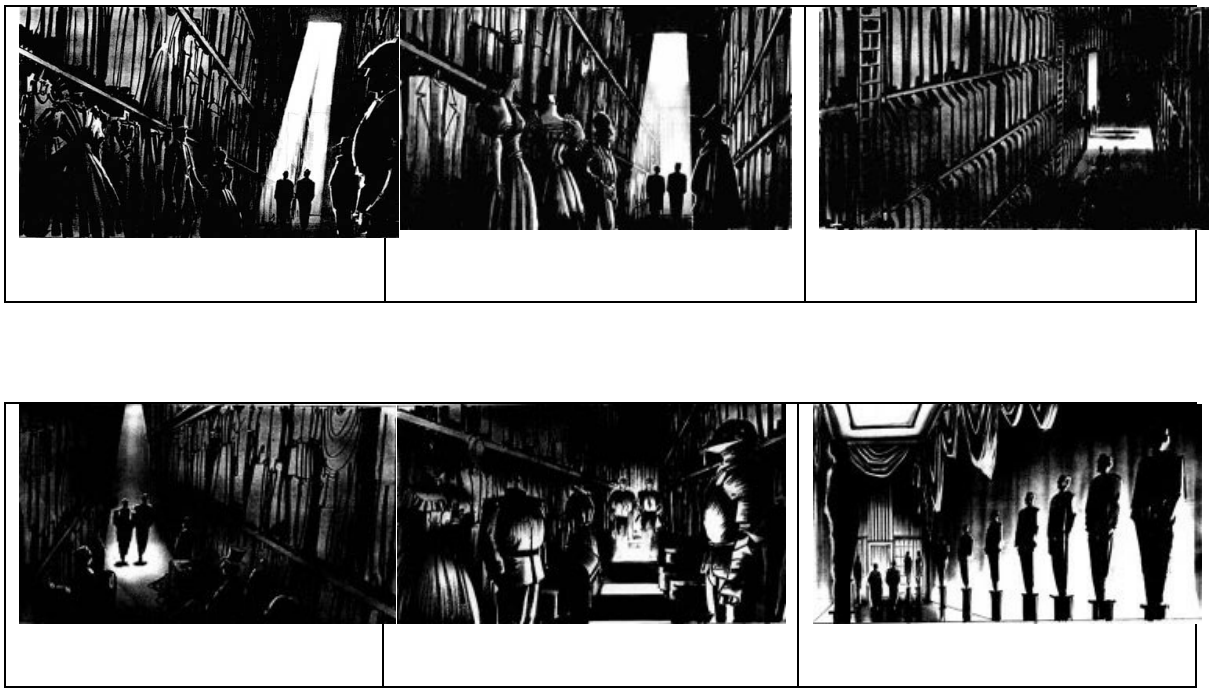

Fig. 3

However, the atmosphere of this sequence is quite different from that which appears in the film: here the smoothing and strong bright-dark lights prevail in a clearly noir style. *Eyes Wide Shut*, on the other hand, makes a softer use of light, choosing a subtler way to create suspense. The three frames below (fig. 4) belong to the costume shop at night, when

Bill comes in search of the costume to go to the party. Lighting and the gesture of the owner give the tone of the film.

Fig. 4

The style of the shop which is portrayed in the film, if compared to the sketch made by Baker to this end (fig. 5), shows that the filmmaker has actualized the story. We can infer this from this drawing, different from the others by its style and without costumed characters. It may have had the objective of pre-visualizing the atmosphere of the shop, while the precious croquis of a more narrative type may have served as a storyboard. The appearance of the costume rental shop shown here is more relevant to the period of the novel.

Fig.5

The Mask ball

The third episode in which the storyboard may be discussed is the mask ball.

In the novel, the environment of the mask ball is described as follows:

> ` Fridolin entererd the dark, dimly lit, high-ceilinged room., drapped with black silk hangings. Some sixteen to twenty masked revelers, all dressed in the ecclesiastical apparel of either monks or nuns, were strolling up and down. The softly resonant tones of the harmonium, playing an old \Italian sacred tune, seemed to descend as if from on high. In one corner of the room stood a small group of people, three nuns and two monks, who had been looking round at him rather pointedly and then quickly turning away. Noticing that he was the only one with his head still covered, Fridolin took off his pilgrim's hat and strolled up and down, trying to seem as innocent as possible. (SCHNITZLER, 1999: 44)

Here, the clothes have only a religious and chivalrous meaning: initially, Fridolin thought he was surrounded by friars and nuns; then, the women strip and are left only with a veil/mask on their faces. However, when Fridolin is surrounded and threatened, there are men with red and black masks of knights.

The drawings below (fig. 6) represent frames from the masked ball, at which Fridolin/Bill arrives after his wife's confession. However, differently from the novel, these sketches show a greater variety of costumes.

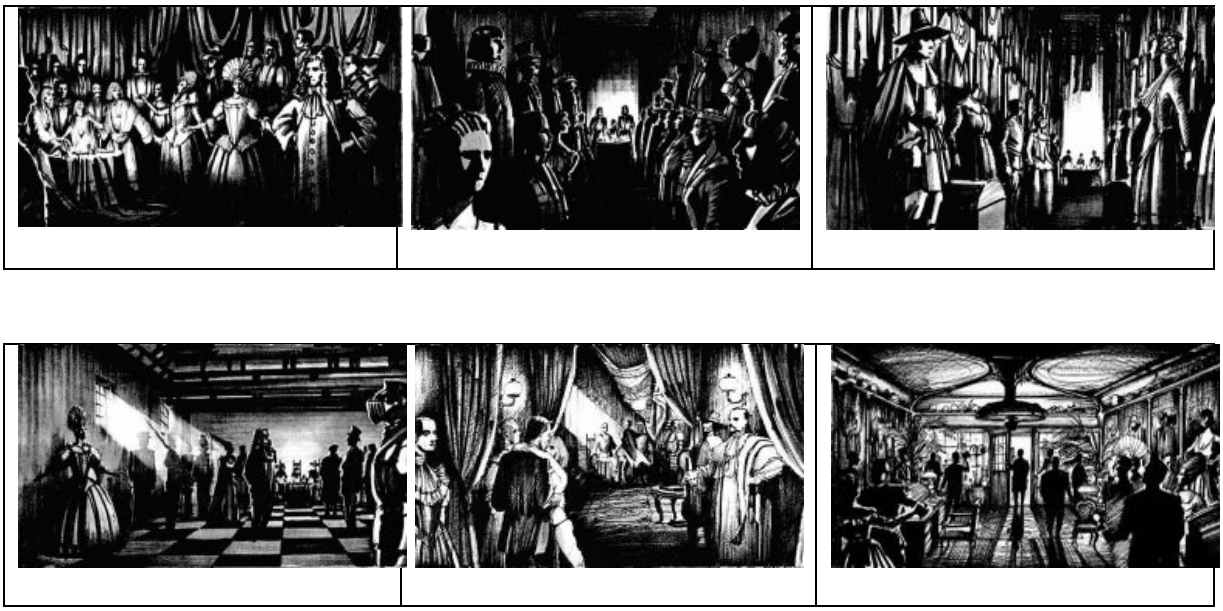

Fig. 6

Baker's visual style, which can be seen in all the drawings both for the environments and the lighting chosen for the scenes, could serve as a first treatment for the adaptation of the novel. It is probable that initially Kubrick thought of transposing faithfully *Traumnovelle* onto the screen, as a costume drama, which would explain the style of Baker's sketch. However, he may have changed his mind when Frederic Raphael was hired to help him in modernizing Schnitzler's text, so as to dislocate the action and the characters from the *fin-de-siecle* Vienna to the end-of-millennium New York. This kind of modernization is suggested by the way the costumes are portrayed during the mask ball. As a consequence, costumes in the film are reduced to cloaks, hoods and masks (fig. 7) and the women are always naked, differently from the way they are presented in Baker's drawings.

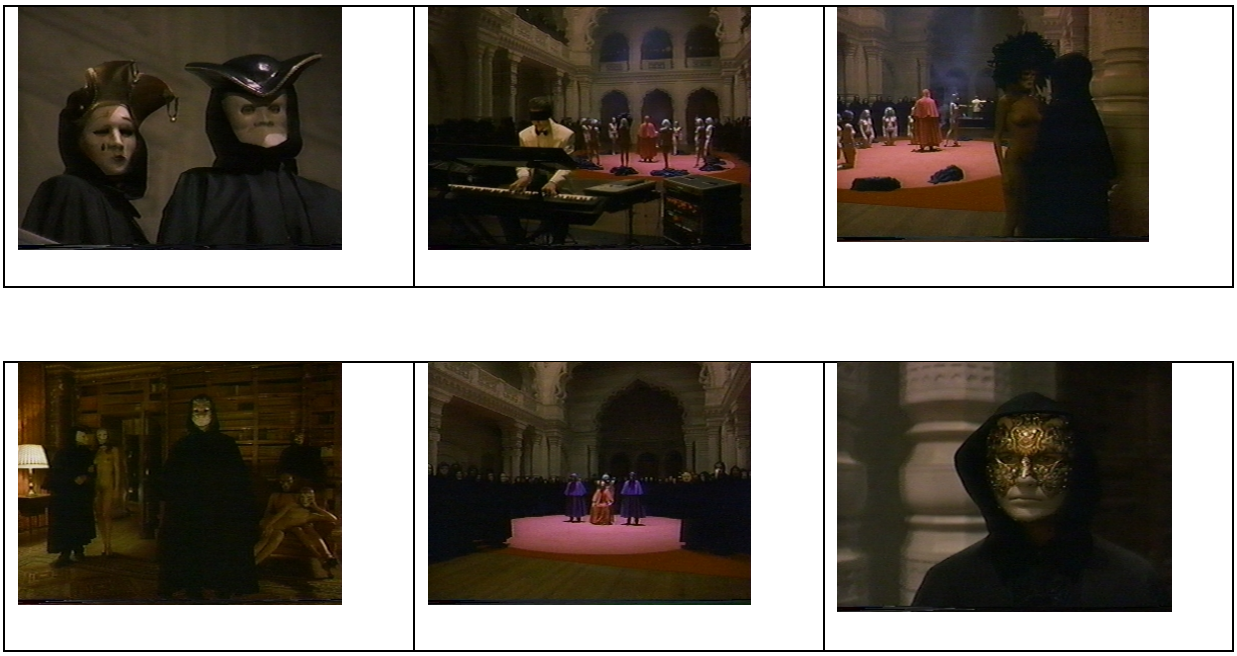

Fig. 7

Raphael began to work with Kubrick in 1994, while Baker had already worked for him for a year. This fact suggests that, at first, Kubrick must have thought of creating a costume drama—which is evinced by Baker's sketches-- and later given up the idea and modernized the scenery to the 20th century. Therefore, in the final version, much of what was proposed by Chris Baker was altered as a result of Kubrick's decisions to change the site and period of the film.

Conclusion

Some images of the film presented here reiterate the idea that Christopher Baker's drawings, although created to help substantiate Kubrick's ideas during the "translation", were discharged at the moment when the director decided to modernize the story by modifying time and space of the novel. This was what this paper sought to demonstrate. Between Schnitzler's text and Kubrick's film there may have been another text, a storyboard, the role of which was initially to help the filmmaker creating a costume drama, located in 19th

Century Vienna. However, on deciding to make a cultural translation, with the plot unfolding in another place and another time—New York in the 20th Century—this intermedial text has disappeared.

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IRONY AND THE STATUS OF THE AUSTRALIAN HERO IN *TRUE HISTORY OF THE KELLY GANG*, BY PETER CAREY

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ABSTRACT: True History of the Kelly Gang, by Peter Carey, winner of the Booker Prize in 2001, is a novel based on the trajectory of one of Australia's most cherished historical figures, the bushranger Ned Kelly (1854-1880). Departing from Northrop Frye's theories on the gradual incursion of irony in Western literature, we examine the manifestation of that literary device in Carey's novel, paying special attention to the crucial role irony plays in the construction of the novel's hero. Irony, according to Linda Hutcheon, is a social practice that necessarily involves text, context and interpreter and the formation of what she calls "discursive communities". Within those communities irony can present itself in different guises. "Verbal irony" is defined by Pierre Schoentjes as the type of irony that occurs within the scope of rhetorical discourse and is a distinctive characteristic of Kelly's style as a narrator. "Situational irony", on the other hand, is not materialized in the narrator's words themselves, but in the manner by which facts are arranged. Our analysis concludes that irony is an expedient that permeates the whole novel, from the title to the main themes and events narrated, influencing even the organization of the narrative focus.

KEY WORDS: True History of the Kelly Gang*;* hero; irony.

RESUMO: **True History of the Kelly Gang**, de Peter Carey, vencedor do Booker Prize em 2001, é um romance baseado na trajetória de um dos mais famosos vultos históricos australianos, o *bushranger* Ned Kelly (1854-1880). Este artigo recorre às teorias de Northrop Frye sobre a incursão gradual da ironia na literatura ocidental para examinar a recorrência desse dispositivo no romance de Carey, dando especial atenção ao papel crucial que a ironia tem na construção do protagonista da obra. A ironia, de acordo com Linda Hutcheon, é uma prática social que necessariamente envolve o texto, o contexto e o intérprete e requer a formação de uma "comunidade discursiva". Nessas comunidades, a ironia pode aparecer sob formas diversas. A "ironia verbal" é definida por Pierre Schoentjes como o tipo de ironia que ocorre no âmbito do discurso retórico, sendo uma característica distintiva do estilo de Kelly como narrador. A "ironia situacional", por outro lado, não se materializa nas palavras, mas na maneira como estas são arranjadas. Conclui-se que a ironia é um expediente que permeia todo o romance, desde seu título até os temas e os eventos narrados, influenciando, inclusive, na organização do foco narrativo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: **True history of the Kelly gang***;* herói; ironia.

Fig.1*

Fig. 2**

Two of the most peculiar items from the collection of the State Library of Victoria, in Melbourne, Australia are a coarse artefact made of plough shares – a five-piece armour in steel and leather, darkened by time and marked by gunshots in several points – and the death mask of Ned Kelly (1854-1880), the bushranger who devised and wore the armour in a confrontation with the police in 1880, during which he was captured.

The presence of the pieces in a library as national icons appears to confirm Mark Twain's remarks, published in 1897 in his travel memoirs. For Twain (1897). Australian history

> is almost always picturesque; indeed, it is also so curious and strange, that it is itself the chiefest novelty the country has to offer and so it pushes the other novelties into second and third place. It does not read like history, but like the most beautiful lies; and all of a fresh new sort, no mouldy old stale ones. It is full of surprises and adventures, the [sic] incongruities, and contradictions, and incredibilities; but they are all true, they all happened.

Indeed, Kelly's historical trajectory – the son of a poor Irish convict, such as thousands of others, who had repeated encounters with the police from his adolescence onwards and achieved, despite his conviction and hanging, the reputation of Australia's most famous outlaw (or hero, as it turns out) – can certainly be qualified as atypical. Something that is especially relevant to this work, however, is the fact that the objects mentioned above are now part of the permanent collection of a library (which, incidentally, made a great effort to put the armour pieces together, as they belonged to different collectors), and not of a museum, as it would be expected.

That might be explained by a certain literary ambition demonstrated by Kelly along his career, since he recurrently attempted to supplement his actions with written statements, something uncommon in other Australian bushrangers. After sending letters to representatives of justice and the government denouncing the circumstances that had led him to crime, Kelly expected to see them published in the local newspapers. During one of the gang's robberies, Kelly even tried to find the owner of a printing business to replicate pamphlets. To his great frustration, his own version of facts was never conveyed by the press, a fact that did not prevent at least 32,000 people from signing a document for the commutation of his sentence.

However, while the journalistic discourse told the story mainly form the police and the magistrates' point of view, the so-called bush ballads from popular Australian literature accomplished, still in the nineteenth century, to exalt the deeds and the sad destiny of the bandit/hero until he became a myth.[23] From then on there has been an intense dialogue between the "historical facts" of Kelly's life and other media, both popular and erudite,

[23] Cf. SCHEIDT, Déborah. Cordel e bush ballads: representações da autoridade na poesia popular do Brasil e da Austrália. **Anais do XII Congresso Internacional da ABRALIC**. Curitiba, 2011. Available online at http://www.abralic.org.br/anais/cong2011/AnaisOnline/resumos/TC0759-1.pdf. Accessed on 21/02/2012.

including comic strips, songs, novels, plays, musicals, opera, ballet, films, painting and other art forms. The most celebrated of these works, because of its international acclaim, is Peter Carey's 2000 novel **True History of the Kelly Gang**[24], winner of several literary awards, including the Booker Prize (2001).

The fact that, through literature, an obscure 19th century outlaw – who acted in small towns of the interior of Australia, some of which even today have a few hundred inhabitants only – could achieve international fame in contemporaneity, leads us to Northrop Frye's considerations regarding the ethos of the hero in the history of Western literature.

To build his historical-critical theory of literature, Frye (1973: 33-34) divides literary history into five stages. In the first one, the era of classical literature, mythical heroes (represented by the gods), are, in their essence, superior to the other characters as well as to their environment. In the second stage heroes are superior, not in essence, but in degree, to other characters and their environment. They are the protagonists of medieval romance and belong to the category of legend and folklore, possessing extraordinary qualities that partially suspend natural law. In the stage that Frye calls "high mimetic mode", epic leaders and tragic heroes are superior to other men, but not to their environment. Their power of action is much higher than that of ordinary people, but they are submitted to the same natural laws and social order as other people.

From the fourth stage on it becomes harder, unless we turn to the resource of irony, to sustain the label "hero", as the protagonist of the "low mimetic mode" is like anyone of us: he/she does not evince any superiority to other characters or their environment. This is the hero of comedy or "realist" fiction in the sense that natural laws can no longer be suspended without loss of verisimilitude. The last stage is called "ironic mode" specifically. The hero of

[24]Published in Brazil in 2002 as *A história do bando de Kelly*.

this kind of literature is inferior, both in power and intelligence, to ordinary people. This mode is usually very disturbing to the reader, as the pathetic situations of submission, frustration or absurdity portrayed do not prevent some degree of identification with the protagonist.

Frye's terminology ("high", "low") has a "diagrammatic" function only and does not imply value judgements, but the gradual dilution of the hero's superiority in Western literature. From the moment writers started to observe the world in a less passionate, more realistic manner, the void spaces left by the shrinking of the hero's power started to expand and to be filled with irony (FRYE, 1973: 42). It is only through this process that a semiliterate peasant such as Ned Kelly – who describes himself in Carey's novel as someone who has thick-skinned hands, callused feet and "knees cut and scabbed and stained with dirt no soap could reach" (CAREY, 2002: 35) – and who, moreover, becomes a robber and a murderer along the way, could become a hero of highbrow literature and tell his own "history".

An analysis of the traditional meaning attributed to irony will invariably lead to Greek comedy and to the *eiron*, a type-character who simulates his own inferiority to take advantage of his opponents. Aristotle associated irony to the inferior side of truth but it was Cicero who, two centuries later, proposed the definition of irony that would become current: saying something but meaning something else. To Cicero, Socrates – when the latter pretended ignorance to make his interlocutors confound themselves with their own arguments – was the ironist *par excellence* (BARNET, 1963: 352-53).

Frye makes use of Aristotle's idea of "appearing to be less" than reality and amplifies some of its implications. To Frye, irony is a technique of "saying as little and meaning as much as possible" or a "pattern of words that turns away from direct statement or its own obvious meaning" (FRYE, 1973: 40). According to those precepts, the very title of Peter

Carey's novel – **True history of the Kelly gang** – is fraught with irony, if we take into account some peculiarities of the English language that are explored in the expression *true history*.

The most obvious of those linguistic particularities is the notorious distinction between the terms "history" and "story" that characterizes the English language.[25] A story is a subjective account, its quality is determined by the narrator's wish and ability and it can be true or not. Thus the noun "story" accepts naturally the adjectives "true" and "false". A "true history", on the other hand, seems to be a pleonasm, as objectivity and actual existence are inherent properties of "history".

An extra factor of estrangement is the absence, in the title, of the defining article that normally precedes the noun *history*, which has an effect of removing some of the authority implied by the term and shows, in between the lines, that there might be other acceptable versions. Therefore if, on the one hand, the pleonastic expression intends to reinforce the "truth" of the narrative, some vagueness implied by the absence of "the" seems to point to the opposite direction.

Another element that plays with the objective/subjective qualities of truth is the modality chosen by Carey: a "historical-epistolary-autobiographical" novel simulating a testimonial account left by Kelly himself. The narrative takes the form of letters directed to the daughter the protagonist never met (this addressee was imagined by Carey, as Kelly did not leave any children). The dividing parts of the plot are also peculiar: they are not done in chapters, but in "parcels", as the novel consists in the "compilation" of the contents of thirteen groups of letters, supposedly belonging to the Library of Melbourne, each one of them preceded by "notes" made by an editor identified only as "S.C.".

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[25] In most languages a single word refers both to "history" and "story".

Some aspects of those notes resemble the work of a historian. The "editor" describes details of the condition of the letters: the origin and type of the paper used, the physical damages presented, the legibility of the documents, and so on. He also tries to authenticate the author's handwriting and establish the period of Kelly's life each parcel would refer to, summarizing the events presented in the parcel. In some occasions he even produces value judgments on the events described, such as "unflattering portraits" (parcel 2) or "interesting details" (parcel 3), compromising his presumed objectivity.

Not only the title of the novel, but also the text of the letters is filled with what Pierre Schoentjes calls "verbal irony", a type of irony that occurs in rhetorical discourse (SCHOENTJES, 2001: 26). Despite the difficulty in pointing it out unequivocally, there are, according to Schoentjes, some indicators that might suggest the presence of verbal irony in written texts (SCHOENTJES, 2001: 162). The naïve gaze of Ned, as a child, watching his mother get ready to take a cake to another of their relatives in jail, for instance, brings together human and inanimate elements, normally hierarchically separated in non-ironic discourse, characterizing what Schoentjes (2001: 171) names "ironic juxtaposition": "My mother tipped the cake onto the muslin cloth and knotted it. Your Aunt Maggie were a baby so my mother wrapped her also then she carried both cake and baby out into the rain" (CAREY, 2002: 8).

A great deal harsher are the instances of irony in the excerpt below, which target the (contradictory) stereotypes connected to Irish men and the prejudice of the authorities in relation to former convicts:

> My mother had one idea about my father and the police the opposite. She thought him Michael Meek. They knew him as a graduate of Van Diemen's Land and a criminal by birth and trade and marriage they was constantly examining the brands on our stock or

> sifting through our flour for signs of larceny but they never found nothing except mouse manure they must have had a mighty craving for the taste. (CAREY, 2002: 9-10)

Explicitly elevated or flattering words (such as "graduate") or adjectives that intensify meaning ("mighty craving") can characterize what Schoentjes identifies as "words of warning" (SCHOENTJES, 2001: 168-9) to the ironic effect. The reinforcement given to the noun "criminal" by "birth and trade and marriage" can also suggest "ironic repetition" (SCHOENTJES, 2001: 169).

In the following comment about the funeral of Red Kelly, the narrator's father, there is an apparent lightness in the treatment of one of the most relevant events of the human life cycle: "Now were your grandpa's poor wracked body finally granted everlasting title to the rich soil of Avenel" (CAREY, 2002: 39). Irony, here, comes from the "simplification" or the "decrease of the complexity of the real world, reducing the number of data enclosed by the gaze and covering up certain connections" (SCHOENTJES, 2001, 172, my translation).

Those few examples evince the fact that verbal irony is one of the distinctive characteristics of Kelly's style as a narrator. Another modality of irony, which is not materialized in the words themselves, but in the manner by which the facts are presented – situational irony (SCHOENTJES, 2001: 15) – is also constantly felt along the novel. The very conception of the book – based on the simulation of the authenticity of the letters, but from the point of view of a narrator profoundly involved in the facts and determined to proposed a revision of history (to his favour) – turns the work into a great ironic charade.

In the episode below, for instance, Carey recreates a significant episode of Kelly's "official" biography: at the age of 10, he had saved another boy from drowning during a flood, having

received, from the boy's family, a green sash (the colour green is a reference to Kelly's Irish ancestry).[26] But at the same time as the courage and physical prowess valued by 19th century Australian society (as we shall see further down) are staring to be identified in young Ned, his true heroic/ironic destiny is also foretold:

> At the very hour I stood before the scholars in my sash the decapitated head of the bushranger Morgan were being carried down the public highway – Benalla – Violet Town – Euroa – Avenel – perhaps it would be better had I known the true cruel nature of the world but I would not give up my ignorance even if I could. The Protestants of Avenel had seen the goodness in an Irish boy it were a mighty moment in my early life. (CAREY, 2002: 32)

The boy enjoys his "mighty moment", ignoring the cruelty of the world, something that the adult and experienced narrator, troubled by his own consciousness as much as by the police, can no longer achieve. If the narrator, looking at the scene retrospectively, but still hopeful and unaware of his own future, attributes irony to it, Carey's readers, familiar with the historical background surrounding the composition of the novel, and having in mind something that would never be contemplated by Kelly – the haunting images of his head in plaster – can certainly add a new layer of irony to the events.

This is where we come to Linda Hutcheon's reflexions about irony as a social practice that "happens in discourse, in usage, in the dynamic space of the interaction of text, context, and interpreter" (HUTCHEON, 1984: 58). To Hutcheon irony, in spite of the intentions of the ironist, depends, ultimately, on the interpreter. As we saw in the above example, the

[26] Historically, the sash had special meaning for Kelly and was found underneath the armour by the doctor who looked after his wounds. Today it is displayed at the Benalla town museum.

experiences and the background of the reader affect both the interpretation of the situation as ironic or not and the "properties" of the irony:

> [T]he whole communicative process is not only 'altered and distorted' but also made possible by those different worlds to which each of us differently belongs and which form the basis of the expectations, assumptions, and preconceptions that we bring to the complex processing of discourse, of language in use (HUTCHEON, 1984: 89).

Therefore Hutcheon suggests that the discursive communities to which readers belong allow irony to happen. Not recognizing a fact or utterance as ironic would not be, according to that conception, a matter of (lack of) intelligence, as many critics have posed along the centuries, but a matter of contrasting interpretations, due to the different discursive contexts from which participants come from (HUTCHEON, 1984: 95). That is illustrated in the excerpt below, in which Ned tries to defend his mother from the assault of a drunken uncle:

> With all my weight on his great hairy head I struggled to settle him.
>
> You mutt he cried striking me across the head so hard I landed on the floor I were winded the sparks flying like blowflies inside my brain.
>
> Them my mother flung wide her door. You leave him alone you effing mongrel.
>
> Whoa Ellen whoa now. He tried to take her by her forearms but she easily broke his grip. Said she I aint a horse.
>
> I rushed him from behind and punched him in the kidney but he swatted me away and pushed my mother back into the bedroom and there he trid to htrow her on her bed.
>
> No you aint a horse. You is a bouley maiden (CAREY, 2002: 44).

At that stage of the novel the reader already knows that Ellen Kelly has a rather active sexual life and even if he/she does not know the meaning of the australianism "bouley" it is evident that the term "maiden", a compromising word in its own terms, is being used in an offensive – and thus ironic – way, by the uncle: it is one more of Schoentjes's "words of alert", used antiphrastically and adapted to the traditional definition of irony.

A new ironic dimension is pointed out in the next paragraph, in which the reader, with the narrator's help, finds out something about the 19th century Australian discursive community to which Ned, his mother and his uncle belong: "I knew what this meant as did my mother. The bouley maiden is the cow which will not take the bull" (CAREY, 2002: 44). Ned's intervention secures a specific ironic interpretation for his utterance.

Indeed, regular novel readers can detect the irony in the position of the hero of **True History of the Kelly Gang**, even when they do not know much about Australian history. After all, Kelly's status as a "noble robber" corresponds to a worldwide phenomenon termed "social banditry" by Eric Hobsbawm. The concept itself is highly ironic, as the kind of country bandit referred to by Hobsbawm (1976: 11) is simultaneously seen as a criminal by the State and hero by the people.

Several of the traits of the noble bandit are also applicable to Kelly as a historical figure and are even more emphasized by Carey's fictional version: Kelly's introduction to criminality is due to persecution from the authorities and his mission is the robinhoodean ideal of repairing injustice by taking away from the rich. The noble robber, like Kelly, is deemed invisible and invulnerable and uses violence moderately, resorting to killing when that is the last remaining option. He is protected and supported by the people and his defeat is

invariably due to betrayal (HOBSBAWM, 1976: 37-8).[27] Indeed, when reviewing the reasons for the defeat of his teacher in crime – the bushranger Harry Power – Carey's protagonist comes to the conclusion that "[t]he bush protected no one":

> It had been men who protected Harry and it were a man who betrayed him in the end. Harry always knew he must feed the poor he must poddy & flatter them he would be Rob Roy or Robin Hood [...]. Harry were not captured because the traps suddenly learned his trails and hideouts he were arrested when he put a lower price on his freedom than the government were prepared to pay. The sad truth is the poor people's love is cupboard love and all it took £500 for the police to be led directly to his secret door (CAREY, 2002: 298).

In addition to the dynamics of social banditry, some knowledge of the conditions underlying the colonization of Australia is useful to help the reader better understand some aspects of the discursive communities involved and the Australian penchant for irony as a national trait. A fondness for the understatement inherited from the British, as well as black humour as a mechanism of self-preservation against the cruelty and injustice of the penal system, has certainly contributed to the Australian ironic vein (LEWIS, 1987: 15).

Besides, the inhospitable conditions of the Australian continent, with droughts and floods that often depleted herds and crops, soon taught pioneers, as Tom Moore puts it, that there were two options: laughing or crying. A combination of pragmatic realism and rejection to self-pity made Australians, as a matter of fact, choose the former (MOORE, 1971: 174-5).

Similarly, the inclusion of heroes in the imagination, history and literature of Australia has had a peculiar trajectory.[28] To a popular poet in the 1840's the lack of European

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[27] Ibid, p. 37-8.

history in the colony did not allow for the existence of heroes: "The woods have never rang with War's loud crash,/ No chivalry has swept the silent plains;[…] Here are no storied tombs, nor sculptured shrines,/ On which we read a Saint, or Hero's praise" (apud INGLIS, 1993: 320).

When the "heroes" imposed by the imperial system – English aristocracy, the generals Wellington and Nelson, the judges that sentenced convicts – started to be replaced by locally-born heroes, those inevitable came from lower ranks in society and their distinguishing mark was their ability to survive in a hostile environment, on an everyday basis. Besides being despised by Europeans as rude and uncultured, the first rightfully Australian heroes stood out in their communities as being excellent gunners, swimmers or horse riders, fearless individuals who were able to keep their good humour when facing the most adverse conditions and who did not lose their dignity even in the face of death itself (CLARK, 1985: 61).

The model of hero constructed by Carey certainly follows those guidelines. Besides the heroic deed, properly, that granted him the green sash, Ned as a boy drops out of school to help his widowed mother take care of their farm: "My hands was blistered bleeding I could chop down 5 trees in one day" (CAREY, 2002: 57), boasts the protagonist. One of the most cherished abilities for currency lads (an ironic self-referential term used by the first native born Australians: "currency" refers to paper money printed locally, less valuable than the "true" British pound sterling) is their horse-riding prowess. Ned also excels at that skill and at the age of thirteen already has his own business, raising and taming horses (CAREY,

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[28] A more detailed exposition of the incursion of the national hero in Australian history and literature can be found in SCHEIDT, Déborah. *All the difference in the world*: aspects of alterity in three novels by Patrick White. Dissertação (Mestrado em Letras). Curitiba: UFPR, 1997. p. 80-83.

2002: 55), an occupation that will render him his first period in jail, unfairly accused of having received stolen horses.

Of course, Carey takes the chance to fill his narration with descriptions of brawls, contests, ambushes, escapes, sieges and other adventures of the sort, in which Kelly and his mates can parade their intelligence, courage and physical abilities against the dominant authorities and the squatters (as the owners of large amounts of land are called in Australia).

Along the novel Carey is very much concerned to establish an ideological purpose for Kelly and the discursive community to which he belongs:

> And here is the thing about them men they was Australians they knew full well the terror of the unyielding law the historic memory of UNFAIRNESS were in their blood and a man might be a bank clerk or an overseer he might never have been lagged for nothing but still he knew in his heart what it were to be lashed for looking a warder in the eye and even a posh fellow […] had breathed that air so the knowledge of unfairness were deep in his bone and marrow (CAREY, 2002: 312).

The central episodes of the "official" history of the Kelly gang are all represented in the novel: the siege of four policemen's campsite in Stringybark Creek where three of them were killed and the gang was formally outlawed, the bank robberies in Jerilderie and Euroa, that culminated with the siege of Glenrowan, in which the gang made use of the famous armours and was betrayed and caught by the police. Other developments in the novel are inspired by theories that are not universally accepted, such as Kelly's apprenticeship with the bushranger Harry Power. There are also openly fictional events, such as Kelly and Mary Hearn's romance and the birth of their daughter.

Graham Huggan (2008: 186) sees the novel as a "sequence of highly entertaining picaresque adventures", in which Kelly plays a double, tragicomic role as a (mock) memorialist and legendary hero. For Huggan, Carey's aim is to deliberately dissolve the borders between oral and written discourses, between historical and fictional sources, keeping a "dynamic version between competing versions of the historical past". This perspective points to what Hutcheon calls the "positive and constructively affirmative" function that irony can have in contemporary literature, as a "powerful tool" in the fight against hegemonic positions, in spite of the destructive function normally attributed to it (HUTCHEON, 1987: 27).

Indeed, Carey's main preoccupation seems to be that of giving a voice to Kelly, a voice supported by (but not limited to) historical research. The main inspiration for the creation of the character and for the form and style of his narrative is the "Jerilderie letter", a 56-page manuscript that, like the armour and the mask, is part of the collection of the Victoria State Library. The letter was dictated by Kelly to his friend and partner in crime Joe Byrne in February 1879, when the gang was getting ready to rob the bank of a town called Jerilderie.

Carey first saw the text of the letter in the 1960's[29] and in the next 30 years, in which his novel matured, he became increasingly intrigued by the human being behind the voice. For him, the Jerilderie letter became the "character's DNA" and the entrance door thorough which he was able to "inhabit" Ned Kelly. The style of the letter, with its vivid images and sporadic presence of commas and periods, were another detail that impressed the author, especially because when he read it for the first time, he had had recent contact with the Irish

[29] A facsimile of the original manuscript is available online at http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/primo_library/libweb/action/getItAction.do?indx=8&ct=getit&doc=SLV_VOYAGER1636991&vid=MAIN&vl(freeText0)=jerilderie.letter&ct=search&fromLogin=true&fn=search&indx=1&frbg=&srt=rank&tab=default_tab&mode=Basic&dum=true, accessed on 25/07/2011.

literary voices of Joyce and Beckett, whose writing also took liberties regarding punctuation (CAREY, 2001). Carey's imitation was so successful that some inadvertent readers went to the Melbourne Library in search of the manuscripts that the supposed editor described in the novel, stirring the debate concerning the "legitimacy" of historical novels (Marques, 2011).

Indeed, the simultaneous treatment of historical and fictional data is a matter addressed by Carey himself:

> The problem of imagining Ned Kelly is that we have these fragments of the story that we know so well, almost like the Stations of the Cross in a way. There's this bit and that bit and that bit. But we really have no idea what happened between this bit and that bit. And of course what is between the fragments is a man's whole life, 90% of it. Incredible. So there's a huge pleasure in imagining the 90% that is consistent with the 10% of fragments. In following this, in interrogating the fragments, it doesn't contradict the known 'facts'. […] You might not like the way I imagine it but you will have to agree with one thing – we have insufficiently imagined our great national story (CAREY, 2001).

That was the genesis of Ned Kelly, the storyteller, from the outset obsessed with telling his own version of facts, i.e. the "true" version:

> I lost my own father at 12yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a wordI write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false.
>
> God willing I shall live to see you read these words to witness your astonishment and see your dark eyes widen and your jaw drop

> when you finally comprehend the injustice we poor Irish suffered in this present age (CAREY, 2002: 7).

The protagonist's attraction to the written word comes from his childhood and Ned recalls how, at the age of nine, he was moved when he was given his first pencil: "At school we used the slates but I never touched a pencil and was most excited to smell the sweet pine and graphite" (CAREY, 2002: 10). Later on, one of his ambitions as a student is to become the best "ink monitor" of his class, which only happens after a year, when the teacher "had no choice for everybody with an English name had taken a turn" (CAREY, 2002: 28).

Both events are froth with irony, if we take into account that the first pencil is given to the protagonist by a policeman and the deference that Kelly shows for scholarly achievement and the erudite culture he did not have access to, ultimately causes his downfall. The traitor of the Kelly gang in the siege of Glenrowan was, historically, Thomas Curnow, a teacher who was allowed to leave the hotel where the gang was keeping hostages. In Carey's version, Curnow wins Kelly's trust by entangling him in his scholarly talk, inflating his literary ego, ennobling the gang's actions with Shakespearean verses, but, mainly, by promising to revise "the grammar" of his manuscript.[30]

Kelly's literary ambitions are also responsible for some of the peculiarities in the novel's narrative spectrum. As a testimonial narrative, Norman Friedman's terminology is well suited to describe the type of narrative adopted by Carey. The main characteristic of Friedman's "I as witness" is that the "author has surrendered his omniscience altogether

[30] Curnow takes Kelly's manuscript with him, leaving the reader to speculate on the identity of the "editor" of the novel, S.C., as being a descendant of Curnow's.

regarding all the other characters involved, and has chosen to allow his witness to tell the reader only what he as an observer may legitimately discover" (FRIEDMAN, 1955: 1174). Therefore it might seem surprising (or implausible, as some critics have thought[31]) that the narrator, in some occasions, should describe facts beyond his scope of his gaze:

> Moonlight shone on the centaurs Dan Kelly & Joe Byrne their iron helmets were strapped to their saddles as they galloped down the centre of the public road [...].
>
> The same cold moolight shone in the bush behind Glenrowan where me & Steve Hart was helping each other into our ironclad suits it also shone in Marvellous Melbourne flooding through the high window of my mother's cell (CAREY, 2002: 348).

The narrative voice, in this episode, deems itself gifted with the same omnipresence as the moonlight, with access to the Police Commissioner's residence:

> This historic might were so bright even if Commissioner Standish had extinguished every lamp nothing could escape my intelligence he were my creature now I knew his heathen rug his billiards table I knew the smell & appearance of his friends and when the Constable come knocking on the Commissioner's door I did not have to be there to know what the message said.
>
> The Kellys have struck they murdered Aaron Sherritt our informer (CAREY, 2002: 348).

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[31] See, for instance, KINSELLA, John. "On Peter Carey's ***True History of the Kelly Gang***." Available online at http://www.johnkinsella.org/reviews/carey.html, accessed on 03/08/2011.

The narrative voice even goes beyond inferring the facts that changed the course of the protagonist's life to imagine itself inducing them:

> The Commissioner thought he were the servant of Her Majesty the Queen but he were my puppet on a string he ordered the Special Train as I desired he summoned the black trackers and called for Hare & Nicolson who thought themselves famous as the capturers of Harry Power they never imagined they would be captives in a drama devised by me (CAREY, 2002: 348).

It does not seem to suit Carey to simply fictionalize Kelly's live, "filling in the blanks" in between the historical facts and imitating his writing style. He goes a step beyond, transforming Kelly, in some relevant passages, into a sort of "editorially omniscient narrator". This mode of first person narrative focus described by Friedman (p. 1171) grants the narrator the (ironic) power of totally dominating the material by seeing the story from "any or all angles at will". That seems to imply that the power to write his own history somehow compensates for the impossibility of changing it, or repairing the injustice and authoritarianism he considers himself a victim of (one of Kelly's inglorious fights consists in trying to free his mother from jail, where she has been sent together with her newly-born daughter). Alternatively, a reading that takes irony into account can reveal the virtue of a seeming "narrative defect."

Carey takes advantage of a national history that sounded like a lie to Mark Twain[32], giving a peculiar and complex treatment to a historical character. **True History of the Kelly**

[32] Twain's quote figures as an epigraph in Carey's 1985 novel **Illywhaker**.

Gang extrapolates the traditional classification as a "historical novel" to include terms such as "historical impersonation" (QUINN, 2001) and "literary ventriloquism" (HUGGAN, 2008: 186). His protagonist embodies both the growing tendency of the Western hero towards irony professed by Frye and distinctively Australian ironic traits. Irony, in its different forms of manifestation is present in the title of the novel, in the protagonist's status, in the events recounted, in the story telling oral register and even in the organization of the novel's narrative focus.

The book ends with a kind of postscript to the collection of letters, in which the editor expresses his outrage at the ironic destiny of someone he considers the true hero of Australian history, the betrayer Thomas Curnow. When he escaped the siege to the hotel and informed the authorities about the removal of the rails that would have thrown the police train off course on its arrival in Glenrowan, Curnow would have accomplished what many did not have the courage to do. And yet, he needed to be escorted by the police all the way to Melbourne, where he received special protection for over four months. S.C. complains that "[t]his was a curious treatment for a hero, and he was called a hero more than once, although less frequently and less enthusiastically than he might have reasonably expected" (CAREY, 2002: 364).

S. C. also describes Curnow's incredulity regarding this particular aspect of the newborn Australian identity:

> What is it about we Australians, eh? He demanded. What is wrong with us? Do we not have a Jefferson? A Disraeli? Might not we find someone better to admire than a horse-thief and a murderer? Must we always make such an embarrassing spectacle of ourselves? (Carey, 2002: 364)

The final irony, though, seems to be in the fact that Australian literature has finally surged in the international scenario, thanks to that same horse-thief and murderer.

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LANGUAGE AS VERNACULAR CULTURAL PERFORMANCE IN BLACK COMMUNITIES IN CUBA AND THE USA

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ABSTRACT: This work examines the use of language as a method of fomenting a black cultural performance in literature of the Americas. Specifically, this article presents as a main focus the linguistic modalities of African descendants in Cuba and the Unites States and the formation of a black identity in literature through linguistic variance.

KEY WORDS: Nicolás Guillén; Zora Neale Hurston; cultural performance; language; Afro-descendant.

RESUMO: Este trabalho examina o uso da linguagem como um método de fortalecer um *performance* identidade cultural negra nas literaturas das Américas. Em particular, este artigo apresenta como enfoque principal as modalidades linguísticas dos afrodescendentes em Cuba e nos Estados Unidos e a formação de uma identidade negra na literatura através de variância linguística.

PALAVRAS CLAVES: Nicolás Guillén; Zora Neale Hurston; cultural performance; linguagem; afrodescendente.

> *"Language is a central feature of human identity. When we hear someone speak, we immediately make guesses about gender, education level, age, profession, and place of origin. Beyond this individual matter, a language is a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity."*
>
> (Bernard Spolsky)

Among most scholars, the accepted understanding of culture centers the experiences shared by a population of people who inhabit a common space and have communal interactions that shape common experience. Additionally, most scholars are careful to not essentialize articulations of culture noting that there are variances among any set or group of

people. However, within certain populations, be they national, ethnic, racial, gendered or age-groupings, there are common cultural performances that tend to differentiate communities in a manner that adds a unique identifier to commonly shared experiences and articulations. In as much, this analysis purposes to focus on a few shared experiences and articulation of Africa-descended populations in Southern Florida (USA) and in Havana (Cuba) by examining the use of language, in-group communicative norms, as a marker of self-expression and identity. The understanding is that the analyzed articulation of "a" normative cultural performance is one that can be found among other Africa-descendent communities in certain areas of the American South (USA) and in Cuba. This work strives to explore the use of popular vernacular found in literary texts that emerge as cultural artifacts or testaments to the manners in which populations mediate "official" discourses for in-group purposes.

For this undertaking, the work two seminal writers of African-descent will be analyzed comparatively: Nicolás Guillén (Cuba) and Zora Neale Hurston (USA). The selection of there two writers centers that he fact that they are common literary figures on the global literary front, and that their work is said to unveil the lived experiences of people inhabiting prescribed geographic spaces. Furthermore, these two literary contemporaries represent early 20th century figures that wrote against the dominant literary ideology regarding the representations of nation, identity and language as central to their trajectory is the presentation of an Africa-descended, or Black cultural reality in both Cuba and the United States.

Sociolinguist Bernard Spolsky in *Concise Encyclopedia of Educational Linguistics* eloquently expresses the notion of language as a signifier of cultural identity. For Spolsky, language is viewed as a powerful conduit by which expressions of cultural, ethnic and national identities come to be understood, expressed and located. Like Spolsky, numerous scholars have begun to extrapolate on the ideology of language as semiotic cultural signifier

within African Diaspora spaces. Contemporary cultural studies critics, including sociolinguists, argue that language as an evolving, mediated discourse, is an adaptable cultural entity that is shaped in order to "fit" the communicative needs of its constituents through varied, hybrid verbalization. In *Orality &Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, Walter I. Ong centers this argument in the justification of an "oral tradition" that supersede a "literary tradition" within many linguistic communities to argue ultimately the codependency of the oral and the literary. Ong states in a tautological mode:

> Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In essence, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. (ONG, 2007: 15)

For Ong, the uniqueness of oral creation and its impending performance gives rise to the literary mirroring of audible iterations as they are written in order to create a "literate" account of the spoken. In as much, conjoined, the oral performance and its written twin form the basis for communal literary expressions, as the adaptation of the spoken becomes a cultural representation of "community" in the accessible written form. The argument is that, in the Americas, people of African ancestry have created an "oral culture" that is rich with "powerful and beautiful verbal performances" that have come to define space, place, people and history. Language, in both oral and written manifestations, has evolved to express the

cultural particularities of a defined community. And, these communities are accessed through, as Ong clearly states, literacy: the written word.

This paper proposes to explore the use of popular forms of linguistic coding (oral performance) by groups of Africa-descended people in the Americas for the purpose of demonstrating the use of, or manipulation of linguistic variance as cultural representations of ethnic/racial identity in literature. Particularly, hybridized-oral language forms in their written manifestation will be examined as semiotic markers of performing identity via vernacular particularities for certain Black communities in the United States and in Cuba. In contestation are the official and popular languages and linguistic structures as Blacks in certain geographical spaces in the African Diaspora exert through oral performance an ethnic identity that is tied to in-group communicative forms. With regard to modalities for this critical examination, excerpts from classical works of African-American and Afro-Hispanic literature will be used in order to illustrate the linguistic "play" that has marked, grouped or come to identify Blacks in the certain geographical communities in the US and in Cuba. Specifically, the poem "Búcate plata" by Cuban national poet Nicolás Guillén and excerpts from Zora Neal Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, first published in 1937, will demonstrate how oral language, through literary manipulation in contested spaces, has created a hybridized space for the celebration of a Black-cultural identity in the Americas. The contested spaces about which I make reference are Eatonville, Florida, and Havana. For Hurston, it is the cultural fabric of an early to mid-20th century United States of North America, the South no less, that gives birth to linguistic signifiers that represent geographical space and the people who inhabit that space, Black North Americans in the region of the Florida everglades. For Guillén, Havana becomes the crucible for the testing of linguistic variances that define people and place. The theoretical paradigms presented in this paper are postulations regarding performance theory, post-coloniality and language, cultural

hybridization, and post-colonial identity as presented by scholars, the like of Homi Bhabha, Helen Tiffin, Frantz Fanon, and other cultural and post-colonial theorists. Suffice it to say, the use of Guillén and Hurston does not limit the scope of the discussion exclusively to these two writers of the African Diaspora or to their writings. Both writers and their works will be used in order to explicate the point of the use of language as a mode of Black cultural express among African Diasporic communities in the Americas. Similarly, the same could be said about the writing of Anglophone Caribbean Blacks who employ *patois* as a linguistic and marker of culture or Francophone Caribbean Blacks who use a variance of *créole*. For the purpose of this very brief investigation, however, the literary focus will be placed on Guillén and Hurston.

Regarding the creation of national culture, Frantz Fanon proposes that "(a) national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence…" (FANON, 1995: 155) Likewise, Helen Tiffin in "Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-discourse" states, "post-colonial cultures are inevitably hybridized, involving a dialectical relationship between European ontology and epistemology and the impulse to create or recreate independent local identity". (TIFFIN, 1996: 95) Fanon and Tiffin suggest a process involving dialectic of cultural bartering and shifting as former colonial subjects mediate normative European cultural constructions by means of manipulation, re-appropriation and recreation for the purpose of knowing, understanding, and identifying self and community. In former colonial spaces in the Americas that have a palimpsest of national and cultural performative practices, such as the US and Cuba, the intricacies of colonization, compounded by slavery and emancipation have afforded people of African ancestry a milieu of fodder for vernacular articulations that come to represent cultural performance. Within these spaces, the historical waltz between the "official" and the "popular" result in

representations that attempt to give meaning to audible and visible manifestations that become unique to confined and defined geographical spaces. And, a pivotal component utilized by Blacks in the Americas to define, celebrate, understand and locate their cultural heritage is language. For numerous diasporic Blacks, language, replete with its propagandistic vernacular, has become a tool of cultural resistance and signification as it has been used to identity and (re) presents a people, community and culture. Or as Marcyliena Morgan puts it:

> Modern creole language situates have arisen mainly from European-conceived and controlled plantation systems that brought together people of different nations, cultures, and languages to serve as either indentured workers or slaves. While the situations from which creole languages have emerged can be described merely as examples of language contact, the denotation is hardly sufficient if one considers the complex ways in which the communities of speakers currently use language to mediate and substantiate the multiple realities that constitute their world. (MORGAN, 1994: 1)

Morgan lucidly articulates the notion of hybridized language formation resulting from cultural contact of disparate systems. In her view, she, too, sees the phenomenon of language as a cultural signifier. To return to my argument, in the case of the United States and Cuba, language is viewed as a semiotic marker of cultural performance as Blacks have altered

dominant linguistic discourse, creating in-group communicative orality, or oral discourse, that has become, as Spolsky states, "a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity." These symbols are performed in an effort to define and localize identity through the spoken and written word. I assert that in the case of Nicolas Guillén and Zora Neal Hurston, the use of popular language (Morgan would argue creole language) in their creative texts emerge as semiotic markers for the performance of Black cultural identity in two disparate, yet similar, locales of the African Diaspora.

A noteworthy observation is the fact that both texts under analysis were published in the same decade. "Bucate plata" was published in Guillén's collection entitled *Motivos de son* (1930) and Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in 1937. Both works deal with the particulars regarding the expression of Blackness in post-colonial, post-emancipatory spaces where Africanized cultural forms in literature, music, dance, language, etc., are in conflict with dominant paradigms of national representation of culture and are thus, relegated to the margins of society and devalued in terms of representation of nation and national culture. Additionally, both works were published in an historic moment when global African Diaspora consciousness was emerging in the Americas and beyond. In literature, the rise of the Negritude Movement, principally in the French-speaking Americas and Africa, was underway in the 1930s as a literary and political response to French colonial racism. Writers such as Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire and Leon Dumas believed that the shared black heritage of members of the African Diaspora was the best tool in fighting against French political and intellectual hegemony and domination. In the United States, the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s to the mid-1930s was viewed as an African-American cultural movement through which black writers, cultural and political activists struggled to include manifestations of Black culture into the fabric of American culture through literature, performing arts, plastic arts, etc. Additionally, Cuba has its own particular history of Black

political activity at the dawn of the 20th century. It is home to the first Black political party in the Americas, *el Partido Independiente de Color*, and scholars such as Franklin Knight, Aline Helg and others write about the importance of Black mobilization in Cuba with regard to Pan-Africanist movements during the first decades of the 20th century. The abovementioned is but a scant iteration of Black Nationalist activity happening in the Americas during the time in which Zora Neal Hurston and Nicolas Guillén emerged onto the literary scene with the texts used in this brief analysis. Additionally, the historical mentioning serves to locate the linguistic performance of Black culture within a larger collective throughout the Americas and in Africa with literary manifestations in colonial languages of English, Spanish and French. And, the creation of a black cultural vernacular within these communities is achieved in written and oral communication through phonetic alliteration, the use of apocope, consonant omission, phonetic transferal of consonants, to name a few stylistic variances.

As referenced earlier, Cuban national poet Nicolas Guillén published "Búcate plata" in his highly assessed volume *Motivos de son*. According to noted scholar Richard Jackson in *Black Writers in Latin America*, "(t)he appearance of his *Motivos de son* in 1930, an authentic literary happening, was upsetting, unsettling and controversial partly because they broke momentarily with traditional Spanish verse expression and partly because they dealt with authentic black characters, but largely because they brought to literature a new and genuine black concern, perspective, and poetic voice, which even some blacks misunderstood". (JACKSON, 1979: 81) Jackson's assertion echoes that of numerous Guillen scholars as they intellectually decode the "blackening" of the poet's aesthetic. The first stanza of Guillén's highly anthologized poem is replete with cultural signification that describes the Afro-Cuban subject in terms of language and culture. The linguistic variance and manipulation of "official" Spanish represents cultural interpolation where the "popular" Spanish spoken by Cubans of African descent is presented in written form for the sake of linguistic visibility,

syntactic resistance and cultural signification. The result is a written Afro-Cuban vernacular lexicology that linguistically marks people and place mimicking the oral performance found in many Black communities in Cuba, Havana specifically. The first stance reads as follow:

> Búcate plata,
>
> búcate plata,
>
> poqque no doy un paso má:
>
> etoy a arró con galleta,
>
> na ma.
>
> (Búscate plata,
>
> búscate plata,
>
> porque no doy un paso más:
>
> estoy a arroz con galleta,
>
> nada más.)

The first noted linguistic contestations are manipulations of the singular informal command form of the verb "buscar" (to look for) and the first person singular conjugate form of the irregular verb "estar" (to be). The phonological representation of the spoken-Spanish illustrates consonant ellipsis as the "s" is omitted from the consonant clusters of "sc" and "st" found in the official orthographical representation of the verbs "buscar" and "estar." The official "búscate" is substituted for "búcate" and the official first person singular conjugate "estoy," is represented as "etoy." Additionally noted in the first stanza is the omission of the consonants "s" and "z" found at the end of words, such as "ma" for "más" and "arró" for "arroz." The use of apocope is found in the omission of the last syllable of the Spanish word

for nothing “nada”, where the Afro-Cuban poetic voice says “na” as in “na ma” instead of “nada más.” Thus, this linguistic manipulation represents the creation of an oral identity marker commonly found in Afro-Cuban communities in written form. Here, Guillén masterfully illustrates Ong’s postulations on the evolution of oral traditions (orality) and written language (literacy). Further, Guillén’s manifestation of “literacy” represents the written hybridized representation of a Black-Cuban speech dialectic emerging from the history of colonial linguistic hegemony within region.

The first and subsequent stanzas continue to illustrate the linguistic play between orality and literacy. Consequently, Spanish vocabulary, orthography, syntax and grammar are manipulated to bear a cultural vernacular that comes to identify Afro-Cubans through oral and written speech. However, the linguistic play in Guillén’s work also serves as semiotic markers that relate to the reader-defined markers of Black cultural performance in Cuba. The poem thematically speaks to the social, economic and political plight of Afro-Cubans in a communicative form understood by them. The use of “plata” (silver) becomes a colloquial, popular symbolic metaphor for money “dinero” for Afro-Cubans. Additionally, the poet voice expresses the level of poverty and struggle in this community through stanzas such as:

Yo bien sé cómo etá to,

pero biejo, hay que comé:

búcate plata,

búcate plata,

poqque me hoy a corré.

(Yo bien sé cómo está todo,

pero viejo, hay que comer:

búscate plata, búscate plata,

porque me voy a correr.)

The poetic voice identifies with poverty, alienation, economic disparity and unemployment within Havana's black population. The alliteration of "búcate plata" attests to the lack of financial resources and means by which to acquire it. Loosely translated, the poetic voice in the second stanza states a familiarity with the condition for Afro-Cubans as she states "I know very well how things are/but man, one has to eat/find money/find money/because I am going to run." The poem alluded to the level to which the Afro-Cuban female has to descend in order to survive. The poem reeks of images of prostitution and female exploitation due to poverty and a lack of opportunities.

Depué dirán que soy mala,

y no me quedrán tratá,

pero amó con hambre, biejo,

¡qué ba!

Con tanto sapato nuebo,

¡qué ba!

Con tanto reló, compadre,

¡qué ba!

Con tanto lujo, mi negro,

¡qué ba!

(Después dirán que soy mala,

y no me quedrán tatar,

pero amor con hambre, viejo,

¡qué vale!

Con tanto zapato nuevo,

¡qué vale!

Con tanto reloj, compadre,

¡qué vale!

Con tanto lujo, mi negro,

¡qué vale!)

Nicolas Guillén with "Búcate plata" manipulates language in order to address the complexities of the Afro-Cuban subject. In so doing, the use of popular language becomes the vehicle by which the author culturally locates people, space and place. The linguistic dialectic used by Guillén in the poem is one the serves as a mimetic cultural signifier addressing the tension between the hegemonically enforced official and the culturally significant "popular" manifestations of black identity in Cuba. And, such is not isolated to Cuba as will be demonstrated briefly in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Scholars and critics of African American literature consider Zora Neale Hurston to be one of the pre-eminent writers of twentieth-century African-American literature. For many, the rediscovery of Hurston's *Their Eyes* in 1975 by Alice Walker represents one of the most significant literary excavations of the late 20th century. A "hushed" voice among male luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance, Hurston's *Their Eyes* deals specifically with the life of Janie Crawford and her discovery and celebration of self in the Florida everglades. The novel bring to the literary fore the position of Black women in a racist and sexist America, metonymically represented by Janie, and their fight for agency in a patriarchal social

structure. However, that which is presented in this analysis is the stylistic form and content of Hurston's acclaimed work. It is my contention that, like Guillén, Hurston's use of visual representations (literacy) of oral culture (orality) in the text serves to signify black cultural performance. Additionally, it must be understood that this analysis will not tackle the debate regarding in-group communicative structures that situate Black American speech as a language, dialect or a combination of both.

However, the assertion is that the "language" spoken by African Americans in Hurston's novel represents the author's attempt to display the linguistic variance of popular oral modes of communication among African Americans located in Southern Florida and elsewhere. Additionally, like Guillén's poem, Hurston's novel addresses race and gender through the presentation and performance of the written/printed word. Literary scholar Susan Willis in "Wandering: Zora Neale Hurston's Search for Self and Method" suggests that Hurston used "grammatical tricks" to mediate Black speech from "standard" English as a means of subversion. In a conversation with Joe Starks, he who was to be Janie's second husband, the linguistic manipulation of language, or "grammatical tricks" as inferred by Willis, is observed and gendered. The following excerpt from the text illustrates the use of apocope, transferal of words and consonant, syntactic variation and symbolic metaphors to code racial and gender performance. In a response to Joe as to her parent's whereabouts, Janie responds:

> "Dey dead, Ah reckon. Ah wouldn't know 'bout 'em 'cause
>
> mah Grandma raised me. She dead too."
>
> (They are dead, I believe. I would not know about them because
>
> my Grandma raised me. She is dead too.)

"She dead too! Well, who's lookin' after a lil girl-chile lak you?"

(She is dead also! Well, who is looking after a little girl-child like you?)

"Ah'm married."

(I'm married.)

"Married? You ain't hardly old enough to be weaned. Ah betcha you still crave sugar-tits, doncher?"

(Married? You are not hardly old enough to be weaned. I bet you that you still crave sugar-tits, don't you?)

"Yeah, and Ah makes and sucks 'em when de notion strikes me. Drinks sweeten' water too." (HURSTON, 1990: 27)

(Yes, and I make and suck them when the notion strikes me. Drink sweetened water too.)

Lyrically written with laces of humor and flirtation, Hurston manipulates language in order to show the transferal from the oral to the written. Her use of phonetic transferal of the consonant cluster "th" to "d" is seen in the play between standard-English orthography and the cultural representation of the definite article "the." Additionally, such is seen in the representation of the third person plural pronoun "they", as the "th" consonant cluster is replaced orthographically by "d." Regarding total substitution of standard-English words with what I consider more culturally and geographically relevant African American lexicons,

words and phrases in standard English such as “bet you” and “don’t you” are conflated and phonetically manipulated into “betcha” and “doncher” to emulate written representations of oral speech performance that become cultural.

Another important observation relating to the use of language as a cultural signifier in Hurston’s work is language as a semiotic marker of gender positionality. The extract from the novel communicates the role of men and women in society. Joe’s question of “who’s lookin’ after a lil girl-chile lak you?” speaks to the notion of the inability of women to exercise agency. Understood from the use of language is a female usurpation of power expressed in Janie’s assumed incapability to care for self, as observed from the male position. However, the light-gender banter, laced with sexual overtones, reverses dominant male discourse as Janie exercises agency through language as she states that she is able to make and drink sugar tits when the “notion strikes” her.

A second extract from the text continues to reiterate the use of language in *Their Eyes* as a marker of Black cultural performance. More so in this extract than the one mentioned before, is the example of linguistic transferal of words, where complete morphemic and phonemic representations are used in the popular that have no semantic recognition in official English. In the in-group communicative form, such is said by sociolinguists to represent loosely a phonetic spelling at best. However, the codes in the popular relate a meaning that ventures beyond its presumed corresponding equivalent in official English.

> “De Indians gahn east, man. It’s dangerous.”
>
> (The Indians are gone east, man. It’s dangerous.)
>
> “Dey don’t know always know. Indians don’t know much

uh nothin', tuh tell de truth. Else dey'd own dis country still. De white folks ain't gone nowhere."

(They don't always know. Indians don't know much about anything, to tell the truth. Or else, they'd own this country. The white folks aren't going anywhere.)

Lias hesitated and started to climb out, but his uncle wouldn't let him.

"Dis time tuhmorrer you gointuh wish you follow crow. You better stay heah, man."

(This time tomorrow you are going to wish you'd followed crow. You'd better stay here, man.)

"If Ah never see you no mo' on earth, Ah'll meet you in Africa."

(HURSTON, 1990 ed: 148)

(If I never see you any more on earth, I'll meet you in Africa.)

The morphological construct of "gahn" for "gone", "tuh" for "to", "tuhmorrer" for "tomorrow" and "heah" for "here" are rendered unrecognizable in the official written discourse if standard English. However, such are given communicative meaning in the popular and serve as signs that identify African American oral and written cultural identity. Additionally, the referenced extract is imbued with African mythological folklore. Joe's parting comment "If Ah never see you no mo' on earth, Ah'll meet you in Africa" conjures

the notion of the African spirit's return to Africa after death. This intertextual connection to Africa mythology is a trope utilized by Hurston extensively in the *Their Eyes*. "Africa" is linguistically and symbolically the connotation of "Eden," paradise, or heaven.

Zora Neale Hurston's highly acclaimed novel is one that unveils manly levels of racial, ethnic and gender inscription. Through a revisionist historical conversation between two friends, Janie weaves Phoebe through the many intersections of her life that ultimately awakened her racial and gender consciousness, producing an African-American female protagonist at the end, that comes to represent black female empowerment and agency before the coining of the term/label Black feminist. Moreover, that which as been addressed in this brief analysis, is Hurston's rich and powerful use of language, transferring the oral discourse to a written form, that represents a people, a history, a story and a cultural identity.

In conclusion, the multifarious manifestations of language within African Diaspora communities "speak" to the history of space, people and region. It is in and through language as a marker of culture that differing communities are identified and come to exist. Each utterance bears a specific history in its formation that oftentimes exhibits vestiges of contact with another linguistic configuration forging oral and written borrowing, altering, or hybridizing. However, it is by means of language that communities of people have come to self-identify and be identified. In as much, the editors of the *Post-Colonial Studies Reader* assert:

> the appropriation of the language is essentially a subversive strategy, for the adaptation of the 'standard' language to the demands and requirements of the place and society into which it has been appropriated amounts to a far more subtle rejection of the political power of the standard language. In Chinua Achebe's words this is the process by which language is made to bear the weight and the texture

> of a different experience. In so doing it becomes a "different language". (ASHCROFT et al, 1995: 284)

Guillén and Hurston represent two writers of African Diaspora literature whose works bear out such an assertion. In their production of a counter discourse in English and in Spanish, both writers achieve in demonstrating the linguistic performance of black culture in form and in content. In so doing, each writer takes the reader on a journey into the cultural creativity of these communities as performative vernacular mediates humor, life, love, despair, and hope. Thus, through the manipulation of official grammar, syntax, vocabulary and orality, Guillén with "Búcate plata" and Hurston with *Their Eyes,* manipulate language in order to create a literary space where poetic and narrative voices and characters perform black cultural performance through language, ultimately rendering with their work, as Bernard Spolsky suggests, "a powerful symbol of national and ethnic identity."

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CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE EFL WRITING CLASS

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ABSTRACT: Combining insights from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, intercultural rhetoric, and intercultural communication theory, this paper discusses issues in EFL writing classes that arise from cultural specificities. Namely, it discusses topic development, readers' expectations, and rhetorical organization across cultures, as well as their importance to the production of a "communicative" text in English. The paper also offers a rationale for the teaching of culture in the writing class and advances possible activities that aim at the production of discourse that is close to the "communicative text" in English.

KEYWORDS: EFL; intercultural communication; writing teaching pedagogy.

RESUMO: Integrando conhecimentos avançados em linguística cognitiva, análise de discurso, retórica e comunicação intercultural, o presente artigo discute como a cultura interage com a produção de texto em língua estrangeira. Especificamente, trata da progressão do tópico, das expectativas dos leitores e da organização retórica preferidas por diferentes culturas e a relevância que assumem na produção de um texto "comunicativo" em inglês. O artigo também argumenta pelo ensino da cultura alvo na sala de produção de texto em LE e avança algumas atividades direcionadas à produção textos "comunicativos" em inglês.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Ensino de LE; comunicação intercultural; produção de textos em LE.

Introduction

Combining insights from cognitive linguistics, discourse analysis, intercultural rhetoric, and inter-cultural communication theory, this paper discusses issues in EFL writing classes that arise from cultural differences. Namely, it discusses topic development, readers' expectations, and rhetorical organization across cultures, as well as their importance to what I call a "communicative" English text. That is, English discourse that shows individual autonomy, inventiveness, forthrightness, action (SHAUGHNESSY, 1977), and personality.

According to Reid (1993), teaching culture is a complex process even in EFL classes attended by students of the same culture and native language. That is so because each one of us brings to class our own subcultures. The EFL teacher then needs to consider individual attitudes, aims, and reactions, guiding EFLers to identify and analyze their values and expectations and those of the target language culture. Such an approach contributes to the writing class in the sense that students become aware of their readers' ways with words and of what their prospective English speaking readers expect to find in a text to construct meaning successfully. The EFL writing teacher, to paraphrase Reid, becomes a cultural informant. As EFL student-writers learn more about the culture of the target language and the expectations of its readers, the closer their texts will be to the prototypical communicative text in English (SALIÉS, 2004) and the more likely EFL student-writers will succeed in conveying the intended message.

Why is it so? When readers encounter a text, their presuppositions interact with the writer´s presuppositions, as represented in the text, to create meaning (BENNETT, 1988). A presupposition pool contains information from general encyclopedic knowledge, from the context in which discourse takes place, and from the discourse that has been presented (VENNEMAN, 1975; BROWN & YULE, 1983)—the co-text. If the writer's presupposition

pool is too distant from those of his or her readers, communication fails. In writing pedagogy, this aspect of communication is referred to as "identification of audience expectations." Such match is especially hard when non-native writers write for native readers. To ameliorate disjunctions in communication, EFLers need to learn about the sociocultural practices of the English-speaking people. With this knowledge in hands, they can better match their written discourse to the expectations of English readers.

To further stress this point, Scovel (1991), Kramsch (1998; 2010) and others have already argued that language and culture are closely interwoven. Language is the main symbol system people use to make meaning, a medium for expressing culture (SCARCELLA & OXFORD, 1992). As such, it should be at the very center of the EFL writing class (see also SHEOREY, 1975). It is not reasoning, discourse structure, or rhetoric which is contrastive across peoples but **culture**. Because culture shapes what we see and how we see, our discourses will vary accordingly. In Sheorey's words, it is the "cognitive framework" which is culturally conditioned. People reason from assumptions and values that have been culturally shaped (see also MINSKY, 1975 and STODDARD, 1986). Their discourses reflect their cognitive frameworks.

However, because the teaching of culture is time consuming and the overcrowded EFL curriculum reserves scant hours even to major topics such as writing, EFL instructors refrain from inserting culture in the curriculum. It follows that students grow in the language in the linguistic sense, lacking a deeper understanding of how cultural specificities reflect in their invention, arrangement, style, and delivery patterns (MATALENE, 1985). Their written discourse becomes a marginal representative of the "communicative" text in English, hindering comprehension.

Some instructors, in an effort to fill in that gap and conform to the time limitation of EFL courses, adopt what Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984), and Galloway (1985, p. 362) call

the *Frankenstein Approach* (pieces of information from every culture given in small samples -- "a taco from here…a bullfight from there"). If we apply Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984) and Galloway (1985) to EFL writing instruction, the first thing we will teach students is that English texts show a clear thesis statement as well as topic sentences. We will also teach them that texts written in English normally show a deductive structure--from the general to the particular: An introduction that sets the stage, supporting paragraphs that offer examples and details, and a conclusion that wraps up everything that has been said. Kaplan (1966) controversially called this straightforwardness the "linear" structure of the English text. However, these "facts are cheap" (SEELYE, 1984: 3). They need to be interpreted within a problem-solving context that emphasizes psychological, sociological, and anthropological concerns (ATKINSON, 2003). Only by adopting a sociocognitive approach to teaching culture in the writing class will the instructor help students to capture the essence of the "communicative" text in English (SALIÉS, 2004).

The "communicative" text in English encompasses not only the writer's vantage point, but also the culture of its readers. By culture (OMAGGIO, 1993; GEERTZ, 1973), we understand everything that readers have learned along a life time, embracing all aspects of human life including habits, beliefs, behaviors, preferred cognitive styles, values, literacy traditions and what they expect to find in a text: a sociocognitive framework. If a sociocognitive approach to the teaching of culture is adopted in the writing class, instructors will be preparing student-writers to understand and cope with cultural variation across discourse modes and contexts, treating the text as a speech event that has a function to perform, conventions and a psychological frame to follow.

Omaggio (1993), Seelye (1984), Scovel (1991), Scarcella (1983), Kramsch (1998; 2010) and Oxford (1992), Atkinson (2003), Campos (2009), among others, endorse the teaching of culture in the language class as an integral part of language instruction.

According to them, the EFL writing class should nurture an understanding of how there is no one "fixed" or "correct" way to produce a text, but many possible ways depending on the cultural milieu of the writer and of the intended audience. Many are the reasons to argue for such an approach. Next, I introduce three that have been extensively discussed in the literature: (i) different cultures have different ways of developing topics; (ii) rhetorical organization varies across cultures; (iii) the main objective of a speech event is to successfully make meaning and fulfill its communicative purpose.

Topic development across cultures

According to McKay (1989), Scarcella (1983) and Hu, Brown, and Brown (1982), topic development is predictable from cultural and social experiences. That is, topic development is a variable that influences what McKay calls "discourse accent." Scarcella (1983), investigating spoken discourse, found that cultural background influenced which topics are acceptable for informal conversations. Native speakers of Spanish used far more personal topics when in informal conversations than English speakers in her research study.

Hu, Brown, and Brown (1982), investigating written discourse, found that in an essay to persuade a brother who does not work hard at school, Chinese EFLers focused on the importance of education for the nation as a whole. Australian students, in turn, stayed with the individual level. In the same study, Chinese students wrote the response as if they were directly addressing their brothers, using imperatives. Australians, on the other hand, used third person singular.

Following a similar trend, McKay (1989) compared essays written by EFLers from the Beijing Institute of International Relations and the Xian Foreign Language Institute to 27 essays written by ESLers in San Francisco. Learners in the two research conditions wrote on the same topic. In spite of the open-ended nature of the task--describe a bus stop scene and

what happens when it rains heavily--Chinese EFLers developed the topic in a striking common way. They restricted the topic by stating a social reason for taking the bus; used metaphorical language to describe the sudden beginning of the rain fall; and described the crowd as consisting of women with babies and senior citizens. To close their essays, they drew a moral lesson, an approach that may derive from their government educational policy, according to McKay. ESLers in the United States undertook the task in a different way. They described the rainfall in terms of weather prediction; provided an excuse for riding the bus instead of driving; described the crowd in a wide range of ways; showed concern with time and with the opinions of others; and drew no moral lessons. In brief, ESLers in the US developed their topics according to their cultural experience in that country: concern with the weather forecast, time, and people's opinions.

Silva (1992), while investigating ESL graduate students' perceptions about differences between writing in their mother tongues and in English, indirectly illustrated how topics may be developed in different ways because of cultural constraints. His Chinese native speakers revealed, for example, that in Chinese parables, sayings, references to ancient Chinese history are a common way of expressing ideas or hammering a point.

More recent studies (UYSAL, 2008; KIMURA & KONDO, 2004; RASS, 2011) reinforce these findings. Uysal (2008) shows that 39% of the argumentative essays written in English by eighteen Turkish university students were developed inductively. Participants developed the topic by exemplification and a collection of obscure topic sentences in each paragraph. In the talk-aloud protocol, they declared they did not feel the need to include a main idea because "the examples were effective enough to speak for themselves" (UYSAL, 2008: 194). As Uysal discusses, the student-writers might have assumed their readers could make the connections by themselves, tracing the roots of such behavior to educational practices in Turkey: "The common use of specification, especially in Turkish essays, might

have roots in Turkish writing instruction in which the writing types practiced […] were consistent with use of that macro-level pattern (UYSAL, 2008: 194-195).

Kimura & Kondo (2004) came to a similar conclusion in their study of 72 Japanese-university-ESL writers. Their learners also relied on specification and multiple different topic sentences to develop their topics within a paragraph, which suggests, according to the authors, a link with Japanese writing education. Kimura and Kondo propose that participants act as if English paragraphs are identical with Japanese *danraku,* a style that does not require any logical combination between sentences in a paragraph, only that sentences are topic related.

Contrary to Kimura & Kondo's (2004) and Uysal's (2008) participants, Rass' (2011) participants do not support their assertions with examples. Their topics progress by means of several parallel assertions, which readers are expected to take as unquestionable truths. The writing of Rass' eighteen teacher trainees is characterized by appeal to emotion, elaborateness and excessive indirectness, traits common to writing education in Arabic.

These findings do not exclude variability within each culture, as well as individual variation. Rather, they do point toward the need to develop context sensitivity to the dynamic and hybrid nature of cultures (ABASI, 2012). They clearly demonstrate that there is not a better way of writing, simply different ways, entrenched in cultural practices. Similar to other behaviors in our daily lives such as greetings or manners at the table, written discourse has a culturally accepted paradigm or a paradigm that is readily accessible in speakers' sociocognitive frameworks. To use Kaplan's (1987) words, if one intends to produce texts to be read by village women in Southeast Asia, the texts should reflect schemata that the women in Southeast Asia carry to facilitate information storage and retrieval networks.

Rhetorical organization

Similar to topic development, research has also shown that different cultures have different preferred rhetorical organization patterns. Kaplan (1966) was a pioneer in contrastive rhetoric research (the study of how writing varies across languages), showing that English speakers favor linearity, Arabic speakers parallelism, Asians indirection, and Romance language speakers digressions in the way they compose. Although he has been highly criticized for that article ("the doodles article"), he planted the seed for the development of what we know now as intercultural rhetoric (ABASI, 2012; ATKINSON & CONNOR, 2008). This approach advocates "sensitivity to the social context and the dynamics of the interactions between readers and writers through texts" (ABASI, 2012: 196) and foregrounds the situatedness and particularity of the writing activity.

In other words, all rhetorical modes identified in the "doodles article" are possible in any language. However, there are preferences. That is, all forms do not occur with equal frequency or in parallel distribution across cultures. Variations are marked by sociolinguistic constraints, for written versus oral usage, and for other features of the psychological context. Rass (2012), Uysal (2008), Kimura and Kondo (2004), among others demonstrated such a tendency. Strong evidence for composing specificities across languages comes from text analysis. In a study I conducted of Portuguese and English texts (SALIÉS, 2004), I found that because English has fewer morphological traps, it is more context dependent or writer responsible (HINDS' terminology, 1987). In English, because the reader cannot count on morphology to disambiguate meaning, the writer must provide information with specificity. On the other hand, Portuguese has a rich morphology to guide its readers, being less writer-responsible and allowing digressions to occur without impacting clarity. Morphology helps readers to tie who does what to whom or what belongs together. In another instance, French is a reader-responsible language; Chinese is in transition; and Japanese has a non-person

orientation, focusing on social and relational control (HINDS, 1987). In reader-responsible languages, readers supply some significant portion of the propositional structure while those in a writer-responsible system expect to have most of the propositional structure supplied to them (the case of English).

Evidence also comes from studies that investigated students' perceptions of these specificities (SANTOS, 1992; SALIÉS, 2010). Santos' subjects revealed that Chinese paragraphs are more inductive, with statements typically supported by citations of historical events while in English paragraphs are more deductive and rational. Santos and Saliés also illustrated the issue of directness. Malay (SALIÉS, 2010) and Japanese (SANTOS, 1992) native speakers reported valuing indirectness in their writing in L1 because direct expression is considered impolite. For that reason, they avoid writing conclusions in their essays, choosing, instead, to be vague. English texts, however, value directness in general and tend to close with a conclusion.

In line with the work of Chafe (1987), Chafe & Danielewicz (1987) and other linguists dedicated to discourse analysis, Kaplan (1988) himself seems to put structural considerations aside in his latest articles, rejecting the straight jacket of the linear, deductive structure he himself suggested to be typical of English in 1966, for the benefit of the reader. What should be of primary consideration is the topic framework of a text (see also LAND & WHITLEY, 1989). That is, the features, derivable from the sociocultural context and from the discourse domain that are explicitly reflected in the text and that are called upon in meaning making (see BROWN & YULE, 1983). If, instead of a thesis, clear topic sentences and a linear propositional structure students use repetitions or lexical collocations to create a topic framework, ultimately, coherence and clarity, there is no need to try to impose a linear structure in the name of uniform English like discourse teaching policy. If we do so, we are encouraging our ESL students to reproduce an experience that is foreign to them (LAND &

WHITLEY, 1989), a straight jacket that disregards learners' subjectivity and capacity to negotiate power (see LIU, 2011). The result will be a text with neither face nor voice. In the view of intercultural rhetoric, student-writers should be empowered to make meaning through the topic structure or a semantics that takes in consideration the sociocognitive frameworks of the texts' potential readers.

In brief, writers composing in different languages will produce rhetorically distinct texts because literacy skills are not only learned, but shaped culturally and linguistically (GRABE & KAPLAN, 1989), but also because writers have their own identities and should be allowed to negotiate power in their discourses. EFL writing pedagogy needs to make student-writers aware of sociocultural and psychological nuances present at the discourse level to bring their texts closer to communicative texts in English. In Grabe and Kaplan (1989) words, the objective of writing instruction to non-native speakers of English is to provide a body of knowledge underlying various types of writing for different audiences in different culturally bound settings. That includes teaching composing conventions to meet the academic writing needs of EFLers; teaching sociolinguistic constraints; and teaching the distribution of reader's and writer's responsibility in the target language. By no means has this included imposing the rhetoric structure of English as if it were the only one accepted. However, this does mean increasing cultural awareness about the target audience so that communication becomes as fluent and immediate as possible (see CAMPOS, 2009, for an extensive discussion on strategies to raise cultural awareness and how to create multicultural materials for the language classroom).

Readers' expectations across cultures

To illustrate how social values influence readers' expectations and ultimately, meaning making, in this section I describe some characteristics of texts written by different

subsets of English writers. Basically, what I show is that the amount and type of shared knowledge assumed between writers and readers vary crosslinguistically (GRABE & KAPLAN, 1989). I begin by describing how Ute English speakers construct coherence in their texts (LEAP, 1989). Ute English speakers rely on the reader to construct coherence, suggesting details instead of presenting them boldly in their compositions. The Ute English writer outlines the message, leaving to the reader the task of filling in the gaps, constructing the necessary relationships between isolated facts, formalizing the connections between segments of the narrative. The discourse framework and presupposition pool is assumed to be reader and writer conscious or to be formed by features naturally activated by the discourse. They are part of the Ute culture and are expected to be known. Furthermore, in Ute English, text arrangement carries meaning. The way in which a writer organizes information on a page is as important to the communication of a message as are factual details. When Standard English readers encounter those texts, their first impression is of vagueness, incompleteness, lack of clarity. Why? Culture influences the way discourse is framed. While Ute people value vagueness and geographic position, Standard English speakers value explicitness, clarity, straightforwardness. Consequently, Ute writers fail to meet English speakers' expectations or expectations which are consistent with the culture of English literate people, hindering comprehension.

In a case study I conducted with two Malay freshmen composition students I found something similar (SALIÉS, 2010). They revealed that writing in Malay is easier because Malay is vague, "one word has many meanings." It is up to the reader, who shares the same presupposition pool, to find out the exact referent or image the writer is trying to evoke. English, on the other hand, "has one word for each thing", said one of the students in the interview for the study. In other words, English is a writer-responsible language, tending to prefer specificity. Consequently, the two students' major difficulty when writing in English

was to meet the expectations of literate readers of Standard English. Also, they struggled to produce texts that had a unique personality or voice. In Malay, what is "shared" is what should emerge from a text, while in English, the opinion of the writer seems to take the foreground.

Silva (1992: 33) corroborates these findings. His subjects observed the difficulty of writing to an unfamiliar audience: "I always have a hard time deciding what should be written...when I compose an English essay". A Japanese native speaker mentioned how different it is to appeal and provide evidence in Japanese. If she writes an application letter to a scholarship committee she cannot write "I would be a successful student" or appeal directly because the effect would be the opposite. In English, however, this is what the audience expects. Silva's students also observed different stylistic preferences that derive from the linguistic tradition of their mother tongue. One student, for example, said that in her L1 she focuses primarily on style, writing long sentences and very complex phrase structures. Naturally, if she does that in English her audience will have a hard time to make meaning, given the linguistic characteristics of the English language such as having few inflections that cue meaning (SALIÉS, 2004). Another student in Silva's study mentioned that in French she has been trained to write rhetorical and elaborated texts, containing metaphors and expressive sentences. To an English speaking audience, this text would look like artificial eloquence.

Given the facts discussed above and following Kaplan (1988), McKay (1989), Land & Whitley (1989), Maurice (1986), Atkinson & Connor (2008), Abasi (2012) and an intercultural approach to rhetoric, I would like to argue for audience-differentiated discourse that benefits intended readers and makes meaning through topicalization. Pedagogically, this implies that ESL/EFL writing instruction should focus on teaching students how to create a topic structure or a projected image through discourse rather than on teaching them how essays are structured in English as if there were a 'mold in which to pour discourse'.

Paraphrasing Grimes (1970), if we teach students to rely on topic structure to convey their messages, we are "providing a language independent framework within which the rhetorical patterns of each language fit as a special class." That approach is not only culturally neutral but respectful of the creativity with which language users were endowed at birth.

The most immediate pedagogical implication of cross-linguistic research in topic development, intercultural rhetoric, and audience's expectations, however, is that we should introduce culture awareness exercises in the writing classroom. One of Santos (1992: 42) students felicitously expressed that view: "I believe that to learn a foreign language is to know another culture. So I hope that those who teach English composition will not only pay much more attention to correct grammar and to good organization, but also to teaching how native think when they write the same things". In the next section, I will offer some strategies to do so. The suggested activities are particularly effective to sharpen EFLers' awareness of their cultural biases, and those of their readers. The activities are a means to an end: successful written communication.

Strategies to teach culture in the EFL writing classroom

Many are the approaches to the teaching of culture in the EFL writing classroom. Here I offer some possibilities. To begin with, writing instructors should rely on strategies that lead EFL student-writers to become more aware of their own culture and its biases; then, they should invite students to investigate how those discoveries differ from the target culture and to contrast and compare to speculate about the differences. Such an approach will experientially teach students that writing and being aware of others' culture in their texts are acts of inquiry. Below, I list some activities for that purpose.

Writing and realia. Student-writers are invited to write about an aspect of the NL culture; read about the same theme or topic in the TL; discern how cultural phenomenon

differs in the two texts; and describe their attitudes about the differences. After an in depth treatment of the same topic in the target and native culture, students should be invited to write from the perspective of the target culture about the same topic. Such an approach allows student-writers to become aware of how culture influences writing; learn about discourse development in the target language as they analyze the target language text in search of cultural differences; and to put their selves in the readers' shoes, trying to bridge the gap between their schemata and that of the writer. They should try to fill in the gaps between their own experience and that of their readers, signaling with topic structure the intended meaning.

Deriving cultural connotations. Another activity to engage students in a writing-cultural inquiry is *deriving cultural connotations* (OMAGGIO, 1993). In this activity, instructors invite student-writers to associate culturally representative images with words and phrases of the TL through word association or semantic mapping. The instructors compare then the mappings or lists the students generate to a native speaker's list or mapping. The value of this exercise rests on its power to show students that the same word may yield multiple images across cultures. For example, Americans do not categorize "beauty" in the same way Latin Americans do. Images and connotations are culturally bound and non-native writers need to be aware of that. To enrich the activity, instructors could ask students to describe in which ways two cultures differ in their categorization of a vocabulary item or phrase. As Omaggio points out, this activity also illustrates how and why word to word translation does not work. Seelye (1993), while discussing how cultural context is key to comprehension, mentions how cultures look at colors differently. Brazilians, for example, say *"Tudo azul"* (= all blue) when things are really going great. To English speakers "blue" would connote depression, not happiness.

Family folklore book. The folklore book, as conceived by Cech (1986), consists of an illustrated book, written and designed by students in which they document their family traditions, stories, customs, and social and political history. As the students write the chapters of their book, they share their creation with other peers in writing groups. This allows the group to learn about others' customs and traditions or different ways of doing the same thing, including writing a folklore book. Cech uses the book in intensive English programs to create a meaningful context for students to write within their authorities and without losing their cultural identities.

Picture Drawing activity. This activity was extracted from Jan Gaston (1992). It is specially efficient to show students (mainly those that refuse to recognize the importance of understanding the culture which lays behind a text) that common experience results in different perceptions even in a homogeneous cultural group or that everyone of us is a culturally-bound being. We see what we see because of who we are. It is our experience that drives our attention, recall, and interpretation of facts. In this activity, the teacher shows a picture to the class, allowing them to look at it for one minute (the instructor could break students into groups with each group having its own picture). Then, the picture is removed from view and the students have to draw it from memory. In the case of advanced EFLers, we could ask them to write a paragraph about the picture. Finally, students discuss the similarities and differences of their drawings or texts in paired discussions. They also have to point out what has attracted them the most in the picture. To debrief, the teacher conducts a discussion about the reasons students who share the same cultural background produced such different drawings or paragraphs. The teacher also shows the original drawing, asking students to compare it to their own reproductions of it. To conclude the activity, students should think and write responses to the questions: What was the purpose of this exercise? What did you learn?

Cross-cultural dialogues. Dialogues (STORTI, 1994) between individuals of two cultures are highly representative of how differences work in inter-cultural communication. By materializing the presence of the reader with the presence of an interlocutor of a different culture, cross-cultural dialogues will help students to refrain from projecting their own norms onto people from other cultures and from assuming sameness when they write. Below I transcribe one example I extracted from Storti (1994, p.19; in Storti´s readers will find an excellent collection of brief conversations between an American and people from other cultures):

Near the family

C: So, Vincenzo, you'll be graduating in May. Congratulations.

V: Thank you.

C: Do you have a job lined up?

V: Yes. I'll be working for the Banco Central.

C: Good for you. Have you found a place to live yet?

V: Actually, the bank's very near my parents' place.

C: That's nice. So you'll be living quite near them.

Vincenzo, being an Italian, is naturally going to live with his parents (see Storti's discussion of this dialogue). In Italy, the family still is the primary focus in life and "moving away" from the extended family may not be in people's agendas.

Hoffman (1968) also offers food for thought in how to introduce culture in the EFL writing class. In Hoffman's (1968) collection of papers titled *Communication analysis and comprehensive diplomacy,* Bryant Wedge illustrates how the Brazilian cultural *milieu*

influences Brazilians' discourse. Working with university students in Brazil, Wedge (1968) analyzed their discussion of Kennedy's assassination, concluding that the students' reasoning rested on the assumption that the socio-political system in the United States was similar to that of Brazil and perceived all evidence presented to them in the light of that preconception. For example, they gave no credit to evidence the Warren Commission provided because to them the government is a corrupt elite who refuses to follow legal procedures and who only acts in its own interest, not in the people's. The students also tended to accept rumors of conspiracy as evidence and to be highly emotional toward the issue because Kennedy was deeply admired. Contrary to Americans, the facts of the assassination had no weight in the Brazilian students' discussions. Rather, they would offer logically sound theories of conspiracy, assuming that American and Brazilian societies function according to the same cultural rules. Americans, in Wedge's words, "tended to resent the Brazilian's stubborn suspicion of evidence" (HOFFMAN, 1968: 33) while Brazilians doubted the credibility of the American style of logic.

The professor re-established the communication line with his audience using two strategies. In one instance, he brought to his discourse the love Brazilians have for ideas by confronting one idea with another to build a general theory of motives for Kennedy's assassination. Mainly, he supported his presentation with insights from psychology that could theoretically explain the disturbed personality of the assassin. "In Brazil, it proved more effective to counter a theory with another theory than with facts" (HOFFMAN, 1968: 34). In a second instance, he used emotional association in his presentation. Instead of simply offering the evidence provided by the Warren Commission, he discussed the personality of the Chief Justice to establish acceptable *bona fides*. In doing so, he transformed doubted evidence in credible information. Wedge (1968) concludes "American professors can adduce their evidence in terms of deductive reasoning from broad principles

and thus become more understandable to Brazilian student audiences." (p. 34) By taking into account the preferences of a particular audience, the writer or the speaker increases the likelihood for effective communication (MAURICE, 1986). As Yousef and Condon (1975) say, the same evidence can yield a range of conclusions across cultures. All of them are logically sound because they stem from different cultural values, assumptions, and psycho-cognitive realities.

Conclusion

To succeed in their communication intents, EFL student-writers need to be aware of culturally-bound traditions that drive communication in the target language, mainly in the written mode. That is so because cultures develop topics, organize texts, and deal with audience expectations according to sociocognitive frameworks that are culture specific. As people perceive their psychological realities as they develop their discourses. It is culture that is contrastive. Only by being aware of their own cultural biases and those of their readers will EFL writers be able to produce texts that come close to a "communicative" text in English. Also, in line with previous research in intercultural communication, I have argued for a process approach to teaching culture. By experiencing a cross-cultural encounter, students may understand how it feels when an interlocutor assumes "sameness." Exercises such as cross-cultural dialogues, writing and realia, deriving cultural connotation lend themselves well to promoting such cultural awareness. Finally, this paper has argued for teaching how to topicalize. If EFL writers learn how to create semantic fields clearly indexed to their intended meanings, issues like rhetoric organization become less critical to meaning construction.

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