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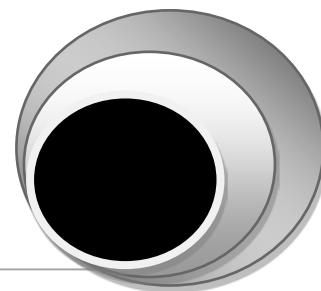*Maria Cândida Zamith*

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O primeiro número da *Via Panorâmica*, na sua versão electrónica (2008), foi organizado em torno da temática da utopia. O número apresentava traduções de textos curtos de quatro estudiosos da área dos Estudos sobre a Utopia de renome internacional – Lyman Sargent (Univ. of Missouri – St. Louis, EUA) Ruth Levitas (Univ. Bristol, Grã-Bretanha), Gregory Claeys (Univ. of London, Grã-Bretanha) e Tom Moylan (Univ. Limerick, Irlanda) –, todos coincidentes na defesa da utilidade do pensamento utópico como princípio constitutivo de uma sociedade mais justa.

O CETAPS – Centre for English, Translation and Anglo-Portuguese Studies, unidade de investigação financiada pela Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia e responsável pela publicação da *Via Panorâmica* – tem, desde 2004, vindo a tratar o tema da utopia de forma sistemática, particularmente através do grupo de investigação "Mapping Dreams: British and North-American Utopianism". O presente número da *Via Panorâmica* apresenta contudo resultados de investigação que não são exclusivamente de membros desse grupo, tornando pois evidente que o tema se tornou transversal a diferentes grupos da unidade de investigação.

Trata-se pois, neste segundo número temático, de replicar o gesto inaugural e de evidenciar não só – como afirmava Lyman Sargent no texto que abria o primeiro número da revista – que a utopia é "absolutamente essencial", mas também que ela é incontornável para quem queira entender as literaturas e culturas inglesas e norte-americanas.

Nota Prefatória
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Na secção dedicada à tradução, o presente número evoca o nome de um dos mais inspiradores utopistas – alguém que acreditava genuinamente no potencial transformador da utopia: William Morris. A primeira parte desta secção apresenta a tradução para a língua portuguesa de trechos utópicos de William Morris, acompanhados de uma nota explicativa. A segunda parte oferece a tradução para a língua inglesa de um texto de divulgação sobre William Morris assinado pelo também utopista português Agostinho da Silva. Esta secção retrata bem um dos princípios orientadores do CETAPS – o estudo das culturas e literaturas inglesas e norte-americanas de um ponto de vista marcadamente português.

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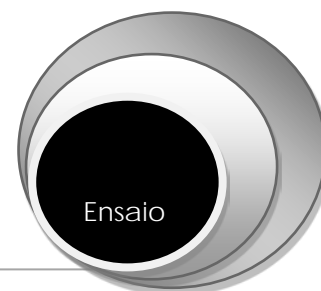
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Todas as utopias se revelam em tempos de crise

Bronislaw Baczko[1]

Tornou-se já um lugar comum afirmar, como o faz Bronislaw Baczko na frase em epígrafe a este ensaio, que os tempos de crise são particularmente propícios a utopias. Esta constatação não deve contudo remeter para a ideia de que a utopia grassa, nesses períodos, como uma forma de escapismo, na lógica da procura de uma compensação de um mundo que é apreendido como insatisfatório. É certo que a utopia oferece frequentemente uma imagem invertida da realidade (em tempo de guerra sonha-se com a paz)[2], mas não podemos esquecer que essa inversão assenta numa leitura crítica do presente. A imagem invertida (ou "distorcida", como lhe chama Melvin Lasky)[3] pretende levar-nos à reflexão sobre o mundo em que vivemos e o mundo que poderemos ajudar a construir. Paul Ricoeur identifica com inteligência o principal valor das utopias: em primeiro lugar, elas fazem-nos compreender a contingência da ordem estabelecida; em segundo lugar, oferecem-se como uma arma da crítica (Ricoeur 300).

Na defesa que faz do pensamento utópico, Boaventura de Sousa Santos sublinha bem o movimento de abertura, expansão e reconstrução que caracteriza a perspetiva contemporânea da utopia. No último capítulo de *Toward a New Common Sense* – com o curioso título "Don't shoot the utopist" –, Sousa Santos é peremptório no modo como afirma que o único caminho possível é a utopia, isto é, "a exploração, através da imaginação, de novos modos de possibilidades humanas" fundamentados na convicção de que somos capazes de

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construir "algo de radicalmente melhor por que valerá a pena lutarmos, e a que a humanidade tem inteiro direito" (Sousa Santos 479)[4]. A relação entre a imaginação utópica e a realidade é igualmente salientada por Sousa Santos num duplo sentido: por um lado, a utopia evidencia aquilo que falta no presente – "a (contra)parte silenciada daquilo que existe, o mesmo será dizer, aquilo que é parte de uma época particular pela forma como se posiciona na margem"; por outro lado, embora pareça distante da realidade, a utopia imagina o *novo* "a partir de novas combinações e escalas daquilo que existe, a maioria das vezes pequenos detalhes obscuros daquilo que existe" (*ibid* 480).

Esta perspetiva da utopia oferecida por Sousa Santos é sem dúvida importante pela forma como evidencia a relação entre a imaginação utópica e o real, lançando luz, em particular, sobre o modo como a exploração de outras possibilidades se faz a partir de algo que existe já nas margens. Trata-se, no fundo, de se promover um movimento que faça com que as margens se vão dirigindo para o centro, tendo-se contudo o cuidado de evitar que elas se tornem o centro absoluto – isto é, que o discurso utópico se fossilize e transforme em ideologia.

A ideia de que a utopia está já presente nas margens da sociedade tem vindo a ser igualmente sublinhada por Eduardo Galeano. Para o escritor uruguaio, que se tem vindo a distinguir pelas inúmeras intervenções públicas que fez em defesa da utopia, "há muitas realidades a querer nascer"; o problema é que não estamos treinados para as ver.[5] Esta questão é colocada de forma perspicaz e pertinente pelo escritor português Gonçalo M. Tavares que, em *Breves Notas sobre a Ciência*, explica que o progresso científico ocorre quando alguém tem a capacidade de ver o que os outros não conseguem percepcionar: "Observar a realidade pelo canto do olho, isto é: pensar ligeiramente ao lado. A isto chama-se criatividade. Daqui saíram todas as teorias científicas importantes" (Tavares 75).

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Perspetivar a utopia à luz das teorias e considerações acima enunciadas equivale a valorizar, no pensamento utópico, a sua capacidade para ver mais além. A imaginação utópica é, neste sentido, entendida essencialmente como estratégia de busca de indícios, de possibilidades ainda por revelar, mas que estão apenas à espera de serem encontradas. A chegada do barco à ilha desconhecida – episódio fundador dos primeiros relatos utópicos, escritos na esteira de *Utopia*, de Thomas More – poderá pois ser entendida como metáfora do "achamento" de mais uma ideia, de mais uma possibilidade.

Esta imagem da utopia enquanto *estratégia* tem vindo a ganhar cada vez mais terreno nas últimas décadas, no âmbito da crítica publicada na área dos Estudos sobre a Utopia. A utopia é perspetivada, neste sentido, como uma forma de pensamento, um modo particular de se analisar a realidade e de com ela se interagir (um modo de "resistência" e de transformação da realidade feito a "partir de dentro", como queria Deleuze quando defendia a ideia de "utopias imanentes")[6]. Interessa contudo distinguir esta *forma de pensamento* (isto é, a utopia enquanto estratégia) do *pensamento utópico* propriamente dito (embora o primeiro esteja contido no último). A língua portuguesa não nos oferece um léxico que torne esta distinção evidente; em inglês, contudo, a coexistência de duas palavras com a mesma raiz permite dar conta destas nuances: "utopian thought" refere-se à história do pensamento utópico, no seu conjunto, incluindo todas as utopias que foram já escritas, isto é, todas as possibilidades que foram já pensadas; por outro lado, "utopian thinking" refere-se à estratégia de pensamento de que acima falei.

No contexto de crise em que vivemos, urge falarmos tanto de "utopian thought" como de "utopian thinking". A referência ao "utopian thought" justifica-se pela necessidade de se contrapor às acusações de que as utopias são meras fantasias o exemplo de tantas utopias do passado que foram entretanto concretizadas. Aos mais cépticos, poderão ser evocados os exemplos da ciência

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(a utopia da cura de doenças outrora consideradas mortais) e da tecnologia (que tem vindo a concretizar projetos que no passado foram apontados como fruto de imaginações demasiado férteis). A referência ao "utopian thinking" tornou-se entretanto uma necessidade. Se a utopia é uma estratégia, se as realidades existem – como afirma Galeano – mas não nascem porque nós não as conseguimos ver, o caminho que nos levará para longe da crise só poderá ser percepcionado se utilizarmos estratégias que nos "treinem o olhar", que nos façam conseguir ver pelo canto do olho.

Falar de utopia em tempos de crise implica pois assumir uma intencionalidade pedagógica: o discurso do estudioso da utopia, validado pela confirmação de que muitas realidades do nosso presente foram no passado consideradas utopias, deve ser oferecido como método para desbravar novos caminhos. Não que o estudioso de utopias seja particularmente iluminado, isto é, que tenha encontrado já esses caminhos. Ele tem contudo a seu favor a luz da esperança utópica, e com ela poderá iluminar quem com ele queira desbravar novos mares. Será que poderemos ser guias do desconhecido? Quem fala de utopia em tempos de crise, quem defende a validade da estratégia utópica, quem exorta os ouvintes / leitores à procura do que está nas margens à espera de ser avistado, assume a função de timoneiro de um navio (como o que Saramago descreve em *O Conto da Ilha Desconhecida*) que transporta homens e mulheres com as mãos nos olhos, a servirem de pala, perscrutando o horizonte, na expectativa de serem os primeiros a gritar "Terra à vista" – e que acabam por perceber que a utopia está na procura, num processo de demanda que tem o efeito positivo de nos levar sempre mais além, de não nos deixar ficar parados.

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[1] Baczko 1979 (tradução minha).

[2] José Luís Aranguren oferece-nos uma definição operacional da "imagem utópica", traçando a fronteira que existe entre este conceito e o de "imaginação". Segundo o autor, a imaginação é dinâmica e criativa, caracterizando-se por um movimento sem fim. Já a imagem é o produto do ato de imaginar, sendo a cristalização de uma ideia. As utopias são imagens (isto é, produtos fechados e acabados), maquetes, modelos que aspiram a ser concretizados (cf. Aranguren 1994).

[3] Afirma Lasky: "[utopia is a mirror, and] a mirror, no matter how it creatively distorts, can reflect only the shapes and shades that are there" (Lasky 11).

[4] Todas as traduções desta obra de Boaventura Sousa Santos são da minha autoria.

[5] Eduardo Galeano fez esta afirmação no programa televisivo *O Tempo e o Modo*, emitido pela RTP2 no dia 17 de maio de 2012 (episódio 2/11).

[6] Sobre o assunto, cf. Deleuze & Guattari 1994.

Utopia, Dystopia and Disenchantment in three Eurocentric narratives of Africa: Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*

Ensaio

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The three novels I selected for this paper may be included in the category, or narrative subgenre, of "narratives of Africa", whether we intend by that designation those stories, purportedly fictional or not, taking place in Africa, or those texts that, in addition to this, present Africa as their theme or as their object of representation. The simple label "narratives of Africa", as well as "narratives of India", presupposes a distancing that is geographical as well as ideological, where the objects of representation are posited as external and even outlandish. The subject, in its turn, is constituted "at home", its location metropolitan even when the author lives or lived in the places he or she writes about. There are, of course, especially from mid-twentieth century onwards, those narratives usually labelled post-colonial, where representations are supposedly built from the standpoint of those cultures that imperialism overpowered and tried to suppress. Though this issue will be touched upon later, I am not especially concerned with it in this paper, as none of the novels to be dealt with falls within this category.

No one of the authors of the novels under consideration is effectively an African. On the contrary, "to be an African" is, in point of fact, a central problem of the representation embodied in these three novels. Immanuel Wallerstein quotes one of the Persians that visit Paris in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, who

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would be taken for a Parisian when he decided to dress like a European. When someone recognised him and told the others that he was a Persian, people would reply: "Oh, oh, is he a Persian? What a most extraordinary thing! How can one be a Persian?" And Wallerstein continues: "This is a famous question and one that has bedeviled the European mental world ever since. The most extraordinary thing about Montesquieu's book is that it provides no answer whatsoever to this query." (32). The setting of the novels under consideration is totally different from that of the Persian travellers, and the formulation of an equivalent query is thus not possible in the same terms. But though not overtly stated, the question "What is an African?", and that more general one "What is Africa?", are overall latent in those novels. Let us see how they manage to answer these questions.

From the mid-nineteenth century onwards projects for the empire began to include the idea of replacing colonization with conversion, thus allowing for the possibility of an independence of the colonies once they were able to govern themselves. Though always located in an unforeseeable future, sometimes accompanied by such dismal prospects as those voiced by a character in one of Marryat's novels when he apprehensively asks whether "England will ever fall, and be of no more importance than Portugal is now?" (quoted in Brantlinger 30), these ideas gave nevertheless expression to a historicisation of the empire that would gather impetus as the end of the century was approaching. According to Patrick Brantlinger in his influential study of the relations between literature and empire in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, the passage from mid-century to the late Victorian period would witness an increasingly ominous view of this change, as an optimist fulfillment of the empire through the adoption of its values by the colonised gave way to different kinds of pessimistic fears, as the "invasion scare" or the fear of decadence or of going native. Or, to put it in a slightly different

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perspective, the myth of the "civilising mission" gave way to the myth of the "white man's burden".

Though published within the period defined by Brantlinger as that of "late Victorian and Edwardian pessimism" (32), Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* is a good example of what might be labelled as utopian optimism of the empire. The novel follows the archetypical narrative pattern of the quest, which has been recurrently adopted (and adapted) in this subgenre and is likewise the pattern for Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and for Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*. The narrator is a British elephant hunter, Allan Quatermain, who accepts to act as a guide to Sir Henry Curtis and his friend Captain John Good in the search for Curtis's brother who disappeared somewhere in Africa. Following some hints that seem to associate Curtis's brother with the legendary mines of King Solomon, the three men depart in search of the mines with the help of a map that had been drawn by a sixteenth-century Portuguese traveller and had come into the hands of Quatermain.

The book is dedicated by the narrator "to all the big and little boys who read it", and its quality as a masculine story seems to be reinforced by the announcement in the first pages that "there is no woman in [the story] – except Foulata. Stop, though! there is Gagaoola, if she was a woman and not a fiend" (10). Foulata will be an almost ethereal virginal native beauty who falls in love with Captain Good and dies, as a good pupil of empire, to save the whites, and in the conviction that hers was an impossible love: "I am glad to die because I know that he cannot cumber his life with such as me, for the sun cannot mate with the darkness, nor the white with the black" (206). Gagaoola, or Gagool, will be the old hag that serves as the master-witch and keeper of the secrets of Solomon's Mines, the embodiment of evil who will be the last resistance to the white men's invasion, and who will appropriately be crushed to death by the stone door that gives access to the mines. When the narrator announces that there are no

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women in the story and only on second thought remembers those two, he is underlining the fact that neither Foulata nor Gagool are appropriate women for a masculine story, the one being too good and the other too bad.

But a masculine story, especially if it is expressly intended, as this one, to address a wide and popular readership (as it happens, for instance, with so-called masculine magazines), is not expected to do without women. Or, to put it more bluntly -- is not expected to do without female bodies. *King Solomon's Mines* is no exception to this rule, as has been repeatedly pointed by critical readings of this novel. The mountainous gate that gives access to the mysterious path leading to the mines is called "Sheba's breasts" (Queen of Sheba – the legendary queen that felt attracted to King Solomon), and the sixteenth-century Portuguese traveller who thus named these mounts is considerably expressive in the instructions he left for reaching the mines: "Let him who comes follow the map, and climb the snow of Sheba's left breast till he comes to the nipple, on the north side of which is the great road Solomon made, from whence three days journey to the King's Palace" (25). When at last the three adventurers have a view of the mountains it is to confirm their sexualised form:

> These mountains standing thus, like the pillars of a gigantic gateway, are shaped exactly like a woman's breasts. Their bases swelled gently up from the plain, looking, at that distance, perfectly round and smooth; and on the top of each was a vast round hillock covered with snow, exactly corresponding to the nipple on the female breast. (66)

Once they reach Sheba's Breasts it is a paradisiacal view that opens before and below them, "league on league of the most lovely champaign country" (79). And there, in the middle of that pleasurable and delightful landscape, runs the long Solomon's Road, an engineering stonework that certainly bears witness to the arts that in ancient times had been learned from white people, as Quatermain had been told by a man called Evans who first

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informed him about the story of the mines. Haggard has in mind the ruins of Great Zimbabwe, that though reported on by Portuguese travellers in the sixteenth century had only very recently been rediscovered and identified with the biblical Ophir, as the high quality of its stonework wouldn't be acknowledged as being of native African origin. This imagined African landscape, thus partaking of an age-old tradition of representing nature "as a pseudogeographic site of male pleasure" (Lewes 2), is the ideal setting for an image of Paradise easily revealed by Haggard's tell-tale symbolism:

> The brook, of which the banks were clothed with dense masses of a gigantic species of maidenhair fern interspersed with feathery tufts of wild asparagus, babbled away merrily at our side, the soft air murmured through the leaves of the silver trees, doves cooed around, and bright-winged birds flashed like living gems from bough to bough. It was like Paradise. (82)

Paradise is thus this fruition of the female body, all the more so if we consider its place in the map that had been drawn by the sixteenth-century traveller. As several critics have pointed out, if put upside down this map seems to evoke a female body, maybe appropriately headless. Whether this be considered as an "unconscious sexual allegory" (David Bunn, quoted in Scheick 30) or more straightforwardly as another expression in the novel of "male adolescent pornographic fantasies" (Scheick 20), what is of especial interest here is the fact that, both in its narrative and in its graphic components, Africa is represented in this novel as a female body. Rebecca Scott establishes this link in terms that look forward to the final climactic moment in the novel, when the adventurers are entrapped in the mine and run the risk of dying there: "The horror at the centre of Africa, the horror that is persistently associated with woman, the horror at the centre of the text threatens to release itself" (75). Though there seems to be here a retrospective reading of Conrad into Haggard,

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Rebecca Scott´s argument is important inasmuch as it stresses this connection between Africa, woman and the text.

The representation of empire implies thus, in *King Solomon's Mines*, this tripartite connection, which takes place in the discourse. But more that the threat posed by that horror mentioned by Rebecca Scott, what seems to assume narrative dominance, both about the middle as well as at the end of the novel, is a sense of harmony expressed in the already indicated view of Africa as a paradise, and also in the utopian final presentation of African society. As they approach the place of the mines, they find that the territory is dominated by a sanguinary and iniquitous tribal chief, Twala, who happens to be a usurper. After an adequate peripety the rightful king will be put into place by the *ex-machina* intervention of the British travellers, who act thus as main agents in initiating a new era of peace. But in order to help the rightful king they make him promise them that "If it be in my power to hold them back, the witch-finders shall hunt no more, nor shall any man die the death without trial or judgment" (130).The civilising mission of empire is thus accomplished, through the rejection of superstition by the natives and by their abiding by the rule of law. The parting words that the new king addresses to the three of them constitute an emblem for a utopian imperialist project, which would be a sort of a non-colonialist imperialist utopia: "But listen, and let all the white men know my words. No other white man shall cross the mountains, even if any may live to come so far. I will see no traders with their guns and rum. My people shall fight with the spear, and drink water, like their forefathers before them" (223).

Come to this point, perhaps we do already have Haggard's answers to those questions posed earlier: "What is Africa?" and "What is an African?" Though at a certain moment it almost makes them die of thirst, as if it were a trial to be overcome, Africa in its most intimate and secluded and mysterious is at last figured as a delightful and welcoming female body, with some perils and

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snares that will however be removed once the introduction of the British values helps restoring the lost primeval order. The British adventurers were necessary agents for attaining that order, and once this is done they may return home with some diamonds in their pockets and a clean conscience of mission accomplished. Up to a point they are naive heroes, that in the course of their adventures happened to restore universalised British values, that as such were also taken as universalised European values and that would in due time become universalised Western values: only less naive, sometimes overtly not so, James Bond and Indiana Jones at one level, the masterminds of the invasion of Iraq at another, were to be the children and the children's children of Allan Quatermain and his friends. In all of them there is this projection of imperial values in the figure of the other, not any more giving him a name and therefore an identity as did Robinson Crusoe with Friday, but believing that the more he will preserve his identity the more he will assume the colonialist's values as if they were his, a process that in theoretical terms corresponds to what is described by Althusser as the interpellation of the subject by ideology. Within this discursive genealogy utopia becomes a central piece in empire's legitimisation move, and has as such an archetypical instance in *King Solomon's Mines*.

When he started writing, Joseph Conrad had a genuine interest in narratives of adventure, and the novels of Rider Haggard, barely one year his elder, were at the time the most well-known example of the genre. Conrad must have read them and, according to Edward Garnett, found them "too horrible for words" (quoted in Dryden 48). *Heart of Darkness* has been repeatedly considered as a kind of anti-Haggard, though those Haggard's novels that have been pointed out as references for this comparison are usually *Allan Quatermain*, a novel written in the wake of *King Solomon's Mines* success, and *She*, a novel where the penetration in Africa is done by a river, as in Conrad's

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novel. However, I am not particularly interested in motive or incidental comparisons but rather in the mythical constructions of Africa offered in these novels, and I think that under this heading *King Solomon's Mines* is the right term for comparison.

In both cases the place that becomes the end of the quest is the centre of Africa. Both journeys tend roughly to locate this place at a geographical centre, but this is above all a symbolic centrality. *Heart of Darkness* is a well-known story: its narrator, Marlow, is an experienced sailor who engages on a voyage along a big river in order to enquire about an official named Kurtz, who used to be a paragon of reason and rectitude and enlightenment but had in the meantime become strangely irresponsive to the Company that employed him. The river is supposedly the Congo River, as the place is supposed to be the Congo, later the Belgian Congo and at the time the acknowledged personal property of King Leopold of Belgium, and the Company seems to represent the Belgian Society that explored the natural resources of Congo, namely ivory. It is though important to stress that none of these is named in the novel: neither the river, nor the region, nor the company, not even the continent, Africa (I'll return to that later). The symbolic centrality of the location is marked from the beginning, when Marlow mentions the reason that led him to look for a job in that Company:

> Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. . . . At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' . . . But there was one yet—the biggest, the most blank, so to speak—that I had a hankering after. (8-9)

> True, by this time it was not a blank space any more. It had got filled since my boyhood with rivers and lakes and names. It had ceased to be a blank space of delightful mystery—a white patch for a boy to dream gloriously over. It had become a place of darkness. But there was in it one river especially, a mighty big river, that you could see

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on the map, resembling an immense snake uncoiled, with its head in the sea, its body
at rest curving afar over a vast country, and its tail lost in the depths of the land. (8-9)

The river leads into "the depths of the land," and it is somewhere in that "place of darkness" that Marlow will find Kurtz who, cut from European civilization, had made of himself a despot and a demigod among the natives, fallen to the greed for ivory and resorting to unnameable practices, among which faintly suggested cannibalism might be the worst. Kurtz had succumbed to that risk of going native stated by Brantlinger as characteristic of late Victorian narratives of Empire, and the usual interpretation of this voyage to the depths of the land as a descent into the abyss of the soul only corroborates the symbolic location of that centre. In Conrad as in Haggard, that centre is the last stronghold against the advancement of cartography, be it that one that since Marlow's boyhood had filled the blanks with names, or be it that rudimentary map to the mines that the Portuguese traveller drew with his own blood. A last stronghold that represents the unknown, the mystery, the occult centre, and that by the simple fact of its narration ceases to be all that, accessed by that cartography that means "filling the blanks with names", as when the mountains that give entrance to the delights of Africa are named Sheba's Breasts. Narrating Africa becomes, in a sense, a way of appropriating it.

This appropriation in *Heart of Darkness* is nevertheless totally different from the imperialist utopia of Haggard's novel. Marlow begins his narrative by referring to the time when Britain was appropriated by the Roman Empire: "I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago—the other day. . . . We live in the flicker—may it last as long as the old earth keeps rolling! But darkness was here yesterday" (6). Conrad historicises the empire, thus making it lose all kind of innocence, if we call innocence that blind belief in the universalism of European values that seems to

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animate those Victorian representations of empire that Brantlinger includes in the optimistic phase. Though he seems to be fond of the idea that the British case is different from the others, Conrad knows that the empire always means "brute force – nothing to boast of", as Marlow says, and continues: "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much". (7).

Edward Said observed of Conrad that he "*dates* imperialism [and] shows its contingency" (*Culture and Imperialism,* 26), thus differing from other previous representations of empire. But this historicising seems rather to be the expression of that late-Victorian mood that tends to think about the empire in terms of its transitoriness, as in the well-known "Recessional", a poem written by Rudyard Kipling on the occasion of Queen Victoria's jubilee in 1897:

> Far-called our navies melt away;
> On dune and headland sinks the fire:
> Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
> Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
> Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
> Lest we forget – lest we forget! (140)

It should be remarked that the moment of exaltation of the British Empire that corresponded to the diamond jubilee was also the occasion of this sense of hubris in Kipling and of this dystopic feeling about the empire in Conrad. Among such contradictory feelings this dystopic image of the empire as rendered in *Heart of Darkness* distinguishes Conrad within that pessimistic mood that seems to filter through the end of the century in England. Though having for context the atrocities practiced in the Congo Free State, where Conrad stayed for six months in 1890 (that is, about eight years before writing this novel), *Heart of Darkness* is much more of a projection of a British and European sense of danger,

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and even sense of failure, that at the time increasingly pervades the imperialist discourse, as Brantlinger has shown. The answer to that question, "What is Africa?" is given, once again, from inside the European consciousness, as a *discourse* in the sense that Said uses this Foucauldian term in his O*rientalism*. As Kossi Logan put it, "like Haggard, the narrative [*Heart of Darkness*] denies the people of the Congo adequate representation" (156). Only the word "adequate" seems to be in excess in this formulation.

The most devastating criticism of *Heart of Darkness* was produced by the Nigerian novelist and critic Chinua Achebe, who makes very clear this absence of Africa from Conrad's novel:

> Africa as setting and backdrop which eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. (12)

In the novels under scrutiny, "this age-long attitude" becomes a discourse that is constitutive of Africa as an image, or rather as a chain of images, where the mind of Europe (to use an Eliotian concept) has created a specific fiction of the other. Or, as Achebe puts it with some humour, "Africa is to Europe as the picture is to Dorian Gray" (17).

Achebe documents Conrad's racism in several passages of the novel, being most of them related to descriptions of native bodies. One of these moments refers to the only description of a woman, supposedly Kurtz's companion, or mistress, to use the term employed by Achebe, who simply mentions this character to highlight her unfavourable presentation when

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compared to that other woman in the novel, Kurtz's white intended. But the importance given in the narrative to the lengthy description of this woman (there is none lengthier in the entire novel) deserves greater attention than has been given to it. Kurtz is ill and about to be removed to the steamer when Marlow perceives her on the shore, "a wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman":

> She walked with measured steps, draped in striped and fringed cloths, treading the earth proudly, with a slight jingle and flash of barbarous ornaments. She carried her head high; her hair was done in the shape of a helmet; she had brass leggings to the knee, brass wire gauntlets to the elbow, a crimson spot on her tawny cheek, innumerable necklaces of glass beads on her neck; bizarre things, charms, gifts of witch-men, that hung about her, glittered and trembled at every step. She must have had the value of several elephant tusks upon her. She was savage and superb, wild-eyed and magnificent; there was something ominous and stately in her deliberate progress. And in the hush that had fallen suddenly upon the whole sorrowful land, the immense wilderness, the colossal body of the fecund and mysterious life seemed to look at her, pensive, as though it had been looking at the image of its own tenebrous and passionate soul.
>
> She came abreast of the steamer, stood still, and faced us. Her long shadow fell to the water's edge. Her face had a tragic and fierce aspect of wild sorrow and of dumb pain mingled with the fear of some struggling, half-shaped resolve. She stood looking at us without a stir and like the wilderness itself, with an air of brooding over an inscrutable purpose. A whole minute passed, and then she made a step forward. There was a low jingle, a glint of yellow metal, a sway of fringed draperies, and she stopped as if her heart had failed her. The young fellow by my side growled. The pilgrims murmured at my back. She looked at us all as if her life had depended upon the unswerving steadiness of her glance. Suddenly she opened her bared arms and threw them up rigid above her head, as though in an uncontrollable desire to touch the sky, and at the same time the swift shadows darted out on the earth, swept around on the river, gathering the steamer into a shadowy embrace. A formidable silence hung over the scene. (75-6)

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This is worth quoting in full as it is probably the best discursive representation ever of that perennial Western representation of Africa as woman. She is wild and savage and magnificent; she is superb and proud an deliberate; she is ominous and inscrutable and tragic; and she also exhibits all that *National Geographic* stuff (to use Claude Rawson's apt icon of native stereotypes), being covered in barbarous ornaments, cloths, brass, necklaces, bizarre things that "glittered and trembled at every step", with loads of ivory upon her. That Conrad intends this figure as the image of Africa is also made clear by Marlow's remark that the "colossal body" of the land seemed to see in her the image of its own soul.

The contention that the presence of this woman is functionally related to her contrast with Kurtz's intended, whom Marlow is to meet at the end of the story, is incompatible with the detailed centrality that this female figure assumes in the novel. This is the figure of Africa, distant from Haggard's not only in artistic accomplishment (and *there* is an infinite distance) but chiefly in ontological terms. This wild and uncanny and exotic image of otherness is no more amenable to imperialist dreams of utopia. Worse still, the self is no more the moral block of Haggard's Victorian heroes but has become complex, contradictory and brittle, as documented in Kurtz and elsewhere in Conrad's main characters. In the confrontation of the self with the other as rehearsed here, Africa is as important as Kurtz, is his counterpart. But in this novel there is no Africa as there is no Congo: there is only a continent (there is that memorable view of a warship "incomprehensible, firing into a continent"), and a river, and a woman. Thence her importance.

That native woman will turn up in the novel once more, for a last good-bye to Kurtz, when, very ill, he is being taken down the river in the steamer. His last look at her has "a mingled expression of wistfulness and hate" (84). The enlightened Kurtz had fallen victim to the allurement of "going native", had

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probed too deep inside his own soul, had searched under the frail envelope of civilisation and had found the other within himself, a sort of a Faustus in a modernist predicament. And that "other" within, that in the primeval Faustus was the devil, is now Africa in the figure of a female body.

In the precise moment that precedes the first appearance of Kurtz, Marlow, who is in his steamer, gives us his location as being "a stretch of the river . . . with a murky and overshadowed bend above and below" (73). I'll take this passage, and this place, as the origin of V. S. Naipaul's title for his 1979 novel, *A Bend in the River*. It is known that Naipaul is an admirer of Conrad, having even said or written somewhere that *Heart of Darkness* would be an appropriate title for his novel if it hadn't been already taken. As a matter of fact Naipaul intends the unnamed place of the action of his novel as that same centre of Africa or, rather, as that same heart of darkness that had been discursively created by Conrad.

We are now in post-colonial times, when the old colonies of Conrad's African cartography have achieved political independence. The traveller is not a European, though he doesn't consider himself a true African:

> Africa was my home, had been the home of my family for centuries. But we came from the east coast, and that made the difference. *The coast was not truly African*. It was an Arab-Indian-Persian-Portuguese place, and we who lived there were really people of the Indian Ocean. *True Africa was at our back*. (12, my italics)

Salim comes from a Muslim family of Indian origin, and though his home is Africa he will always feel as an exile there. He senses that the old ways that had kept his family stable since immemorial times are over: "To stay with my community, to pretend that I had simply to travel along with them, was to be taken with them to destruction. I could be master of my fate only if I stood alone" (22).

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From his friend Nazruddin, Salim buys a shop located somewhere in the centre of Africa, in a town by the great river that after the colonial times had entered into decline: "[t]he town in the interior, at the bend in the great river, had almost ceased to exist" (3). And thus we have again the journey to the centre of Africa, not on foot as in _King Solomon's Mines_, not by boat as in _Heart of Darkness_, but by car this time: "I drove up from the coast in my Peugeot. That isn't the kind of drive you can do nowadays in Africa – from the east coast _right through to the centre_. Too many of the places on the way have closed down or are full of blood" (3, my italics).

Neither the river nor the country is named, but their referents are usually considered as being the Congo River and Zaire, that is, the independent country that replaced the Belgian Congo. The plot of the novel cannot be briefly summarised, but those introductory words just quoted give an idea of what, generally speaking, is going to happen. _A Bend in the River_ is the story of the degradation of Africa in post-colonial times, through tyranny, corruption, incompetence, tribalism and bloodshed. First a traveller in space in order to arrive at the centre of Africa, Salim becomes a traveller in time who watches, at first, the rise of imitated European patterns which prove untenable and are pulled down by a rising demand for an African identity bringing in its wake the utter collapse of society.

Contrary to the other two, the world in this novel is not seen from the point of view of a European. Quatermain and Marlow are agents of the empire, however critic of the system the latter may be, but Salim is not a European neither an agent of the empire. Though not truly African, Africa is his home, and, even if only for his economic and social interests, he is on the side of progress rather than of decline. His peculiar situation makes of his venture a search for an identity in Africa rather than a search for an African identity, even if the latter ever makes any sense. He is, as many Africans he deals with, trying to build a self

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and a future, but in the end what is left is only the agency of power, discretionary power, and the dismal prospect of a country, or a continent, without any future.

Notwithstanding those hints at some lost advantages, this novel needs not to be read as representative of a nostalgia of the empire. Sara Suleri sees Naipaul's narratives as "located . . . at the intersection of the colonial and the postcolonial worlds" (28), and considers that Naipaul's subject is "the anxiety of the empire" (32). When he talks of the anxiety of influence in poetry Harold Bloom says that in it "the shadow cast by the precursors" is dominant (11). If we apply Bloom's formulation to Suleri's account we have a definition of how the presence of the empire looms large over the image of Africa in this novel. The presence of the empire is not positive and absolute, as in the other novels, but remains there as a shadow, as an obstacle that though absent was not vanquished. This is not the reverse of Haggard's utopia that we found in Conrad; it is rather a post-imperial disenchantment.

The narrator is an African exile in Africa and though his perspective contains this double vision, it may be said that in him the distance of the outsider supersedes the intimacy of the native. His identity, as he himself asserts, is moulded by the European tradition in the form of European texts: "All that I know of our history and the history of the Indian Ocean I have got from books written by Europeans. . . . Without Europeans, I feel all our past would have been washed away" (13). On the one hand, he feels that his past, and thus his identity, wouldn't exist without the Europeans, while on the other hand these are always mentioned as "they" and thus felt as being "the other". If, as Sara Suleri suggests, there is in Naipaul an "uncanny ability to map the complicity between postcolonial history and its imperial past" (32), then the narrator of *A Bend in the River* is a good example of that ability. The stated disenchantment should

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therefore be seen within the frame of this double perspective, or rather of this casting of Salim's identity in the European tradition.

The presence of the other in this novel partakes of this ambivalent perspective. Contrary to the imperialist novel of Haggard or Conrad, here the other is not the African, but the European. However, the imposing presence of the imperial past against which the current shambles are implicitly if not explicitly measured creates room for the Europeans, that can feel almost as if at home, at least up to a certain point. An example of this European presence is the couple formed by Raymond and Yvette. Raymond is a historian who is very near the president, or the Big Man, as is called this moderniser who becomes a tyrant and seems to have been composed from the historical figure of Mobutu Sese Seko. As is said by the friend of Salim's who introduced him to Raymond, "He's the Big Man's white man. - - - They say the President reads everything he writes" (145). Raymond represents that "complicity between postcolonial history and its imperial past", once again a textual presence of that past. It is in a party at Raymond´s very European house, with the songs of Joan Baez in the background, that Salim meets Raymond's young wife, Yvette, shortly to become his lover. From the first moment Salim feels attracted by Yvette's body, first of all by her white feet: "she was barefooted, feet white and beautiful and finely made" (146). Much later, when Raymond seems already to be falling in disfavour with the president, Salim will recall this first meeting with Yvette mainly in terms of its European setting: "I often thought about the chance that had shown me Yvette for the first time that evening in her house, in that atmosphere of Europe in Africa" (215). In a curious inversion of roles as compared with novels of Africa in the imperialist tradition, Yvette is in this case the representation of the European other as a female body.

The love affair between Salim and Yvette will reach heights of extreme violence that is, above all, bodily violence. The following   is the climactic

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moment of the relationship of Salim with his European other, and takes place after an incident in which he thinks that he has been in some way undervalued or even mocked (the scene takes place at Salim's house; note the ironic, if not sarcastic, detail of the "Windsor chair"):

> This time she was given no chance to reply. She was hit so hard and so often about the face, even through raised, protecting arms, that she staggered back and allowed herself to fall on the floor. I used my foot on her then, doing that for the sake of the beauty of her shoes, her ankles, the skirt I had watched her raise, the hump of her hip. She turned her face to the floor and remained still for a while; then with a deep breath such as a child draws before it screams, she began to cry, and that wail after a time broke into real, shocking sobs. And it was like that in the room for many minutes.
>
> I was sitting, among the clothes I had taken off before going to bed, in the round-backed Windsor chair against the wall. The palm of my hand was stiff, swollen. The back of my hand, from little finger to wrist, was aching; bone had struck bone. Yvette raised herself up. Her eyes were slits between eyelids red and swollen with real tears. She sat on the edge of the foam mattress, at the corner of the bed, and looked at the floor, her hands resting palm outwards on her knees. I was wretched. (256-7)

Yvette, who in the beginning was about to leave, undresses and returns to the bed:

> I went and sat on the bed beside her. Her body had a softness, a pliability, and a great warmth. Only once or twice before had I known her like that. At this moment I held her legs apart. She raised them slightly – smooth concavities of flesh on either side of the inner ridge – and then I spat on her between the legs until I had no more spit. All her softness vanished in outrage. She shouted, 'You can't do that!' Bone struck against bone again; my hand ached at every blow; until she rolled across the bed to the other side and, sitting up, began to dial on the telephone. (257-8)

Race and gender are very closely connected as power relations in the writing of empire: that's why the representation of Africa as female body

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becomes central in novels like *King Solomon's Mines* or *Heart of Darkness*. But in *A Bend in the River* it looks like the tables are turned. It seems that in the couple formed by Salim and Yvette no one is certain about the role each one is playing. Salim wants to be the dominant figure, but he is afraid that Yvette is just using him, and that fear starts the aggression. Yvette, who is young, beautiful and white, besides being married to the president's protégée, feels as the centre of that small lettered coterie that gathers at their house. In political terms no one has any power, and sooner or later both will have to flee the country. But in symbolical terms the drama of race and gender continues to be enacted, this time with a twist, or perhaps not so. At one level of the representation there is an inversion of roles, Europe being now the female body, which makes of Salim's aggression a sort of revenge. The violence and the baseness of Salim's behaviour don't let him be far from Kurtz, and that "mingled expression of wistfulness and hate" that was in Kurtz's eyes the last time he saw his native woman companion could very well be put on the face the narrator of this novel. On the other side, the masochistic role assumed by Yvette, who after being thus savagely handled calls Salim as soon as she returns home, only to ask him "Do you want me to come back?" (259), makes this European cut a despicable figure that bears no comparison with the fiery and proud African woman on her farewell to Kurtz. At this level of significance *A Bend in the River* may be read as a mirrored inversion of *Heart of Darkness.*

But if we ask those initial questions suggested by Wallerstein, "What is Africa?" and "What is an African?" maybe the answers Naipaul gives us are not much more conclusive than those Montesquieu gave about the Persians. Though he wishes to be a non-native native, as someone has already called him, Salim is no African. A cultural exile, with a sense of his and his family's history learned from Europe, always taking his distance from everything African from an assumed point of vantage that is moulded on European values, finally attracted

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by the white female body of an European, Salim is after all the type of a picaresque character, more of a continuing traveller than of a rooted native. As a literary figure he is a Western character through and through. The voices that are given to the Africans in this novel are the voices as heard by Salim, or, if we prefer to put it technically, as focalised through this character. Viewed from this perspective, Yvette becomes a representation of a European woman as imagined by the refracted representation of the African other that organises the universe of the narrative. That is to say that she is the other of an imagined quasi-African other. The imagined reversal of the imperial order linking race and gender that is shown in the figure of Yvette with eyes that "were slits between eyelids red and swollen", "spat on between her legs", is not so much the expression of Salim's sadism (which it is), as it is above all an image of the empire's sense of guilt in a post-modern hall of mirrors.

The place is the same for these three novels: it is the centre of Africa. In the first novel it is reached on foot, starting in the southernmost point of the continent, in the Cape; in the second the journey is by boat and starts on the west coast; the traveller in the third novel comes from the east coast and arrives by car. It is as if there was some sort of strange attraction from a point in the centre of the continent, a point that on the other hand is never named neither geographically located. It is an unknown country in an imaginary map in *King Solomon's Mines*, a place far up the unnamed river in *Heart of Darkness*, and a town "at the bend in the great river", equally unnamed, in *A Bend in the River.*

These are not just coincidences. Reaching the centre is a figure for knowledge as for appropriation and possession, and we do not need to resort to the psychoanalytic imaginary to see how gender plays a central role in the symbolism of such a figure as well as in its adoption in representations of Africa where the female body is object and metaphor of the quest for the centre.

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Within the tradition of the European patriarchal society feminisation is a prevailing form for constituting the object of empire, and thus gendering it, as in the well-known early example of John Donne's naming of "his mistress" as America. Africa is the only continent for which a mythical centre has been created and it is thus no coincidence that it is at the same time the most feminised continent.

All the Africas in these novels are therefore Africas of the mind, and, to be more precise, of the European imperial mind. I´ll end by quoting again Immanuel Wallerstein:

> And when the dominant European masters of the modern world-system encountered the 'Persians,' they reacted first with amazement – How can one be a Persian? – and then with self-justification, seeing themselves as the sole bearers of the only universal values. (40)

This universalism of European values, says Wallerstein, is what happens in Orientalism that makes Said designate it as a "style of thought" (*Orientalism,* 2). I would say that the images of Africa in these novels, and their merging in the figure of the female body, bear all of them witness to such universalism as a style of thought, as much as they are part and parcel of a European discourse on Africa.

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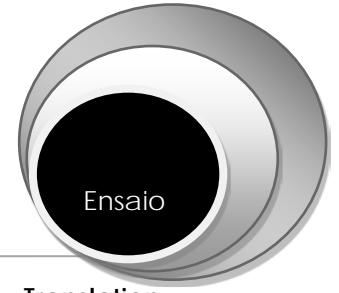
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Any social Utopia is always a response to the particular conditions of the place and the time when it is written; it intends to suggest new ways of governing and directing the people to attain a perfect state of blissful living. Where there is a war, Utopia seeks peace; where there is tyranny, Utopia points to individual freedom; where there is poverty, Utopia depicts a life of plenty.

When the evils of the existing society are so many and so profoundly rooted that a peaceful path to a better state becomes impossible, William Morris and other utopians think that any improvement of society may only happen after a revolution takes place, so that everything may be started anew. This has proven disastrous. Likewise, all attempts to create small secluded "islands" as Earthly Paradises are destined to fail when their egotistical basis becomes inhuman or when their original ideal is spread and contaminated.

In an age when utopias have lost all credibility following the collapse of ideal totalitarian projects and old equalitarian communities' experiments, the only pure utopian schemes become confined to the thinker's mind and aspirations. Virginia Woolf had, "avant la lettre", such a creative capacity.

One cannot properly say that Virginia Woolf was a utopian writer. However, her whole work is infused with utopian dreams, subtly conveyed under different aspects, forms and targets at each new writing. This leaves her readers with a patchwork of differently coloured utopian visions which seem to complete one another, showing a diversity of perspectives of old problems, whilst opening original views of how to attain better possibilities of a good life for all.

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A spectre is a ghostly idea that haunts us. The spectre of Woolf's dearest longings, which accompanied her throughout her writing career, is better understood in a dramatized fashion, as it is undeniable that Woolf acted out her emotions in her fiction and lent a theatrical touch to all her writings, from her childhood to the moment of putting to execution the reluctant decision of her self-inflicted death.

Woolf's diffused idea of Utopia has the important particularity that it is not confined to a special place, time or community, but rather it is prevalent in all her writing sceneries, times and characters, presenting thus different glimpses of a whole which is never specified because it can never be reached.

The last sentence of *Between the Acts* is paradigmatic of the conclusion Virginia Woolf reached after more than a quarter-of-a-century of writing efforts: her characters spoke – but only when they were leaving the acting stage.

In her Letters and Diaries, Virginia Woolf mentioned more than once her prospects of active life for the future, hoping to reach at least her 70th anniversary. Among these statements, in April 1925 she explicitly wrote: "How awful it would be to retire at 60!" (*Diary III*: 23), little knowing, at the time, that she herself would take the necessary steps to definitively 'retire' from life's performing stage just before that appointed limit.

Widening the perspective opened by this wishful thinking and its unfortunate failure, one can wonder about the quantity of unborn paradises that take shape in people's imaginations throughout their lifetime. Pandora's fault, perhaps, but at the same time Pandora's gift, because life would become far more unendurable if one had not the capacity to paint one's future with the colour of one's preference. Sometimes, when we are lucky, we can go as far as climbing up some steps of the high mountain of our dreams and, if we are wise, we make the most of what we have, on that attainable top according to the inexorable Peter's principle, and we keep on looking at the stars with our feet

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well stuck to the motherly, reliable Earth. But, the more imaginative we are, the more difficult it is to be wise, and unhappiness may follow both for ourselves and for those whom we love and who love us.

Woolf's imagination was unquenchable, but unfortunately her health did not always accompany its pace. It is true that sometimes she took advantage of forced moments of rest to let her fantasy fly freely to those 'real life' acting stages of her creation. She made her characters utter opinions and raise questions she put in their mouths to attain some definite purpose of her preference. Yes, she had that possibility when her physical strength was at her lowest, and that was because she felt secure, she knew she could count on the friendly care of those surrounding her. That was mostly Leonard's task for several decades, until circumstances made it more difficult for both of them to go on.

One of Woolf's unfulfilled dreams was her attraction to the theatre and to playwriting. This yearning pursued her since her youth: she entertained and actually worked on a project of writing a play with her brother-in-law Jack, Stella's widower. As far back as 1902 she confided to Violet Dickinson: "I'm going to write a great play […] That is a plan of mine and Jacks – we are going to write it together" (*Congenial* Spirits: 9). The performance that allows each person to live several lives under different disguises, the display of emotions – be they our own or those guessed in others -, the possibility of using masks, adapted to each occasion and each public or each listener, fascinated her. She felt that personalities were not of one piece or, as she herself put it, "people have any number of states of consciousness (second selves is what I mean)" (*Diary III*: 12). Throughout her life, she used one or other of such devices in her fiction, as well as in her own life and in her epistolary or assumedly confessional writings. In her words "the only exciting life is the imaginary one" (*Diary III*: 181), and this she

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put to practice. As she said, "[o]nce I get the wheels spinning in my head" (*Diary III*: 181), "that is what I am ripe for – to go adventuring on the streams of other peoples [sic] lives – speculating adrift" (*Diary III*: 187). She always wanted to "defeat the shrinkage of age. Always take on new things" (*Diary V*: 248).

To try and understand Virginia Woolf's rich personality and her innovative work, one cannot forget that, special as she was, some portion of her achievements may be ascribed to the characteristics of her family and the kind of education she received.

Born from a mother who had worshipped a mortal husband as if he were a god, and from a father who had quitted a feebly worshipped, unseen, and unrelenting God for freethinking liberty's sake, Adeline Virginia Stephen (the future Virginia Woolf) was naturally prone to trespass the boundaries of the normal.

The 7th child (the magic number) in a household where three families had become one, her very position in the children's hierarchy made her special and fragile. Being a late speaker and a love fighter, torn between two brotherly loves and jealousies, turning her weaknesses into strength to secure privileges in her parents' attention and favours, her most efficient weapon consisted in her histrionic capacity to bewitch those she wanted to conquer, bestowing on them all her feminine and infantile attractions. She was a born actress, and she might well have become a renowned one if the passion for reading and writing had not overcome – or somehow left in the shade – her acting talents, which, however, she used profusely throughout her life and which had an enriching distinctive repercussion in her writing. In her personal everyday life her histrionic skills were quite naturally used for her own personal benefit and pleasure. For instance, little Ginia – as her father tenderly called her – could be a temptress at three

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years of age, as if she had learnt her feminine devices from the most efficient of Salomés.

When grown up, she acted likewise: frigid as some labelled her, she was never short of paramours and devotees, her charms being as strong as to lead her friend Lytton Strachey to forget for a moment his homosexuality and propose to her. Iconic and snob as others saw her, she could converse with servants and make herself understood when addressing working class uneducated women. Shy and low-profile as she usually was, she did not hesitate to perform, with her brother and friends, the outrageous national prank of the Dreadnought hoax (for which purpose she dressed up as a male Abyssinian dignitary and had her face darkened, showing her predisposition for acting and masquerading). Moreover: a typical highbrow as she admitted she was, she had the skill to reach the heart and mind of the "common reader", in whom she marvelled as much as Ben Jonson.

Probably helped by all these conflicting qualities and idiosyncrasies, Virginia Woolf could not escape the attraction to the theatre, and she well grasped the potentialities of using masks and disguises: she did use them, both in her life and in her writing.

Take, for instance, *Orlando*, considered a burlesque by some and an "exercise in mimicry" by Helena Gualtieri (Gualtieri 113). This is the most theatrically organised of her narratives: written as a respite from her more serious work, she idealised it as a provocation, when she thought: "I want to kick up my heels and be off" (*Diary III*: 131). And off did she let her imagination fly to utopian fields where all transgressions of normality were permitted, including the erasure of time and gender limitations. Ironically called '*A Biography*' by her author, the work can easily be read as the Utopia of mind's liberty of creation, opening unparalleled possibilities to the fugitive fantasies each human being is sure to experience one time or other in the course of his/her life. But, in Woolf's

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usual manner, the ensuing negative consequences of the desired change are shown forthwith and the end of Utopia is made apparent, the dream vanishes and Dame Reality takes possession of the stage, covered only by the veils and masks lent her by each person's vintage point of view. Woolf's artistry leaves each reader free to select his/her own preferential share of the many utopian trends opened by the narrative. One crucial moment is when the text specifies: "Orlando had become a woman there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity" (67). Here, Utopia is triumphant: it has brought about what was lacking in society: the equality of the sexes, the true capacities of androgyny. However, when Orlando, in the role of a woman, has to face the twentieth-century England's bureaucracies and traditions, she is confronted with reality: utopian fantasies cannot last long. The author submerges Utopia in the unsound waters of Reality:

> No sooner had she [Orlando/a] returned to her home in Blackfriars than she was made aware by a succession of Bow Street runners and other grave emissaries from the Law Courts that she was a party to three major suits which had been preferred against her during her absence [...]. The chief charges against her were (1) that she was dead, and therefore could not hold any property whatsoever; (2) that she was a woman, which amounts to much the same thing [...] (82). [After much ado] she appended her own signature beneath Lord Palmerston's and entered from that moment into the undisturbed possession of her titles, her house and her estate – which was now so much shrunk, for the cost of the lawsuits had been prodigious, that, tough she was infinitely noble again, she was also excessively poor (126).

Indeed, utopian ideas can never accompany the swift flight of mind's Imagination and Dreams, particularly when one combines them with dramatized scraps of real life. However, as Hertzler remarks, "[i]deas are our most precious

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heritage, for they guard us from more evils and lead us to more goals than all other devices and powers" (271n.5).

Woolf's dramatizing capacity dwelt in her lucid mind: she could foresee the inevitable failure of her highest dreams but, in spite of her physical and mental frailty, she was strong enough to keep on dreaming and imagining solutions and by-passes for the innumerable situations she created.

Orlando is fantastic and different from all the other Woolf's writings but, nevertheless, the writer managed to imprint in this narrative her usual characteristic of having the sentences imply more than the bare words would do. Against the usual saying, Virginia Woolf's so carefully chosen words have sometimes the power to convey more meaning than a thousand images. This particularity gives to the text a sense of true realism, as complete as possible, going much further down the human psyche than the mere description which the external aspects of life would afford. The readers think with the characters and adopt or ostracise them according to their own sentiments and emotions of the moment, same as they would react to the actions and speeches of good actors on the stage. All is dramatized in Woolf, ready for the pubic to grasp and judge and sometimes wonder whether they are fully grasping the author's intentions, exactly in the way it eventually happens about the words or actions of people we think we know, or plays we boast of being familiar with.

Other novel, other method: the most ostensive recourse to theatre devices in Woolf's novels happens, naturally, in *Between the Acts*, and not only because of Miss La Trobe's display of England's History on the improvised stage in the country, together with her unorthodox questioning of the audience's perception of themselves and their inner feelings. Throughout the whole writing, with its medley of disparate characters with more or less disguised sentiments and idiosyncrasies, everybody seems to be acting a part as written on the script;

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the atmosphere of a theatrical performance persists. *Between the Acts* can be understood as a Utopia "in instalments": "the last of England" as Julia Briggs labelled it; or perhaps a "carnivalesque comedy" according to Christopher Ames, or something similar in the opinion of many others. But it is undoubtedly something much more serious. The text leaves us the assurance that the world has not and will not change ever since the time when dinosaurs walked in Hyde Park, whilst the human nature is also the same throughout the ages. This confirmation is the more pathetic since the book was written just before the Second World War, and published only in 1941, after its author's death. It is possible that Woolf's suicide compulsion might have been taken to the final paroxysm precisely because of her clairvoyance about the un-improvable condition of humankind, made so obvious to her in this last book which, symptomatically, she expressed the wish to be withdrawn from publication.

From the remainder of Woolf's work, *The Waves* may be pointed out as particularly theatrical and utopian. A.D.Moody had long ago the perception that major attention should be given to this book. He says that it "is an attempt to comprehend human life in more ultimate terms […] there is for the first time in Virginia Woolf's work an adequately convincing sense of the energies which constitute life beneath the mind's abstraction of it into 'society' or 'art' or 'the soul'; a response to it in its wholeness and fullness" (Moody: 45). The book can be divided into acts separated by soliloquies, and the six actors' quest remind us of Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, with the difference that the quest is not for an author but for a ghostly friend whom they would like to bring back to life. This utopia of everlasting life has been known to be destined to failure since the times of Gilgamesh and Enkidu: permanence does not exist in this world and never will. This is a Utopia of Identity and Nostalgia, with its roots in the past but maintaining a resounding semi-prophetic quality that keeps it

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independent from the gnawing effects of time. The final words of Bernard, the last survivor of the friends, show the inevitable disenchantment of those who pursue a utopian desire, greater than life:

> I am aware once more of a new desire, something rising beneath me like the proud horse whose rider first spurs and then pulls him back. What enemy do we now perceive advancing against us, you whom I ride now, as we stand paving this stretch of pavement? It is death. Death is the enemy. […] I strike spurs into my horse. Against you I will fling myself; unvanquished and unyielding, O Death! (167).

The rider who controls the horse can be seen as Woolf herself controlling her fiction: sometimes pulling it back to her Victorian reminiscences, nostalgically dramatized, and soon thereafter galloping at full speed to follow her imagination, swallowing the Present to give her characters a utopian or perhaps even prophetic voice in her innovative ways of conveying special significances to her words.

To be noted that both *The Waves* and *Orlando* have been adapted to the cinema, as it has regularly been happening to one or other of Woolf's writings, adapted to the screen or the stage with more or less care, honesty and imagination. This has been made so much easy as all of them, as said above, have traces of a commanding utopian thought and a "penchant" for play writing characteristics in phraseology and structure.

Jacob's Room, seen as the first of Wool's experimental novels, may also be mentioned here. It had been idealized by her with "no scaffolding" (*Diary II*: 13), as a mere structure, similar to a theatre performance without an actor. The novel is developed as a dramatic judgement of a deceased protagonist escaping oblivion by being brought back to life in the readers' minds through the power of mere fortuitous or eventually more important words which, little by little, draw his physical and human portrait better than any painter could have done.

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The most decisive and formal evidence of Woolf´s exquisite skills as a caricaturist and a playwright was merely intended for family entertainment: *Freshwater, a Comedy* was initially written in 1923 as a caricature of Woolf's great-aunt Julia Margaret Cameron, the renowned photographer, whom she actually loved dearly and to whom we owe some of the writer's best pictures. Cameron's house in the Isle of Wight served as scenery for the mock play, which took its title from the near-by Freshwater Bay. This first attempt was left practically forgotten until 1935 when Woolf decided to enrich it with an extra act in honour of the celebrated young actress Ellen Terry (married to a much older artist, George F. Watts) and have it performed in the family circle to celebrate her niece Angelica's birthday. This performance was included in a theatrical series organized, written and presented at regular sessions by the members of the Bloomsbury Group, by turns, in their own houses.

Nearly forgotten or ostracised for decades, this unique and very special fruit of Woolf's talents of dramatist was brought to the public attention after Lucio Ruotolo edited and commented on it in 1976. In his preface to the work published, he tells us of the difficulty to find, assemble and date the different original drafts, some of them merely the notes for each participant's intervention. As he informs:

> As early as 1919, Virginia states her intention to write a comedy about Julia Cameron. In her diary entry for 8 July 1923, she describes herself working vigorously on "Freshwater, A Comedy," a welcome diversion in her struggle with "The Hours" (*Mrs. Dalloway*). She expects to complete the play on the next day. Six weeks later in a letter to Vanessa, Virginia expresses concern that the play is not yet finished and invites her sister and Duncan Grant to hear it read 'as soon as possible'. The urgency suggests a deadline and is clarified by her letter to Desmond MacCarthy, probably written in October of that same year, asking if he would consider stage-managing the play for a Christmas production. He agreed to direct *Freshwater*; Virginia, however, deeply

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involved in the writing of her novel, disappointed a number of people by deciding to abandon the production. 'I could write something much better," she informs Vanessa in the late fall of 1923, "if I gave up a little more time to it: and I foresee that the whole affair will be much more of an undertaking than I thought'. She was to find time to improve her play a decade later (viii).

The circumstances of this long and shaky writing process are in accordance with Woolf's usual perfectionism and over-revising discipline. But, on the other hand, they confirm her profound affection for the possibilities of stage performance and her wish to have a say in that field too. She intended to present, in a caricatured way, the idiosyncrasies, everyday habits, and particular features of reverenced people she knew well, perhaps influenced by the disturbing directness of phraseology and merciless realism of her friend Lytton Strachey's biographies of notable figures of the preceding century.

The text itself lets us know how earnestly and deeply she documented herself, considering the reference to phrases actually said and situations actually lived by the real personalities depicted. But we may well guess that she might be reluctant to expose to the ridicule of caricature – and performed caricature – those friends and acquaintances she actually loved. Her delay could only mean hesitation. And when she finally decided to bring her project to conclusion, she did it in the understanding that it was merely meant for a restricted performance for family and friends, in the same context of the open-mind confessions of the Midnight Club meetings.

Apparently, Woolf's utopian wish to enter the play writing world did not satisfy her. However, were she interested in following this path, perhaps choosing more neutral characters which she could treat with the same perfunctory or caustic verve she used in her novels, this unique example of comic situations supported by a deep insight of the characters involved, leads us to bet

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that she would also fully succeed in this field. Further, we might perhaps expect some surprising original masterpieces, probably as innovative as the bulk of her fiction.

As matters stood at the time, she had too many projects in her head to embark in a new adventure, in a field she did not master and which she reverenced too much to risk a deficient or even second rate experience. Were she to live as long as she had predicted and wished for in her youth, there might be a possibility that England should gain a new talented playwright; but the short time she disposed of left this utopian dramatic dream as one more spectre in the enchanted forest of unborn creations of her inexhaustible imagination.

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The Southern Agrarians and Utopia

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In his essay "The New Provincialism", Allen Tate suggests that Southern history is considerably different from the experience common to the rest of the United States (262-72). It is distinct because the American story of success, industrial progress, wealth and optimism about the future was not the story of the South. Southern history is made of defeat, dispossession, poverty, oppression, and, after the Civil War, of corrosive guilt as well. It was precisely this distinctive experience that, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, contributed to a thoughtless enthusiasm concerning the so-called gods of modernity, who were bringing rapid modernization and urban behavior patterns to the South. Indeed, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought about radical change in the United States, resulting from industrialization and urbanization, which were seen as the way to rebuild the country following the Civil War. The social, scientific and cultural situation was, in fact, reinventing itself just as Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection were questioning established views. Thus, the urbanization and the restoration of the United States following 1865 once again promised that a better place and a better life could be created in America owing to those concrete actions. As a result, the country's pastoral and agrarian roots dating back to the nation's founding were being replaced by the winds of change, which at the turn of the century were also being felt in the South. However, while the South in general seemed to embrace its modernization and consequent Americanization wholeheartedly, in 1915 a group of Southern intellectuals concerned about the gradual loss of Southern identity and culture founded a movement to defend southern rural values against the

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modern urban and industrial ones. In their essays, the so-called Nashville Agrarians voiced their fears and openly rejected the constant denial of the Jeffersonian principles in favour of a national economy based on devouring industrialism.

As pointed out by Paul Conkin in "The South in Southern Agrarianism", the Nashville Agrarians defined themselves in terms of everything they opposed in Southern society (131). These intellectuals did not believe in the optimistic notion of continual progress. On the contrary, as John Crowe Ransom emphasized, they believed that, "What [was] called progress [was] often destruction" (Ransom,"The Aesthetic of Regionalism" 310). Ultimately these intellectuals, connected to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, bemoaned the increasing loss of Southern identity and traditional culture to industrialization.

The first paragraph of chapter one of *The Southern Agrarians* describes this context:

> In a sense, the origins of Southern Agrarianism stretch back to about 1915. By then, a half dozen young men in Nashville, Tennessee, most either students or faculty at Vanderbilt University, began gathering periodically for some heavy philosophical discussions. After the war those few, joined by an equal number of younger men, switched their concern to poetry and for four years published a small monthly journal, *The Fugitive*. After 1925, four of these Fugitives, soon joined by friends or colleagues, turned their attention to political and economic issues, and particularly to the problems of the South. These discussions first found outlet in what became a famous book, *I'll Take My Stand*, and in a crusade called Southern Agrarianism. (Cokin 1)

In *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition,* the twelve Southern Agrarian intellectuals and poets wrote a manifesto that highlighted, on the one hand, their own understanding of the society and the culture of the South rooted in the Old South and, on the other, their indignation towards the

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changes imposed by Americanization in the first decades of the 20th century. They sought to confront the widespread and rapidly increasing effects of modernity, urbanism, industrialism and a new money economy on the country and, above all, on Southern culture and tradition. Pointing out the effect of replacing the natural agrarian economy with a new money-based one, in *I'll Take My Stand* Andrew Nelson Lytle, one of the twelve Southerners, states: "[The farmer may] trade his mules for a tractor. He has had to add a cash payment to boot, but that seems reasonable. He forgets, however, that a piece of machinery, like his mules, must wear out and be replaced; but the tractor cannot reproduce itself". And he continues:

> This begins the home-breaking. Time is money now, not property, and the boys can't hang about the place draining it of its substance, even if they are willing to. They must go out somewhere and get a job. If they are lucky, some filling station will let them sell gas, or some garage teach them a mechanic's job". (236)

These twelve Southerners rejected the integration of the region into the modern social and economic American model which, in those days, promoted the view of never-ending progress caused by post-First World War technology and industry, at a time when, as John Crowe Ransom wrote, in his introduction to *I'll Take My Stand* "the word science [had] acquired a certain sanctitude " (xxxix).

The Agrarians were particularly concerned about the fate of the tenant farmers and, as Donald Davidson sums up in his essay "*I'll Take My Stand*: A History", they "wished that the greatest possible number of people might enjoy the integrity and independence that would come with living upon their own land". (311)

All this constituted the pillars of a very different culture from that of the North, dominated by capitalism, industrialization and a dehumanizing urbanism. As

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Crowe Ransom underlines in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate", "the latter-day societies have been seized - none quite so violently as our American one - with the strange idea that the human destiny is not to secure an honorable peace with nature, but to wage an unrelenting war on nature" (7).

It is important to emphasize that in spite of their aversion to a changing American and Southern society, these twelve thinkers were not arguing for a nostalgic and reactionary return to the Old South. Instead, and according to a recent reassessment of the Agrarian's work which contradicts its first negative reception, they intended to articulate a philosophy rooted in a love of the land with the enormous changes the traditional rural South had undergone. They were trying to reformulate a pastoral and regionalist impulse to look for an attractive alternative to the new urban cosmopolitan centers.

However, as Donald Davidson very often explained, *I'll Take My Stand* was born out of the indignation against the attitude that Northern Yankees and their journalists had towards the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925. This court case resulted from a State of Tennessee law prohibiting the teaching of evolution in public schools. Journalists, spokesmen of the dominant national culture represented by the Northern technological and industrial order, ridiculed and humiliated the South, which they denounced as ignorant and backward. In an act of indignation, the Southern Agrarians neglected to discuss the prohibition to teach Darwin's theories of evolution in science classes, as that was not their point. What the Southern Agrarians actually did was to promote distinctive traditional Southern values plus an agrarian way of life. They posited this as an alternative to industrial urban life and industrialism, which North Yankees were blindly advocating, totally unaware that such progress would sooner or later become dystopia itself.

As Thomas Daniel Young points out, quoting Professor William Pratt in *Waking Their Neighbors Up*, one of the basic values defended by the Agrarians is

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that a "satisfying way of life cannot be produced by economics forces, with their shifting cycles of poverty and wealth, but can come only from an adherence to stable human values and ideals"(60). Above all, moved by their preoccupation with life in the South and in the country as a whole, they identified themselves as the spokesmen for the principles they believed in and defended as the basis for a good and happy life in an organized and well-structured agrarian society idealized by memory. To this extent, they were undoubtedly utopian and, once again, utopianism arose from America's discourse, now through the voice of the twelve Southerners of *I'll Take My Stand.*

On the other hand, the cultural and the political American model was built on the belief that America was the place to remake the world. As Conrad Cherry states in *God's New Israel: Religious Interpretation of American Destiny* "the belief that America has been elected by God for a special destiny in the world has been the focus of American sacred ceremonies, the inaugural address of our presidents, the sacred scriptures of the civil religion. It has been so pervasive a motif in the national life that the world 'belief' does not really capture the dynamic role that it has played for the American people". (11)

In fact, the idea that America had been chosen by God to create a perfect society and serve as a model to humankind dates back to the time of the first English settlers. They saw America as a new beginning in history and they were thus undoubtedly utopians. It is in precisely in this context that I have stressed the projection of the utopian vision onto the first two English colonies, Virginia and Massachusetts, whereby I mean the South and the North in the New World. Each region underwent trials caused by the tension between the belief in the dream of building a place of happiness and perfection and the recognition that facts and history were making this impossible. The two regions, with their differing experiences between 1861 and 1865, went through unique processes of social destruction and reconstruction. These processes led American history

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either to dystopian moments, such as the horrors of slavery, Vietnam, and Iraq, or to historical moments and experiences full of utopian impulses, like the belief in an elected America, the Declaration of Independence or even the current technological euphoria and dream of infinite American progress.

However, scholars of utopian America have limited their focus to the Puritan colonization since, as they have pointed out, it was the Puritan colonists who planted the idea of a social utopian project in America. And as they limit their reflection to the Puritan colonization, those academics have forgotten the contribution of the South, as a cultural region, to the broadening of a utopian mentality and vision in the New World. This is a lacuna that I want to address today.

It is true that those responsible for the Puritan colony established firmly in people's imagination the utopian myth of "America's" election, glory and progress by means of religious and political speeches. However, it is also undeniable that the colony of Virginia was announced as the perfect place to bring back the English "yeoman" tradition.

In effect, the pamphleteers claimed European utopian aspirations and at the same time they proclaimed the colony to be a place of perfection, "a garden of Eden which the Lord planted", "a cross between Arcadia and that place" (Gray, *Writing the South* 6).

Both colonies had the same sense of self and the same eschatological vision, although they had different plans for achieving their goals. It is, therefore, clear that the colonization of Virginia and Massachusetts was linked to two different proposals, two ways of pursuing the same dream. But, both the cultural North and the cultural South shared similar origins, anxieties and aspirations, in the minds of the Europeans travelling in search of their land of dreams; undoubtedly they also shared a similar utopian vision.

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In fact, while a culture based on an urban, market-based economy came to prevail in the North, a pastoral and Arcadian vision, based on an agrarian ideal, predominated in the South. But in both colonies, the New Continent was seen as a land with the potential to be transformed over time from a European fiction into an American reality by the hand of humankind. America proclaimed itself to be the place where happiness would be built and, thus, the New Continent started its own page in what Lyman Sargent defines as the ultimate tragedy of human existence:

> Utopia is the ultimate tragedy of human existence, constantly holding out the hope of a good life and repeatedly failing to achieve it. (83)

From 1776 until the confrontation in 1861, both regions progressed peacefully side-by-side precisely because they had been motivated until then by the pursuit of similar European ideals. Furthermore these aspirations were nourished by the same utopian impulse over time. As Krishan Kumar clearly stated in his excellent book *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times,* the utopian impulse in America was practically converted into a national ideology – "Utopianism, the idea of America's special destiny, was a central part of the national ideology – almost the national ideology"(81). Furthermore, that impulse has informed, in particular, most of American thought and most of the American imagery and imagination.

Considerable attention has already been given to the literature of the American Renaissance and its relation to utopia and two main points have been made. Some scholars have argued that the American tradition failed to develop the utopian form because, as Kumar reasons, "Americans thought they were already living in utopia" (81). Others have stated that literature has announced the possible achievement of utopia without explicitly writing about it, revealing, however, a utopian mentality. But both these arguments totally ignore 19th-

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century Southern writers who in fact imagined the Southern utopia. These arguments deny a utopian literary tradition that indeed provided a detailed portrait of an ideal society in the New Continent.

Despite the obvious differences between the writers of the American Renaissance and the Southern Agrarians of *I'll Take My Stand*, the fact remains that in 1930 the Agrarians gave voice to utopian thought just as the American Renaissance writers had done before them. With *I'll Take My Stand,* the twelve Southern intellectuals and poets intended to illustrate their understanding of the society and the culture of the South. But their essays also showed their indignation towards the changes imposed by Americanization and its notion of work solely for reward, which they considered degrading. In reaction to this concept, Andrew Nelson Lytle wrote: "A farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn". (205)

I'll Take My Stand is the best example of how the agrarian social and cultural order was kept in the Agrarian minds as a utopian impulse nourished by an idyllic rural tradition. In effect, as Louis Rubin Jr. wrote in his introduction to the 1962 edition,

> The image of the old agrarian South in *I'll Take My Stand* was the image of a society that perhaps never existed, though it resembled the Old South in certain important ways. But it was a society that should have existed - one in which men could live as individuals and not as automatons, aware of their finiteness and their dependence upon God and nature, devoted to the enhancement of the moral life in its aesthetic and spiritual dimensions, possessed of a sense of the deep inscrutability of the natural world.(xxxi)

As Crowe Ransom pointed out in "A Statement of Principles" to the twelve articles,

> All the articles bear in same sense upon the book's in the same title-subjects: all tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or

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prevailing way; and all as much as agreed that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, Agrarian *versus* Industrial.(xxxvii)

In fact, to these heirs of the Fugitives, the ideal period to return to was that of harmonious pastoral and Arcadian principles which had the "Yeomen" and the "planter" as models.

In his essay "Reconstructed but Unregenerate", John Crowe Ransom suggests a solution to the industrial dominance of the Southern economy, thus proposing the South as a moral role model for the rest of the country. "I wish that the whole force of my own generation in the South would get behind his principles and make them an idea which the nation at large would have to reckon with", states Ransom in his contribution to *I'll Take My Stand,* providing again a glimmer of hope and enthusiasm in the history of the United States. In *I'll Take My Stand*, the twelve Southerners strongly defended the distinctive traditional values of the Southern past, as well as an agrarian utopian project as an effective means of protection against urban uniformity and the mass culture of modern times. As Richard Gray wrote in 2004

> the approaches and arguments of the essays in [*I'll Take My Stand]* necessarily reflected the individual training and interests of the contributors. But they were all characterized by three things: a hatred of contemporary society in all its aspects, a commitment to the heritage of the South and, related to this, a conviction that the best kind of social order is one in which agriculture is the leading vocation whether for wealth, for pleasure or for prestige. (466)

In 1930, the Agrarians, motivated by a utopian (American) mentality and, as Tate defended, possessing a peculiar historical consciousness, aimed to resurrect a past (Southern) pastoral dream, which was, however, already behind them. But as Louis Rubin Jr. wrote in the introduction to the 1977 edition of *I'll Take My Stand*

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> if *I'll Take My Stand* continues to command an audience today, almost half a century after its publication, the first conclusion to be drawn is that the importance and the appeal of the Agrarian symposium must not have resided in the efficacy of its prescription of a non-industrialized, unchanged south as the proper model for the region's future, but in something else. (xiii)

The approaches and arguments of the essays in *I'll Take My Stand* necessarily reflect the individual training and arguments of each contributor. However, it is undeniable that one feels the presence of that "something else". Rubin Jr. refers to it in the essays of this volume. It is precisely because of this presence that I dare suggest that the best phrase to define the twelve agrarians' Southern thought is ultimately "Utopian *versus* Industrial", which, in turn, in 1930, represented a process of destruction and reconstruction, an attempt to reject contemporary reality to start building a new better one once again.

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Uma Cidade na Literatura Norte-Americana: Nova Iorque em Paul Auster. Incursões da utopia na América contemporânea. [1]

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No Novo Mundo a que se chamou "América", os primeiros colonizadores, imbuídos do espírito de missão divina, chamaram a si a tarefa de estabelecer comunidades, fundando vilas e cidades à imagem de uma bíblica Nova Jerusalém na imensidão selvática de um continente a explorar – uma actualização do inferno -, a par da vontade de transformar em acto a potência de mitos que povoavam o seu imaginário. Desses mitos, um dos mais celebrados é o de "city upon a hill", proclamado pelo dirigente puritano John Winthrop em 1630, num sermão – "A Modell of Christian Charity"- que é "um dos discursos políticos mais influentes de toda a história política da humanidade" e "verdadeiramente o texto fundador da América" (Santos 383) onde a cidade edificada em cima de um monte se projecta como a primeira cidade americana, a Cidade de Deus, inaugurando-se desse modo o tempo da utopia nessa nova versão da Terra Prometida.

Ler e escrever a cidade é, em boa medida, pensá-la como legado de um Caim exilado que se quis instalar no lugar do seu desterro. Por isso, toda a cidade tende, em última análise, a ficar assombrada por forças que emanam do seu interior e que a impelem para novas configurações exteriores. Já desde Platão que o lugar da poesia na cidade era fonte de preocupação. Tratava-se da questão

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do poder e encantamento que a "arte de imitar" exercia sobre os homens, atraindo-os para o falso e desviando-os da razão: "Era a este ponto que eu queria chegar, quando dizia que a pintura e, de um mundo geral, a arte de imitar, executa as suas obras longe da verdade, e, além disso, convive com a parte de nós mesmos avessa ao bom-senso, sem ter em vista, nesta companhia e amizade, nada que seja são ou verdadeiro" (Platão 468).

Em rigor, o lugar que Platão reservava à poesia não se encontrava na cidade, mas sim onde ela mais facilmente pudesse ser neutralizada. Em princípios do século XXI, a poesia já não será reconhecida como ameaça, até porque, verdadeiramente, ela já não está na cidade. Mas há que continuar a pensar a poesia – a literatura -, em confronto com um mundo que, numa indiferenciação generalizada, agora as quer expulsar em nome da ciência que se transmite e do espaço em que esta transmissão tem lugar: um cenário contaminado pela vocação totalitária da imagem, pelo reino do audiovisual, da telecomunicação e informática, pela dispensa da palavra escrita ou pelo seu registo em suporte magnético. A própria leitura pode evoluir, mas no fundo permanece o que sempre foi: o contacto do leitor com o texto. Esta circunstância não vai mudar, o que muda são as formas como esse acto acontece. [2]

Por outro lado, a história da cidade comporta nos seus registos a história da própria civilização ocidental. É certeira a observação de Ihab Hassan:

> In its earliest representations, the city – Ur, Nineveh, Thebes, or that heaven-defying heap turned into verbal rubble, which we call Babel – symbolized the place where divine powers entered human space. The sky gods came, and where they touched the earth, kings and heroes rose to overwhelm old village superstitions, and build a city (Hassan 94).

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E como igualmente assinala uma escritora norte-americana contemporânea, Joyce Carol Oates, referindo-se àquilo que a Literatura dos Estados Unidos exibe no século XX:

> [T]he City, an archetype of the human imagination that may well have existed for thousands of years, in various manifestations … has absorbed into itself presumably opposed images of the "sacred" and the "secular." The City of God and the City of Man have conjoined out of psychological necessity in an era of diminished communal religion. A result of this fusion of polar symbols is that the contemporary City, as an expression of human ingenuity and, indeed, a material expression of civilization itself, must always be read as if it were *utopian* (that is "sacred") – and consequently a tragic disappointment, a species of hell (Oates 11, itálico meu).

Paul Auster, para quem a América, mais do que uma construção social, se lhe impõe em finais do século XX como discurso literário, com o real em pano de fundo, revisita o mito winthropiano em *The New York Trilogy*, com particular incidência na primeira parte, "City of Glass": "From the very beginning … *the discovery of the New World was the quickening impulse of utopian thought,* the spark that gave hope to the perfectibility of human life …America would become an ideal theocratic state, a veritable City of God" (Auster 42, itálico meu). Ao permitir ler os factos, mitos e símbolos que desde a primeira cidade americana – a Cidade de Deus – chegam ao paradigma da megalópole contemporânea que Nova Iorque é, o texto de Auster recupera aquela ideia primeira de "América" que os puritanos legitimaram na Bíblia. De resto, sem o entendimento dessa ideia e dos seus pressupostos mítico-culturais, é reconhecidamente incompleto qualquer estudo da Literatura Norte-Americana.

O empreendimento literário de Auster é veiculado "por um movimento duplo de singularização (o "eu", o mesmo) e de pluralização (o "outro", a exterioridade)." O que move a escrita é, por um lado, "o apelo da memória e as

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ressonâncias do espaço" (Azevedo "Paul Auster e 'the voice's fretting substance'" 185). A memória tanto é física – traduzindo-se na errância – como metafísica – a busca de um sentido – e, ainda, literária – o tributo crítico aos clássicos americanos, a sua paródia. O espaço, por sua vez, é pensado a partir da sua localização a Leste ou a Oeste, no deserto ou na cidade. Nova Iorque, cidade-paradigma da América e espaço urbano privilegiado por Auster na sua ficção, é projectada pelo autor como cenário e personagem de *The New York Trilogy,* como aquele lugar que, enquanto "floresta de símbolos", é descrito adequadamente por Marshall Berman: "The city has become not merely a theater, but itself a production, a multimedia presentation whose audience is the whole world" (Berman 288).

Daniel Quinn, o escritor-detective de 'City of Glass', deambula, qual flâneur pós-moderno, por um espaço urbano que o assombra: "an inexhaustible place, a labyrinth of endless steps, and no matter how far he walked… it always left him with the feeling of being lost. Lost, not only in the city, but within himself as well" (Auster 3-4). Este cruzamento entre o labirinto urbano e o mundo interior põe em marcha os pensamentos de Quinn, transformando-os numa deslocação impermanente por lugares transitórios, em transformação constante, que instabilizam o ser e o estar: "By wandering aimlessly, all places became equal and it no longer mattered where he was" (Auster 4). Esta desidentificação e ausência de referentes arrasta para o espaço urbano toda uma carga de mistério, de estranhamento, que acabará por contaminar o trajecto vivencial das personagens, seres em busca de sentidos que continuamente lhes escapam, seres à mercê da contingência, da arbitrariedade e do acaso, criaturas errantes que vêem a sua própria identidade ameaçada por forças difusas que habitam a cidade.

Para Quinn, "New York was the nowhere he had built around himself" (Auster 4). Os espaços que pontuam as suas deambulações pela cidade são, de

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facto, não lugares, uma vez que, "se um lugar pode definir-se como identitário, relacional e histórico, um espaço que não pode definir-se nem como identitário, nem com o relacional, nem como histórico definirá um não lugar" (Augé 83). Contudo, a personagem de Auster, em vez de se diluir na magnitude do anonimato que o rodeia, faz dele o seu refúgio, a sua utopia de auto-realização em contexto urbano. Por um lado, o lugar da utopia é, por definição, um não-lugar; por outro lado, o Novo Mundo projectou-se desde os seus primórdios como espaço de concretização de utopias, da materialização de sonhos.

Em *The New York Trilogy*, Nova Iorque oferece-se como traçado de lugares/não lugares, onde a presença pode ser marcada pela ausência e pela arbitrariedade: "The address is unimportant. But let's say Brooklyn Heights, for the sake of argument" (Auster 136). Não surpreenderá então que, nesse palco nova-iorquino, assistamos a uma dança de identidades e a uma coreografia de máscaras, por trás das quais os indivíduos se ocultam, desdobrando-se em pseudónimos, duplos e nomes inventados, muitas vezes tomados de empréstimo às obras dos clássicos americanos do século XIX, como é o caso de um William Wilson (Edgar Allan Poe), de um Jimmy Rose (Herman Melville) ou de um Fanshawe (Nathaniel Hawthorne).

"William Wilson" (1839) é uma narrativa tida como exemplo clássico do motivo do duplo, tema que em "City of Glass" se desdobra em figurações que ultrapassam a dualidade e atingem uma dimensão tripla, uma multiplicidade inerente a cada personagem. A relação nome/identidade, na Nova Iorque austeriana, é manifestação paradigmática da transposição do duplo de Poe para o romance de Auster: perante Stillman, Sr., Quinn não é apenas Quinn – ele é também Henry Dark e Peter Stillman, enquanto em "The Locked Room", narrativa na qual o seu duplo parece ser Fanshawe e não Stillman, o Eu e o Outro se completam momentaneamente para depressa se anularem. Como, de resto, acontece em "Ghosts" com Blue e White/Black, personagens que, com uma

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subjectividade reduzida a jogos cromáticos, passeiam por uma cidade labiríntica que está nenhures – "New York was the nowhere" – e, paradoxalmente, está por todo o lado, fundindo-se as personagens num mesmo ser/não-ser. O apagamento do Eu, a fragmentação e a indeterminação, enquanto alguns dos traços da condição pós-moderna potenciados pela cidade, já não se esgotam em dualidades e exigem multiplicidades difusas.

Este jogo com o cânone literário norte-americano paraleliza outros jogos: desde logo, em torno da já referida questão da identidade, mas também à volta da diluição de fronteiras entre realidade e imaginação, história e ficção – o que permite, por exemplo, que Paul Auster se (des)autorize e ceda o seu nome a uma personagem, pretexto para uma reflexão sobre a processualidade da escrita ficcional e sobre um mecanismo que lhe é inerente: a linguagem e a sua circunstância. Por outro lado, Blue, nas suas aproximações a Black, disfarça-se de Jimmy Rose, personagem literária que é título de uma narrativa de Melville (1855), desse modo desconstruindo a clássica formulação realidade *versus* ficção, já que esta versão de um Jimmy Rose em Nova Iorque nas últimas décadas do século XX é recriada na figura de um sem-abrigo que, para além de semelhanças com profetas do Velho Testamento, lembra Walt Whitman, o bardo da América, investido aqui na função de duplo de um vagabundo urbano. Estes seres errantes e misteriosos vagueiam, quais fantasmas, pela cidade pós-moderna, corporizando o entendimento da figura do escritor que a trilogia propõe ao convocar Hawthorne:

> In some sense, a writer has no life of his own. Even when he's there, he's not really there.
> Another ghost.
> Exactly.
> Sounds mysterious.
> It is. But Hawthorne wrote great stories, you see, and we still read them now, more than a hundred years later (Auster 178).

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Em "The Locked Room", o narrador anónimo encara o seu misterioso amigo Fanshawe como algo mais do que um duplo. Usurpa-lhe o ser e a existência, nas vertentes pessoal e profissional, procurando transformar o seu Eu num Outro. Fanshawe, entre outras presenças junto do narrador, foi o guia da sua primeira experiência sexual num bordel de Nova Iorque, cidade que por esta via assume o estatuto de personificação da mulher e *locus* iniciático. A investigação que o narrador leva a cabo para decifrar o enigma de Fanshawe esbarra com a experiência do vazio numa outra cidade – Paris – a cuja realidade física atribui o seu desconforto e o seu sentimento de perda, que acaba por ser mais interior do que geográfica:

> Things felt oddly bigger to me in Paris. The sky was more present than in New York, its whims more fragile. … This was an old-world city, and it had nothing to do with New York – with its slow skies and chaotic streets, its bland clouds and aggressive buildings. I had been displaced, and it made me suddenly unsure of myself. I felt my grip loosening, and at least once an hour I had to remind myself why I was there (Auster 287).

Este é o início da desintegração do narrador, a diluição das fronteiras entre o Eu e a realidade exterior, bem como o sinal da inviabilidade do seu projecto de (se) encontrar (n)o Outro. É uma demanda fracassada, como falhada foi a opção de vida do próprio Fanshawe, cujo nome é desde logo sinónimo de insucesso, por aludir ao título de um romance de Hawthorne (1828) que o autor procurou retirar de circulação por o considerar um fiasco. O regresso do narrador a Nova Iorque permitir-lhe-á encenar-se como um "eu" – o "eu" do escritor – e descartar o Outro, emprestando as suas palavras para a constituição das três narrativas do romance de Auster: "[L]anguage invades reality and metaphors are constantly literalized, becoming a part of the ontology they are supposed to represent….In this fictional and meta-fictional universe, the useless quest is both the form and the only possible meaning (Shiloh 202). Ou, como diz o próprio

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texto da trilogia: "[The] struggle is all that really matters. The story is not in the words; it's in the struggle" (Auster 294).

É um telefonema do acaso que arrasta Quinn para o cerne da sua luta : seguir o trilho de Peter Stillman, Sr.,um professor obcecado com a sua muita peculiar teoria da Queda, não tanto no mundo do pecado mas mais fundamentalmente nas malhas de Babel. Os passos de Stillman, na sua errância pelas ruas da cidade, cartografam um espaço e desenham as letras das palavras THE TOWER OF BABEL. A personagem, subscrevendo a certeza de que os americanos são o povo eleito, propõe-se inventar, qual Adão, uma nova linguagem, pelo que recolhe e renomeia objectos perdidos na cidade, fragmentos de um lixo urbano que evoca outros momentos da Literatura Norte-Americana contemporânea – Thomas Pynchon e *The Crying of Lot 49* são aqui referência obrigatória – e que constitui o ponto de partida para o restabelecimento da relação perdida, pós-Jardim do Éden, entre conceito e objecto. Reerguer a Torre de Babel é emulação e vontade de construir desde os fundamentos uma nova morada para a linguagem, mais rigorosa, mais autêntica e, se possível, mais genial do que a casa bíblica. Mas é igualmente uma aventura devedora da interpretação do génio de Colombo e dos "Peregrinos" e de um entendimento da América enquanto promessa entre realidades terrenas e antecipações edénicas, enquanto utopia em constante actualização. O que subjaz à construção narrativa de *The New York Trilogy* é a recriação do facto poderoso de que a América não só se tornou objecto de utopias, mito, sonho e grandeza para o resto do mundo, mas também para si mesma.

O percurso urbano de Stillman transforma-se num "círculo hermenêutico" (Lehan 281) que consubstancia o projecto de redenção humana através do resgate de uma linguagem em ruínas, divorciada do real e induzida pelo caos citadino:"[T]he world is in fragments … Not only have we lost our sense of purpose, we have lost the language whereby we can speak of it." ; "Our words

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no longer correspond to the world" (Auster 76, 77). Fica justificada a escolha de quem ousa recriar a linguagem transparente do Paraíso, desprovida de signos arbitrários:

> I have come to New York because it is the most forlorn of places, the most abject. The brokenness is everywhere, the disarray is universal. You have only to open your eyes to see it, the broken people, the broken things, the broken thoughts. The whole city is a junk heap. It suits my purpose admirably. I find the streets an endless source of material, an inexhaustible storehouse of shattered things (Auster 78).

Stillman apropria-se da cidade e dos objectos do acaso que se amontoam nas ruas e recicla simbolicamente o mito de Babel, no pressuposto de que o sentido essencial das palavras será reencontrado. Stillman perde-se na vastidão fragmentária da cidade, no mesmo lance em que se empenha contra o acaso da linguagem. Inspirado pelo sentido de eleição que presidiu à edificação da América, acredita na real possibilidade de retorno a uma linguagem natural, em que a ligação entre palavra e objecto nomeado não seja distorcida ou falsificada. Faz sentido, neste contexto, evocar as palavras de Jean Baudrillard: " O princípio da utopia realizada . . . [c]ria nos Americanos uma percepção da realidade diferente da nossa. O real não está, ali, ligado ao impossível, e nenhum fracasso pode voltar a pô-lo em causa" (91).

Nova Iorque dá-se a conhecer como lugar de exílio, na medida em que terá de haver o abandono completo da linguagem adquirida para que a pureza de um novo sistema linguístico possa ser implantado. É essa tarefa que se espera da América e, por inerência, do próprio Stillman. A motivação vem-lhe do impulso utópico que, também na sua visão, presidiu à descoberta do Novo Mundo enquanto Reino de Eleição, passando pelas teorias de uma espécie de heterónimo, Henry Dark, autor de um panfleto - "The New Babel" – onde se postula a refundação do paraíso na Terra, indissociável da reconstrução de uma nova Torre de Babel assente em alicerces novos, que garantam novos encontros

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com a linguagem primeira, já que a queda adâmica terá arrastado consigo a degradação da linguagem humana, linguagem das origens, só recuperável através da interferência e inspiração divinas. Sem esquecer, o natural génio de eleição do visionário Stillman, outorgando-se o estatuto de legislador adâmico do mundo: "It's a function of my genius" (Auster 78).

Acreditando que a missão imperiosa e imperial do povo eleito é actualizar a memória daquela promessa inicial de criar uma nova terra e um novo homem, Stillman exacerbou a pulsão mais violenta que presidiu à concretização do seu projecto idealista ao escolher o seu próprio filho como agente e instrumento do seu utopismo:

> No one really knows that happened. I think, probably, that he began to believe in some of the far-fetched religious ideas he had written about. It made him crazy, absolutely insane. There's no other way to describe it. He locked Peter in a room in the apartment, covered up the windows, and kept him there for nine years . . . An entire childhood spent in darkness, isolated from the world, with no human contact except an occasional beating . . . [T]he damage was monstrous (Auster 26-27).

O enclausuramento, que no romance é equacionado como atributo da experiência urbana, atinge em Peter Stillman o paroxismo, privando-o de qualquer contacto físico e verbal, para que uma linguagem pura, original, não contaminada, espontaneamente saísse da sua boca. O ordálio redunda no atrofiamento do filho, à beira da loucura, vítima dos malefícios e do arbítrio de um plano que *realmente* só podia terminar em estrondoso fracasso. Stillman filho fica reduzido a um discurso mecanizado, redundante e, simultaneamente, arrebatado, a tal ponto individualizado que não impede a personagem de projectar de si a imagem de um poeta detentor em pleno
da linguagem de Deus: " Peter can talk like people now . . . But he still has the other words in his head. They are God's language, and no one can speak them. They cannot be translated. That is why Peter lives so close to God. That is why he

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is a famous poet" (Auster 20). À sua escala e circunstância, Peter Stillman deixa-se embalar por um ímpeto visionário – "I see hope everywhere, even in the dark, and when I die I will perhaps become God" (Auster 22) - que envia para as ressonâncias utópicas da retórica da fé primeira na missão puritana. Se a ideia de uma Nova Torre só faz sentido na América, o suicídio de Stillman pai é o desabar do sonho, a etapa final de uma agonia utópica e o regresso da distopia. Após esta saída de cena, tudo o que resta a Quinn é a cidade incerta, à semelhança de uma linguagem que se desfigurou, uma Nova Babel que perdura para além de qualquer sistema linguístico, onde as pessoas se deslocam de um espaço para o outro, e onde cada espaço está constantemente a ser renovado.

A Nova Iorque de Paul Auster é um lugar de existência mas também de ausência. Quinn existe enquanto percorre as ruas da cidade, que formatam o seu ser, e enquanto vai escrevendo no seu caderno vermelho: para ele, há vida enquanto houver linguagem. Homem no meio da multidão – mais um envio austeriano a Poe, desta vez a "The Man of the Crowd" – Quinn é confrontado com realidades que não domina ou entende, experimenta uma radical solidão e refugia-se na auto-reflexão. Apaga-se nas paredes da cidade onde as suas palavras se diluem, misturando-se igualmente com as paredes dos quartos que habita: os aposentos labirínticos da sua mente e o confinamento do espaço físico onde desaparecerá. Em "The Locked Room", o significado último do misterioso Fanshawe está contido num caderno vermelho, cujo conteúdo é uma combinação da cidade com a linguagem por ela gerada, texto que, nos derradeiros instantes da história, é depositado nas mãos do narrador sem nome e que este se recusa ler. Quer dizer: tal como no conto de Poe, a cidade não pode ser lida (não se deixa ler), permanecendo um enigma tão indecifrável quanto o das personagens. A pergunta de Joyce Carol Oates – "If the City is a text, how shall we read it?" (Oates 11) – fica sem resposta categórica, abrindo

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campo a múltiplas interpretações e leituras, potencialmente utópicas ou "sagradas".

Em Auster , Nova Iorque é um mundo onde cada espaço é um cenário de teatro, onde os exteriores são interiores e os interiores são exteriores, lembrando as arcadas de Walter Benjamin. Em Auster, a fusão dos espaços com a linguagem e da cidade com os textos faz com que a cidade seja ela própria um texto e cenário de acontecimentos textuais que se abrem a correspondências várias. Em *Moon Palace*, a história da cidade acompanha a história da América, bem como o alargamento de fronteiras para além da costa do Pacífico, chegando à Lua. A nível mais terreno, a "selva" de Central Park articula-se com o deserto do Utah; "the streets of New York's Chinatown lead to the shores of the Pacific and to China beyond" (Lehan 281). Em *In the Country of Last Things*, deparamo-nos com uma aproximação de Auster à ficção científica, assente numa visão de uma cidade futura exaurida nos seus recursos, assombrada com morte e lixo, sujeita à gratuitidade da violência e da desrazão. Estamos no reverso radical da Cidade de Deus, num entrópico e pós-moderno labirinto.

Os romances de Auster aqui convocados parecem traduzir a impossibilidade de a literatura contemporânea representar um universo objectivo e acabado (isto é, com princípio, meio e fim), onde seja possível descortinar com clareza os seus limites – daí se afirmar em *The New York Trilogy*: "The centre . . . is everywhere" (Auster 8). A pulverização de centros, a deriva das personagens, os saberes relativos dos narradores, para além das estruras móveis e sempre mutantes da vida contemporânea, impõem o reconhecimento final da opacidade do universo e das suas forças, de Caim à Babel dos nossos dias.

As histórias que integram *The New York Trilogy* são narrativas possíveis, dependentes como estão de um encadeamento de escolhas por parte das personagens na liberdade de que dispõem, sem fechamento ou resolução à vista.

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O percurso dessas personagens oscila entre as ruas da cidade e espaços fechados, de entre os quais sobressaem os quartos e a sua valência ascética, numa moldura conceptual em que a ordem objectiva do mundo se desmorona perante um universo de evidências flutuantes, pluralidades que descentram, esvaziam e isolam o Eu: "In the end, each life is no more than the sum of contingent facts, a chronicle of chance intersections, of flukes, of random events that divulge nothing but their own lack of purpose" (Auster 219). Na trilogia, a Nova Iorque de Auster, a "cidade de vidro", é uma "cidade-espelho" que multiplica e , no extremo, anula o sujeito e a sua errância, favorecendo o recuo solitário para a interioridade e, em última instância, a descida a uma espécie de grau zero da existência, uma espécie de invisibilidade. Quinn desaparece quando deixa de fazer parte da multidão: na economia do romance, quem ensaia a leitura da cidade é por ela absorvido.

Ler Auster, continua a ser um acesso "a uma arte da descoberta assente numa retórica oscilante entre desnudamento e sonegação de meios. E a própria leitura deve ser entendida como processo ou continuum," tal como o próprio Auster é "um autor 'in progress' que vai sobrevivendo na escrita e nela expressa …todas as incertezas e temores" dos nossos tempos e dos nossos espaços. Sem certezas. Como ele próprio se encarrega de lembrar: "Writing isn't mathematics, after all" (Azevedo, "Paul Auster e 'the voice's fretting substance'" 195-196; Irwin 115). A geometria irregular da Nova Iorque de Auster parece pertencer mais à variável da perda do que à variável do encontro. Mas a ficção (austeriana e não só) continua a oferecer-se como o lugar do recomeço da busca. Onde sempre se procuram encontrar, por acaso ou não, os sentidos que não se podem perder, recriando utopias na América contemporânea que rapidamente se transformam no seu contrário. Como se, na ficção austeriana, a cidade de Nova Iorque, enquanto microcosmo de toda uma nação, fosse simultaneamente América e anti-América.

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"Bem-vindos ao Colaboratório!": Notas utópicas sobre impacto, relevância e convergência

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Numa entrevista concedida à revista *Visão* em dezembro de 2012, José Gil falou de modo pertinente sobre a forma como os tempos que vivemos nos estão a roubar as nossas vidas: não é apenas a ideia da possibilidade de um futuro melhor que parece ter sido arredada do nosso horizonte de expectativas, mas também a de um presente que parecemos não conseguir viver com plenitude. Este "roubo do presente" está patente, segundo o filósofo, no conjunto de trabalhos e atividades que condicionam a nossa vida: tarefas inadiáveis, obrigações de trabalho, horas extraordinárias, imperativos burocráticos cada vez mais excessivos e impiedosos (Gil 22). José Gil não se referia em particular à vida de um docente universitário, mas certamente que todos nos revemos nesta descrição de um presente roubado.

Nas duas últimas décadas, a nossa vida académica foi afetada por alterações profundas. Como explica Pierre Bernard referindo-se à situação que se vive em França, mas que pode facilmente ser aplicada a outros países europeus, nos anos noventa do século XX as universidades viram-se confrontadas com o desafio do acolhimento de um número cada vez maior de estudantes; o governo encorajou o crescimento das universidades existentes e o estabelecimento de novas instituições através da promoção de uma política baseada em contratos de financiamento em função do número de estudantes acolhidos por cada Escola. Na primeira década do século XXI, essa política foi alterada. Ao longo de toda a década, "competitividade" impôs-se como palavra de ordem; e a ideia de excelência – alcançada apenas por alguns – forçou as universidades e os centros de investigação a lutar por um lugar na liga dos vencedores (Bernard 5). Na viragem da década – e ainda mais agora, com o novo programa de financiamento

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Horizonte 2020 – a mensagem foi de novo alterada: precisamos de colaborar, primeiro a nível interno e depois a nível internacional. De um momento para o outro, antigos rivais tornaram-se "melhores amigos" e impõe-se a ideia de que o conhecimento só será acessível através da cooperação. A ideia de convergência passou a servir de bandeira a esta nova era – e espera-se que vivamos felizes, todos juntos neste "colaboratório" mundial.

Entretanto, as universidades, forçadas a convergir também no seu esforço de abertura ao mundo exterior, tornaram-se permeáveis à lógica economicista que rege esse mundo. A nova "sociedade do conhecimento" concedeu às universidades – geradoras por excelência desse conhecimento – lugar de destaque, mas atribuiu-lhe um valor económico – e assim se chegou ao conceito de "economia do conhecimento" e à ideia do conhecimento como um bem de consumo. Como sublinham V. Lynn Meek e Dianne Davies, a ciência deixou de ser vista como um processo de "busca da verdade" para se transformar numa "busca por uma resposta aos interesses políticos e económicos" (Meek and Davies 58-59).

Dentro desta nova lógica, outras palavras e expressões foram ganhando terreno. Disso são exemplo a expressão "transferência de conhecimento", o conceito de "stakeholder", a ideia de "crescimento sustentável" e o mandamento "Think global, act local", que nos recorda que as universidades têm um papel importante a desempenhar no processo de desenvolvimento das suas áreas de implantação. De repente, as autoridades académicas e as fontes de financiamento governamentais exigem aos seus professores e investigadores que saibam dissertar sobre os compromissos regionais, sociais e políticos da Academia e que estabeleçam pontes de cooperação com os centros de decisão política, com o comércio e com a indústria (*ibid* 55). A mobilidade tornou-se um imperativo (e deu azo à discussão do impacto da mobilidade no conhecimento) e pertencer ao *top* das cem melhores universidades europeias passou a ser a grande utopia académica. Esta transformação teve um impacto considerável na relação das universidades com os seus docentes e investigadores, que passaram a ser também avaliados em função da sua capacidade para gerir projetos e atrair financiamento.

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De entre o vocabulário novo, importado da área da economia – e informado por uma clara perspetiva económica –, distinguem-se sem dúvida três conceitos que me proponho aqui analisar: "impacto", "relevância" e "convergência", os instrumentos principais a que recorrem as instituições de financiamento e de acreditação universitária para efeitos da investigação desenvolvida pelas unidades de investigação e dos programas de estudo oferecidos pelas universidades. Embora a minha posição de base em relação a estes conceitos seja de grande desconfiança – uma vez que a minha vida académica foi já por eles fortemente abalada – não posso deixar de, antes de os rejeitar liminarmente, reconhecer que eles são, acima de tudo, instrumentos, devendo como tal ser encarados e utilizados.

Quando me refiro a estes conceitos como instrumentos estou a pensar na definição de instrumento que nos é oferecida por Ivan Illich na sua obra verdadeiramente fundamental para o entendimento da contemporaneidade, *A Sociedade Convivial*. O problema com os instrumentos – explica Illich – é que, num momento inicial, eles são concebidos para resolverem um problema específico, mas quando a sua importância toma dimensões exageradas, tornam-se verdadeiras ameaças para a sociedade. (Illich 35). Assim – conclui Illich –, o problema não reside no instrumento, mas no uso que fazemos dele. Illich oferece-nos um retrato de um mundo escravizado pelos instrumentos que esse próprio mundo criou. O destino da nossa sociedade – recorda-nos Illich – está nas mãos dos "gestores de nações-instrumento, corporações, partidos, movimentos organizados, profissões de elite".[1] A estes gestores foi concedido o poder de decisão; eles geram novas necessidades para que os instrumentos criados sejam utilizados e inventam rótulos sociais para darem sentido aos novos rituais ditados pelos instrumentos (*ibid* 83).

A esta sociedade de seres humanos escravizados pelos instrumentos que eles próprios inventaram, Illich faz opor a visão de uma sociedade convivial, onde todos os indivíduos utilizariam instrumentos "menos controlados pelos outros indivíduos", onde as relações interpessoais seriam animadas pelos princípios da autonomia e da criatividade e por uma preocupação de uma vida em harmonia com a natureza" (*ibid* 70). Esta visão – diz-nos Illich – não deve ser encarada como uma mera efabulação, já

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que assenta no princípio básico de que uma utilização diferente dos utensílios poderá conduzir a resultados distintos. Creio que esta perspetiva proposta por Illich poderá ser produtiva para a análise dos conceitos de impacto, relevância e convergência a que me propus dedicar no contexto deste artigo.

Comecemos pelo conceito de impacto, que tem vindo a ser utilizado como instrumento de medida da qualidade das nossas publicações, por um lado, e do interesse económico e social dos nossos projetos de investigação, por outro. Estamos todos cientes da forma como este conceito alterou os ritmos e caminhos da vida académica, e estamos decerto bem familiarizados com as diferentes estratégias que as próprias universidades têm vindo a propor para que os resultados dos índices da medição do impacto aumentem consideravelmente. O problema agravou-se sem dúvida quando, apesar de os processos para medição do impacto terem sido estabelecidos pelo Research Excellence Framework, a Academia começou a propor novos índices, baseados por exemplo no número de visualizações de um *clip* no Youtube ou no número de "gostos" colocados em páginas de Facebook ou de Twitter. Simultaneamente, como tem vindo a ser evidenciado em várias instituições europeias, criou-se uma verdadeira "indústria do impacto", traduzida na criação e comercialização de *software* e numa reorganização dos serviços académicos das grandes universidades, que contratam pessoal específico para dinamizar e medir o impacto de todas as iniciativas académicas. Refira-se ainda a forma como o velho lema "Publish or perish", que serviu de bitola para a avaliação do trabalho desenvolvido por docentes e investigadores até ao final do século passado, foi informado pela ideia de impacto. Não interessa agora apenas publicar, interessa onde se publica (e aí sim, a ideia de impacto tem claras consequências económicas que têm aliás sido denunciadas, como se passou em relação ao Elsevier).

Conhecemos pois bem o lado negro do impacto, mas será o conceito, em si, um mau instrumento? Para respondermos a esta questão teremos de relacionar este conceito com o de "relevância" (e questionar a própria ideia de "conhecimento relevante"), por um lado, e de ter em linha de consideração uma outra diretiva dos nossos tempos, a necessidade de as universidades promoverem atividades de extensão.

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Em relação às atividades de extensão universitária, importará ter em conta a ideia, defendida por Boaventura de Sousa Santos, de que a legitimidade da universidade só será conseguida quando as atividades de extensão se tiverem desenvolvido ao ponto de deixarem de ser entendidas como tal, ganhando um lugar de direito nas atividades de investigação e de docência. Sousa Santos propõe de facto que as atividades de extensão sejam encaradas não como o terceiro elemento da tríade "Ensino – Investigação – Extensão", mas como uma ação política, um sinal de que a universidade não se encontra separada da sociedade e de que se preocupa com os problemas sociais, tenta solucioná-los e contribui para o seu desenvolvimento. Citado no documento que define a Política Nacional de Extensão Universitária brasileira,[1] Sousa Santos defende a ideia de que a reforma da Universidade deverá passar pela concessão de um lugar de centralidade às atividades de extensão universitária, conferindo-se assim à universidade a missão de uma participação ativa na construção da coesão social, na lógica de uma luta pela instauração de uma verdadeira democracia, contra a exclusão social e a degradação ambiental e na defesa da diversidade cultural (Sousa Santos 2004).

Esta perspetiva avançada por Sousa Santos implica naturalmente a reformulação da ideia de conhecimento e uma reflexão sobre o que nós, docentes e investigadores, fazemos. O problema é que, como bem salientou Edgar Morin, nos agarrámos à ilusão de que vivemos numa sociedade do conhecimento, quando, na verdade, lhe deveríamos antes chamar "sociedade do conhecimento desconectado" (Morin 241). Na verdade, o nosso conhecimento, tendo essencialmente uma natureza fragmentária, produz aquilo a que Morin chama "uma ignorância global" (*ibid* 240). Se pretendermos entender realmente as coisas, teremos de investir na busca de um conhecimento capaz de ligar todos os fragmentos, as partes ao todo, o local ao global e vice-versa, isto é, teremos de investir na criação de um *pensamento complexo*, ideia que Morin tem vindo a defender há mais de duas décadas. Como explica o filósofo francês, "conhecer" implica saber contextualizar, globalizar, multidimensionalizar (243), mostrar sensibilidade em relação às ideias de ambiguidade e de ambivalência, ser capaz de

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[1] *Política Nacional de Extensão Universitária*, Manaus-AM, maio de 2012, disponível em http://www.proec.ufpr.br/downloads/extensao/2012/legislacao/Politica%20Nacional%20de%20Extensao%20Universitaria%20maio2012.pdf. Consultado pela última vez em novembro de 2012.

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associar aquilo que parece antagónico, isto é, pensar de forma complexa (254). Apenas nessa situação poderemos falar de *conhecimento relevante* – aquele que nos revela os diferentes lados de uma mesma realidade. E se é verdade que não conseguiremos alcançar nunca o conhecimento global, poderemos pelo menos tentar alcançar um conhecimento multidimensional.

No fundo, o que diz Morin é que precisamos de *convergir.* A convergência de que fala o filósofo é contudo muito diferente da convergência a que somos atualmente exortados no contexto da nossa vida académica. Com efeito, a ideia de convergência que prevalece nas universidades tem uma intenção claramente economicista, e alicerça-se nos conceitos de "inovação" e de "oportunidade", apontando para a necessidade de estabelecimento de pontes com a indústria. O problema é que este modelo, concebido e posto em prática para as ciências, está agora a ser imposta às humanidades e ciências sociais. O que é pior é que também o valor económico de convergência foi transferido e dizem-nos agora que teremos de convergir para conseguirmos produzir riqueza. O resultado deste processo de transplantação para as nossas áreas de estudo de um modelo produzido num contexto absolutamente diferente é que nos encontramos hoje no seio de um "colaboratório" que não sabemos pôr a funcionar.

O conceito de colaboratório parece-me de facto pertinente para descrever a situação que hoje vivemos. Os colaboratórios tornaram-se uma moda no Reino Unidos e nos Estados Unidos na última década, embora na verdade a ideia tenha raízes nos anos 90 do século passado. Trata-se de espaços físicos ou virtuais que têm no seu centro a informação disponibilizada pelas bibliotecas digitais; foram concebidos com o objetivo de permitir a partilha de dados e instrumentos e a interação entre especialistas de diferentes áreas, oferecendo-lhes um espaço propício à investigação experimental e à ciência colaborativa.

A ideia da universidade como um colaboratório é de facto atrativa e parece servir a lógica da visão multidisciplinar. Contudo, o conceito de colaboratório – com a ideia que lhe é inerente de que a investigação científica se faz a diferentes mãos e que desse processo deverão resultar publicações colaborativas (isto é, artigos escritos por mais do que um autor) – é, pelo menos por agora, difícil de assimilar para quem trabalha

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na área das literaturas e das culturas. Dito isto, será relevante fazer notar, recorrendo a Illich, que os colaboratórios poderão tornar-se um ótimo instrumento de investigação se os soubermos utilizar.

Parece-me de facto importante sublinhar que o próprio Illich, que se mostrou sempre tão crítico da sociedade em que viveu, não quis com o conjunto da sua obra transmitir uma mensagem de desespero. Na realidade, se é certo que ele afirma que "os instrumentos podem escapar ao controle do ser humano, tornando-se primeiro o seu mestre e depois o seu carrasco" (278), não é menos verdade que Illich termina *A Sociedade Convivial* termina com a afirmação de uma esperança alicerçada na convicção de que o ser humano tem capacidades que poderá explorar de forma a aprender a utilizar os instrumentos que cria com sabedoria. É pois num tom coincidente que eu gostaria de terminar estas reflexões.

A solução passará, na minha perspetiva, não pela recusa das palavras de ordem que a Academia hoje nos impõe, mas por um processo de apropriação dessas palavras de forma a torná-las mais consentâneas com a ideia que temos daquilo que uma universidade deveria ser. Adotemos pois o lema da convergência não porque nos impõem essa nova vocação, mas porque a convergência nos proporcionará uma perspetiva multidimensional, estabelecendo assim a base para o pensamento complexo que nos permitirá um melhor entendimento da sociedade em que vivemos. Promovamos o conhecimento relevante não porque queiramos contribuir para a dita economia do conhecimento, mas porque o conhecimento relevante nos poderá proporcionar os instrumentos para o entendimento do mundo. Promovamos atividades de extensão não com vista a uma melhor avaliação dos nossos CVs ou relatórios, mas porque, como defende Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ele abrirá o caminho para a afirmação de uma universidade que abraça a sua missão social e se oferece como bem público, visando contribuir para uma transformação efetiva da sociedade.

A universidade poderá de facto oferecer-se facilmente como espaço para a transformação da sociedade. Se fizermos um esforço para combater a visão economicista prevalecente, se nos empenharmos na implementação de um sistema de verdadeira democracia participativa, se deixarmos de pensar nos estudantes como

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sendo nossos "clientes", considerando-os antes parceiros ativos e fazendo-lhes entender as responsabilidades inerentes ao facto de serem ouvidos, se lutarmos pela nossa autonomia intelectual, pela relevância dos nossos temas de investigação, se, como diria William Morris, tivermos coragem para sermos suficientemente rebeldes, seremos então capazes de insuflar nova vida na universidade, de a revitalizar, de a rejuvenescer, de a estimular – e também de encontrar mais estímulo para a nossa carreira académica e para a nossa vida pessoal.

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[1] Tendo eu consultado o livro de Illich em inglês e o de Morin em francês, as citações em português que incluo neste trabalho são todas da minha autoria.

"WILLIAM MORRIS"[1] (Translation of a brief presentation of Morris's work by Portuguese philosopher Agostinho da Silva)

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William Morris's father, taking advantage of the industrial progress in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, invested his money in mining companies, while at the same time working as a stockbroker in London. In this way he amassed a fortune which allowed him to provide his family with every comfort, while simultaneously maintaining the rules of a strict upbringing, in stark contrast to the environment of entrepreneurship and commerce in which they lived. As soon as he could, he took his family to the countryside and William, who was born on the 24 March, 1834, spent his childhood in Woodford Hall, a large house, surrounded by parks and gardens. Close by there was a wood with a small stream where William and his siblings would follow the paths which wound between the trees, mounted on a pony, or would become more adventurous and go deep into the dense undergrowth. At times they would stop to fish and lose track of time in the rustling branches, waiting for the faintest twitch of the floats or watching the fish pass by - a fleeting black-green shadow or a silvery flash in the clear water of the stream. On other occasions they would head for the quietest, most remote place they could find and tell stories of knights who had wandered dense woodland, just as they did, to vanquish wizards and tyrannous kings or free damsels in distress, who, imprisoned in castles, wept for their distant loves from behind locked doors.

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[1] William Morris, Author's edition, 1994 (without illustrations).

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William, whose frailty stopped him taking much of an active part in the games of other boys of his age learnt to read early, and at the age of four started reading the works of Walter Scott, fascinated by the palace parties, the adventurous expeditions, the tournaments where justice was decided and the valiant resistance of the Saxons against foreign control. The Middle Ages took over his spirit and little by little appeared to him to be the best era humanity had experienced, just as it had to the Romantics: tales of peace-loving people,   who worked in the fields or in small city workshops, ruled over by powerful lords, brave and just, who spent their lives fighting for good, besotted by their lady loves whose melancholic beauty inspired sweet ballads, or judging the occasional lawsuit brought forward by one of their subjects. In the cities, the construction of cathedrals involved everyone and each of the craftsmen involved put their heart and soul into the task with which they had been entrusted. Throughout the land was heard a wave of prayer and glory; the dream was becoming a reality and the atmosphere was right for the most noble feelings to be expressed and established. When given a suit of armour, it seemed as if he truly lived in the era he preferred to all others and he would ride his pony between the trees, brandishing his long sword, helmet shining in the pale twilight of the wood. The dragons hid, no castle raised its standard and wizards, if they existed, hid in a cowardly fashion when the boy champion appeared .The books of Marryat and *Arabian Nights,* which amongst others he read later, may have strengthened his love of adventure and kindled his desire to lead a life different from that of others, but they couldn't diminish his love of things mediaeval. Instead, they encouraged him to return to the pages of Scott where his favourite heroes evoked times past with the magic of a single word.

When he was about nine years old he started primary school. Even though he dedicated time to his studies, he still had free time to read and walk; it appeared more important to him to let his imagination wander than to patiently

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memorise the rules of arithmetic and grammar his teachers demanded of him. Also, his family had no wish for him to rush his studies. On the one hand they excused him due to his delicate health, which was improving much with his walks in the woods, and on the other hand his father's fortune meant economic necessity wasn't such a serious consideration as it was for others. He continued his studies until 1847, the year in which his father died. As it was felt necessary to keep a close eye on the boy, he was sent to Marlborough College, a boarding school which was going through a period of reorganisation, but whose headmaster had little concern for pedagogical matters. There was scant discipline, and at the same time a lack of a necessary structure; each boy dedicated himself to the sport he considered most convenient, and those like William, who preferred to spend hours in the corner of the classroom reading a story were similarly free to do so. Pupils could study, sleep or play in class or outside, depending on their aptitudes or whims. For William no system could have been better. His love of reading developed and the games, as they were optional, were reasonably attractive to him, although he still preferred quiet spots where he could read and meditate.

Due to his love of the Middle Ages he studied architecture and archaeology, either consulting all the books he could find on the subject in the college library or obtaining material from elsewhere. When he could, he wandered round the surrounding area, lingering in the ruins of mediaeval buildings. He still loved nature although his interest was now almost exclusively artistic. He read *Herbario de Gerald* (Gerald's Herbarium) untiringly, admiring the forms of herbs and flowers, drawing their most unusual forms while at the same time continuing his interest in mediaeval times and showing a growing sense of beauty. He had a great attraction for church ceremonies and it seemed that, in a time of trains and factories, the clergy was the only profession where some aspects of mediaeval times could be relived. At least he could experience the

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beauty of the cathedrals and create a life of dreams, as he had done in previous days in Woodford Hall and perhaps, as so often happened in the future, this way of seeing things came to shape his thoughts. When he left school he prepared to enter Oxford University, gaining the skill necessary to take religious orders. He had a Greek and Latin teacher and quickly learned to read the classics which interested him most in the original version. A world unfolded before him, no less beautiful than the other, although it stimulated more his intelligence than his imagination. Above all it was a good school of experience, and through his contact with the classics, William Morris gained knowledge of style which combined both elegance and strength. Mediaeval thought, or rather the mediaeval dream was a genre which did not allow for the imprecise, the vague, and the lack of discipline of the written or spoken word of the Romantics. Through the tranquil formulation of ideas and the critical serenity with which he chose and ordered them, his ideas gained in clarity and strength.

In June 1852 he passed his entry exam but it was only in January of the following year that he was admitted due to   a lack of lodgings at the university .He formed a friendship with Burne-Jones who had also come to take religious orders and immediately they formed a lifelong friendship due to their shared artistic interests. It was exclusively their friendship that protected them from the dryness, the strict regime and the inferiority of Oxford. Either the masters withdrew into a world of academia without any signs of life, with the students preferring sports to the library or lessons, or they came up against antiquated ideas or a brutality that could barely be disguised as chivalry. The two found themselves isolated, which although it denied them the help they hoped to find, in compensation gave them a freedom which would be more useful than total absorption in a university environment. They spoke of art, history, archaeology and trips they would one day make to the sacred lands of the Middle Ages. They took long walks round the outskirts of the city and with the arrival of new

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students, some of whom were personal friends of Burke-Jones, they were able to organise a small group which maintained a spirit of intellect, initiative, contemplation and a desire for achievements. Morris was the most enthusiastic of all and never showed fatigue or a lack of enthusiasm: all obstacles fell in the face of the brave knights and the world would be what they had imagined, albeit it in a very vague manner, if they could only remain firm in battle. What was needed was to instil beauty into life, which seems to be ever more utilitarian. They had to rekindle the idea of an ideal existence in the heart of every man in which a deep-rooted interest would free thousands of English factory workers from grinding hours of toil; like a vision of paradise, the memory of cathedrals, built with love, liberty and a relish for the task, where each of the workers could leave his mark, rose alongside the machine rooms of the huge factories. Was it possible to turn back the clock? Of course, and soon exuberant Morris energetically organised ideas and urged the group to take upon itself the reform of the working conditions of English factory workers. The others hesitated, uncertain of the path to take, and more attracted by literature than action, they finally convinced Morris that perhaps the best course of action was to establish a magazine which would enable them to set forth their ideas and create an environment which could result in practical action. The nine hundred pounds Morris received annually from 1855 onwards allowed the project to move forward and *The Cambridge and Oxford Magazine,* which sold few copies of the 12 editions published, involved the collaboration of students from both universities. Here Morris published some of his best poetry, which he composed with ease, as if it were a task of little importance. He found his themes principally in the Middle Ages and his poetry, although lacking historical accuracy, was some of the most beautiful in English literature, for the novelty of its images, the rhythm of its language and its understanding of a world of suggestion and imagined music.

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Holidays spent on the Continent in France and Belgium put William Morris in direct contact with some of the great cathedrals and the sites where much of the action described in history books and novels had taken place. These entrapped him ever more in the mediaeval world, although it was also true that they led him to an awareness of the evils of the modern world which could emprison his spirit and hinder the pursuit of his artistic dreams. However it also seemed to him that it was possible to work in both worlds at the same time and under the influence of the same inspiration. His belief was that if the principles which had made the Middle Ages great were applied to modern life, it would rid men of the mental and moral oppression in which most of them lived. The economic basis of human organisation was still very confusing to him, and he could not establish a connection between industry, art and his aspirations for a fulfilling life for all.

On his return to England he consulted his sketch books in which he had drawn details of cathedrals or the notebooks where he recorded his impressions of the great masters he had admired in museums. Nature still interested him and there were numerous sketches of landscapes, but principally a fixation with details of plants and animals, more in the decorative sense rather than an attempt to capture them for their intrinsic interest. He felt that instead of entering the clergy he should dedicate himself to art, but it was also true that art didn't satisfy him completely. It appeared to him that art was to a certain extent distant from man and he wanted to help mankind find its way to real humanity and contribute to its betterment, not keep his distance like the great majority of intellectuals and artists of his time. He felt in art the danger that it might diminish his drive towards human solidarity, the danger that it might lead him to view the world as a spectator, not as the transforming agent he hoped to be. He attempted to create a life-long student association which would have the character of a religious order but without the imposition of belief, the purpose of

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which was for members to share a desire for perfection , to be true to themselves, and to bring to others the knowledge, suggestions, doctrines or works that would best help them progress. However, it was difficult to find collaborators, especially as the projects were so vague and he himself had yet to decide on an occupation. In the end, in a decision more for others than himself, he abandoned the idea of entering the church and started work in Street's studio as an apprentice architect while at the same time experimenting with mediaeval illumination, wooden sculpture and clay modelling. His best friend, Burne-Jones, who by this time was completely dominated by Rossetti's influence, which would soon also have its effect on Morris, decided to dedicate himself wholeheartedly to painting.

In October 1856 they travelled to London and the two friends rented a flat in Bloomsbury. They needed to furnish it but it seemed an affront that artists should buy the same furniture as was on sale to the English bourgeoisie, so they designed their own and decorated it with paintings in which Morris revealed he was a diligently good disciple, but in which Burne-Jones showed himself capable of originality, albeit still under the influence of Rossetti's artificial, literary preoccupations. Morris so enjoyed the experience that he abandoned architecture, and dedicated himself to painting. One year later Rossetti was awarded a contract to supply frescos for a room in Oxford and Morris was part of the group of painters responsible for the work. The themes were taken from a tale of knights but none of the artists, enthused as they were by the occasion and mediaeval visions, thought of acquiring the necessary techniques and soon the frescos faded, although the loss of the work was little mourned, except for the pieces by Rossetti and Burne-Jones.

Although interested in painting, Morris still had plenty of energy for other ventures. He wrote verse and prose, almost always based on mediaeval themes, and in 1858 he published a volume of his poetry- the *Defense of Guenevere* – to

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which critics paid no attention and which sold very badly. However, the best poems highlighted all of Morris's qualities such as his capacity to recreate an atmosphere of the past, the subtle delicacy of his rhythmic structures and the emotion of the poet when confronted by the scenes of compassion or cruelty which had most impressed him. The Middle Ages, while appearing as a paradise to artists, was also presented as a time of violence and cruelty, where the shadow of death was a constant companion. To Morris however, it still appeared to be more worthwhile than the era that fate had determined he should live in – one of submission, sorrow and an absolute domination of material necessities. It is also possible that part of Morris's pessimism resulted less from his comparison of the Middle Ages with the nineteenth century than with the results of his work as a painter. His enthusiasm was diminishing considerably and his critical spirit, always sharp, left him in no doubt as to the value of his paintings. The more effort he made, the more his paintings looked like insipid copies, without the faintest spark of inspiration. Giving up and finding a job where painting was a useful extra, or at least one where he could use what he had learned about drawing and colours seemed to be the best course of action. He was aware that none of his existing projects suited. He was the type of person who had to create his own sphere of activity but knew how difficult that was and how uncertain the results could be. However his energy was sufficient for much more complex tasks and realising he had chosen the wrong path, renounced his career as a painter.

His marriage to Jane Burden in April 1859 helped him find himself. Jane was a stunning beauty, tall and majestic. There was perfection in the lines of her face, a purity and a serenity which she imposed on all around her and which brought the discipline and security Morris needed to escape the, at times corroding influence of his friends, and to concentrate on himself, perfecting what was best in his spirit so as to leave his mark on the world. He started by choosing a piece of land in Upton, Kent and hired Webb, a pupil of Street, to build a small

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house surrounded by a walled garden, which could simultaneously act as a centre of activity and a monastic retreat. The decoration was entrusted to Burne-Jones and while work was being carried out on the house, the idea of a small business dedicated to the manufacture of everything which could contribute to elevate the artistic level of English homes was born. Workshops were built in the countryside with the workers' houses nearby, and little by little, starting with furniture, every type of decoration was produced.

The project immediately received the enthusiastic applause of friends and a small business was formed involving about eight partners, with Morris supplying almost all the capital. Talent, imagination and fervent hard work were in plentiful supply although capital and administrative know-how were less than was necessary for the success of the company. Morris's determination however knew no bounds. Work started almost immediately and the crises, which soon appeared, were confronted with courage and good humour. The most serious of these were the illness of Burne-Jones and the ruin of Morris. The former deprived the firm of its only real full time artist for a considerable period; the latter placed Morris in financial difficulties and affected the security of the project. However, he never considered giving up the fight and launched himself into work with double the energy. He bravely sold his house at Upton and bought another close to London from where he directed the firm's activities, and in the 1862 exhibition, the now Morris, Marshall Faulkner & Company presented works in stained glass, decorated furniture and embroidery which called the attention of the critics and started to influence other designers. Shortly after, orders started to arrive from churches and private houses and profits meant new workshops were opened. These produced cotton and wallpaper printed with Morris's own designs, which were almost always inspired on the world of plants and animals, and which, of all the products the firm sold, were the cheapest and most popular. For these reasons, they were most influential in changing tastes,

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while at the same time bringing a little art to the homes of the less wealthy, which Morris so wished for.

A commission to decorate a room in South Kensington in 1867 made the firm's reputation and, under the administration of Tangier, it also gained financial security. Morris was then free to dedicate himself totally to technical work while at the same time writing and publishing *The Earthly Paradise ,* with stories from Greek, Nordic and medieval sources. In stark contrast to the optimistic activity and the confidence the success of the factory gave him, his poems were dominated by the idea of a tragic destiny and all were concerned with death, which had previously been evident in *Defense of Guenevere* and *The Life and Death of Jason*, which he wrote between books. Both compositions were perhaps overtly long and lacked inspiration and rhythm but the short interspersed lyrical poems were amongst his most beautiful works. However, neither his poetry not the work of the firm were enough to occupy him and in 1868, excited by the sagas and epic songs of the Scandinavians, he started to learn Icelandic and three years later, made his first trip to Iceland. The island impressed him for its harsh, sombre tragic landscape, perfectly adapted to the scenes of the dramas of love and death narrated in the sagas and which appealed to one of the facets of his spirit.

Upon his return to England he worked on illumination and carried out one of his most perfect works, the illustration of the Rubá'yat by the Persian poet Ornar Khayam, from Fitzgerald's translation. But the calm wasn't to last: the firm's prosperity caused infighting which years of struggle had not, and only at the end of difficult negotiations did William Morris buy out the other partners, thereby becoming the sole owner of the factory. He immediately researched new areas and learned of new techniques in the art of dyeing, experimenting with vegetable dyes, which were superior in their artistic effect and aniline duration. He then started weaving and sent for a weaver and loom of the latest design

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from France with the idea of making tapestries. In the meantime orders increased and Morris became a recognised authority by museums, which frequently called upon him for evaluations or to pronounce on the authenticity of pieces. Churches which needed to replace stained glass windows always came to the firm and after having overseen work in St James's palace, no one hesitated in entrusting the decoration of the most important houses to him. He was less appreciated as a writer, in spite of his translations of the Sagas, the Aeneid, *Love is Enough*, the *Freeing of Pharamond* and above all *Sigurd the Volsung* which he published in 1876.Morris considered *Sigurd* his masterpiece, but most readers shrank away from the richness and splendour of the work which seemed, and at times was, too artificial and heavy.

Although the firm's activity and his literary production brought him into contact with the public, in both cases with the knowledge that he was a person of influence and capable of moulding mentalities, it was only through the restoration of ancient monuments that Morris had occasion to fully intervene in the public life of his country. Due to a sudden love of ancient monuments, a love full of romanticism but lacking a sense of reality, the authorities, supported by numerous private individuals, had taken it upon themselves to restore ancient buildings considered of artistic or historic value and in the name of restoration had committed the worst acts of vandalism. At times a monument had been modified, to supposedly reintegrate it with primitive purity, when this purity was no more than a theoretical concept. At other times parts of buildings were invented so they appeared whole, which naturally was unsuccessful, and worse still, on other occasions, the real historical monument, the ruins, were demolished and substituted with a totally modern building, the only value of which was as a staged set. The idea of a society to defend monuments against artistic notions and the government was suggested and Morris, who would become the secretary, immediately started work. He protested against

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restoration work which went any further than halting the ravages of time. In the meantime he dedicated all his energy and capacity for work to the company as he had done previously, without giving a moment's consideration to the fact that the campaign would cause the firm considerable financial loss, as it limited sales of stained glass. Gradually the idea sank in, opposition to harmful aesthetic interventions became ever greater and much of England's rich artistic heritage was saved.

However, for Morris the victory brought no respite. It was simply the first and least important of a vast crusade upon which he embarked with the zeal and courage of his medieval role models. He gained a taste for public action, conferences, protest meetings, commissions and societies and it seemed to him that this was the best way to educate, to make man reach a higher level of culture and life. His ideal was to re-establish the love for life which seemed to have existed in the Middle Ages, where everyone gave of their best within their possibilities, and where social circumstances, whether   political, economic or cultural, which were after all merely artificial barriers, failed to stop personal development. It was obvious he would have to fight on two levels, focusing his attention on the one hand on everyday life including political life, while on the other hand focusing on the perhaps more important problem of elevating man's spirit. He was an educator who, to become complete, found it necessary to take an interest in politics. This he did not through a particular liking for the subject, but because his work at the firm and his experience with the men and their resignation in the face of the inevitable limitations gave him a sense of what was possible. England and the world, in his view expected something important from his work and he did it with enthusiasm and forceful resolution while at the same time perfecting the weaving processes for the production of upholstery in the factory and preparing to set up workshops outside the city in a spot where the

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workers could appreciate the beauty and experience more hygienic living conditions.

His battle started with the question of the Orient which came about due to the barbarities committed by the Turks and which divided opinion in England , creating two groups which fought bitterly. One protested against the attitude of Turkey and demanded international sanctions. The others, with the memory of the Crimean war still fresh, supported the Turks, blamed all the incidents on manoeuvrings by the Russians and demanded military action against the Moscow-based Empire. Morris, on a humanitarian impulse, and because war against the Russians seemed absurd, took up the cause against the Turks and became treasurer of the association he founded in '76. He wrote pamphlets, gave speeches, wrote a song which naturally wasn't one of his best poetic works thus avoiding, or believing that a declaration of war against Russia had been avoided. In the meantime he was fully aware of the economic questions surrounding war and understood that his any action taken would need to be more complex that his rather superficial ideas. His own ideas on art and pacifism would have no future without a solution to the economic problems which England and other countries would face. The means of production, in a broad sense, would have to be organised in such a way as to attend exclusively to the interests of humanity, to create the possibility of a job done with interest in place of the absurd, crushing tasks which were normal and which could be nothing else, given the economic system which was in place. Contrary to what many thought, he didn't see the machine as an enemy of man but as his best aid. Put simply, freedom depended on how it was used; he believed it should be developed, not solely to the benefit of its owners, but also to reduce the number of hours necessary for the production of all essential goods, employing those with free time in the manufacture of artistic objects, in which the worker could leave the mark of his individuality and develop physically and spiritually. He

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suggested working within existing laws and only felt it would be necessary to draw up others if for some reason opposing groups broke those laws which gave Morris and his friends a possible way forward. During some years Morris dedicated himself more to socio-political work than to the company, and contrary to expectations, encountered his greatest obstacles not from his adversaries but from those who should have supported him. Due to the ignorance of most people and the lack of a sense of practicality in almost all leaders, his efforts were in vain. Morris believed it was necessary to start again, firstly educating the population so they could understand certain ideas and avoid becoming easy prey to ignorant or ruthless politicians.

Practicing what he preached, which rarely happened with others who expressed the same views, Morris was a good friend to his workers. He constantly worried about their material and moral well being, always searching for new technical processes which could give more beauty to the products and lighten their workload, always improving the workplace so the atmosphere helped to develop the spirit. Neither the aged nor infirm, not even the incompetent were harshly sidelined as in other factories. Morris believed above all that whatever symbolised production or beauty had a right to exist. Human concerns were of secondary consideration and contrary to popular belief, but in line with what Morris had always claimed, the result was neither financially unsound nor did it reduce the quality of the products. Having survived a period of financial difficulties, the firm affirmed its position and considered expansion. A small printing press with characters, principally adaptations of classic and gothic typefaces designed by Morris himself, was set up in Kelmscott Manor. He established the basic rules of book aesthetics, unknown to almost all typographers, and although it is true to say that he didn't obtain concrete results in this area, he continued to influence industrial progress. His pages were almost always too thick and the decoration rarely matched the text or the chosen

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typeface. What was important however was to show how a book should be an artistic whole and how the form of the typeface, the colour and quality of the paper, the width of the margins, the colour of ink, and the distribution of space were of major importance. In the last years of his life, typography was his great passion although he never forgot his other passions: he still produced wallpaper, textiles, furniture, stained glass, tapestries (some of great artistic value) at the same rate and always and with improved quality and taste. He also wrote and although his writing may not have had the same flair or perfection of form, he did write more realistically about life with all its problems, setting aside the affection which to a certain extent had spoiled some of his earlier works. In his last pieces of work he emphasised his faith in the future, in humanity free of encumbrances, morally and intellectually progressive, able to assert a fullness of spirit and conceiving of man in the present as a rough outline of what he could become in the future. On this day, which he spoke of enthusiastically in *The Pilgrims of Hope, A Dream of Johon Ball*, and *News from Nowhere*, beauty would not only be for the few but, given some inner spark, all would be able to rise to the levels which in the contemporary world were only attained by the privileged, even though they weren't always the most deserving. In a generalisation of his first visions of the Middle Age he believed that soon art would be a creation by the people for the people, a means of universal communion and not just another barrier causing separation and battles, as it had been in his time. The hope of a brighter future never left him during his prolonged, painful illness which finally overcame his work-weary body. He tried to keep the factory working at full speed and on the eve of his death held the first copy of an edition of Chaucer in which he had invested all his efforts. After considerable suffering which he bore with fortitude, he died in Hammersmith on the 3rd of October, 1896.

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Tradução de uma seleção de textos utópicos de William Morris', seguida de"Nota Explicativa"

Ensaio

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Seleção de textos com um forte pendor utópico

1.- De *News from Nowhere* (1890)

[...] Os campos à roda que, ao passar por eles anteriormente, se tornavam dia a dia mais sórdidos, cada vez mais marcados com o carimbo da 'agitação e vida intelectual do século XIX', já não eram intelectuais, mas tinham-se tornado de novo tão belos quanto deviam ser [...]

2.- De *The Earthly Paradise* (invocação) (1868)

"Esquece os seis condados[1] de seu fumo toucados,

  Esquece o bater do êmbolo e o bufar do vapor

  Esquece a expansão crescente da hedionda cidade:

  Pensa antes no cavalo pelas dunas passando,

  E sonha com Londres, pequena, branca, lavada,

  O claro Tamisa de verdes jardins debruado."

3.- De "The Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings"

[...] O mundo civilizado do século XIX não tem o seu próprio estilo entre os numerosos estilos de outros séculos de que tem conhecimento.[...] Mas aqueles

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[1] Os seis condados à roda de Londres

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que fazem acontecer as mudanças nos nossos dias, sob o nome de Restauro, enquanto afirmam que trazem um edifício de volta ao melhor tempo da sua história, não têm qualquer orientação senão cada um a sua própria fantasia a dizer-lhes o que é admirável e o que é desprezível; enquanto a mesma natureza da tarefa que têm os compele a destruir alguma coisa e substitui-la pelo que imaginam que os anteriores construtores teriam ou poderiam ter feito.[...]

[...] nós rogamos e apelamos aos que têm de tratar com eles que indiquem Protecção em vez de Restauro, para protelar a decadência pelos cuidados diários [...] que não mostrem pretensão de outra arte e, por outro lado, se oponham a interferir na adulteração quer da estrutura quer dos ornamentos do edifício tal como ele está.

4.- De *The Lesser Arts* (conferência 1877)

[...] Tudo o que é feito pelas mãos do homem tem uma forma, que tem de ser ou bela ou feia; bela se estiver de acordo com a Natureza, e a ajudar; feia se estiver em desacordo com a Natureza e a ela se opuser; não pode ser indiferente. [...] Dar prazer às pessoas com as coisas que elas têm por força de *usar*, essa é a grande função da decoração; dar às pessoas prazer com as coisas que têm por força de *fazer*, essa é a outra utilidade dela. [...]

5.- Letters: 1 de Junho 1884 (para Georgiana Burne-Jones)

[…] Alguns daqueles que trabalham para mim têm parte nos lucros formalmente: suponho que ganhei no último ano ou dois cerca de £1800. Wardle cerca de £1200, os Smiths cerca de £600 cada. Debry e West £400. Todos estes têm parte directa nos lucros. Kenyon, o misturador de cores, e Goodacre, o capataz de tinturaria, também têm uma espécie de bónus sobre o montante das mercadorias saídas; os outros, ou trabalham ao dia ou são pagos à peça, estes

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últimos são a maior parte: em ambos os casos recebem mais do que o preço do mercado pelo seu trabalho: duas ou três pessoas por aí não são úteis à firma e são mantidas pelo princípio do "vive e deixa viver", que não é um mau princípio, acho eu, como as coisas estão, apesar da Charity Organization Society.

A firma tem, naturalmente, um certo capital de maneio, cerca de £1500, o que é muito pouco para o movimento de mercadorias: isto nominalmente é meu, mas claro que eu não posso tocar-lhe enquanto a firma estiver activa, e se a firma fechasse duvido que se conseguisse obter mais do que o necessário para pagar as dívidas, porque as mercadorias vendem-se sempre por menos do que o seu valor nas vendas forçadas [...]

6.- Letters: Kelmscott Manor Agosto 1895 (para Georgiana Burne-Jones)

[...] Foi uma tarde maravilhosa quando vim até aqui, já estava a contar gozar a viagem de Oxford até Lechdale, e assim foi; mas – ai de mim! – quando passámos por aquele encantador jardinzinho perto de Black Bourton, vi todos os meus piores receios realizados; pois ali estava o pequeno celeiro que nós vimos a ser consertado, com a parede deitada abaixo e acabado com um telhado de ferro zincado. Fiquei doente quando o vi. É assim que as coisas estão a ir agora. Dentro de vinte anos tudo terá desaparecido desta paisagem, que há vinte anos era tão rica em belas construções: e nós não podemos fazer nada para ajudar ou corrigir isso. Entretanto eu não posso fazer mais nada se não um pouquinho de "Anti-Scrape"[2] – doce para os olhos quando visto. Agora que eu já cheguei a velho e vi que nada se pode fazer, quase desejo nunca ter nascido com o sentido do romance e da beleza nesta desgraçada era [...]

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[2] "Scrape" era para Morris a designação abreviada da Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

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Nota Explicativa

William Morris foi toda a vida um visionário e um utopista, perseguidor de sonhos e projectos tendentes a assegurarem beleza e bem estar para todos. Sempre se adaptou mal às condições discriminatórias existentes na sociedade do seu tempo, trabalhando incansavelmente para as modificar. Conforme Gillian Naylor lembra, "he was a man at odds with his own times, his own class, and his own conscience, and he was determined to do something about it" (Naylor: 15)[3] O próprio William Morris se referiu mais de uma vez, nos seus escritos, à sua aspiração de fomentar e ajudar a criar uma sociedade mais igualitária, em que todos pudessem usufruir dos mais altos benefícios da civilização. Nas suas palavras: "What business have we with art at all unless all can share it?" A par desta convicção, ele preconizava a aproximação à natureza, a sua preservação, o cultivo de gostos simples e comunitários, como os que encontrava nas descrições da Idade Média. Nelas também o fascinava o facto de cada artesão poder acompanhar a manufactura de cada produto do seu trabalho desde o início até ao objecto completo, que ele considerava muito mais humana e digna do que a produção em série trazida pela revolução industrial.

Sendo um infatigável lutador pelos seus ideais, Morris embarcou sucessivamente em iniciativas nobres mas pouco realistas, destinadas a trazerem-lhe desilusões sucessivas, que se vão notando nos seus escritos de toda a ordem. No entanto, essas desilusões nunca o levaram a desistir dos seus esforços altruístas. Cada sonho que morria era sucedido por um outro novo, pois a sua confiança nas possibilidades de melhoramento da sociedade e da aproximação a níveis mais igualitários nunca foi por ele posta em causa.

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[3] Gillian Naylor (ed.). *William Morris by Himself: Designs and Writings*. London, Time Warner Books UK, 2004.

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A escolha dos textos acima deveu-se a esta característica ímpar do espírito utópico de Morris. Nenhum dos textos pode ser considerado um genuíno 'documento utópico', mas as expressões utilizadas, as convicções expressas e os sentimentos desvelados deixam vislumbrar uma vida toda consagrada a ideais utópicos, perseguidos incansavelmente, sucedendo-se uns aos outros ou vários concomitantemente. Embora a expressão máxima destes ideais esteja concentrada no seu livro *News from Nowhere*, publicado poucos anos antes da sua morte, eles não se confinaram apenas à literatura. Morris acarinhou, aprendeu e praticou todas as artes, particularmente as consideradas menores, 'the lesser arts', que ele elevou a uma excelência e dignidade nunca antes atingidas no seu século. Isto pode ser detectado nos excertos escolhidos, assim como o seu empenhamento nos muito concretos campos político e social, onde o seu dinheiro e os seus esforços conseguiram resultados visíveis, embora, infelizmente, muitas vezes efémeros ou rapidamente contaminados por interesses que lhe eram alheios.

A personalidade de William Morris pode contar-se entre as mais nobres e excepcionais de todos os tempos, e os seus ideais, por mais utópicos que se revelassem, podem servir de exemplo às aspirações de qualquer sociedade.

"Getting at the same thing from different angles": Hemingway e o Modernismo
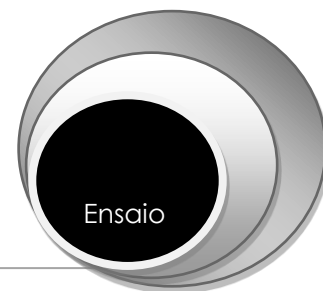
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"The year 1912 was really an extraordinary year, in America as well as Europe", escreveu o romancista, dramaturgo e crítico literário Floyd Dell, editor da publicação radical *The Masses*: "In the arts it marked a new era . . . It was then plans were made   for the Post-Impressionist [Armory] Show, which revolutionized American ideas of art . . .One could go on with evidence of a New Spirit come suddenly to birth in America" (qtd in Trachtenberg, *Critics of Culture* 4). Pareciam não restar dúvidas quanto à circunstância de, algures entre 1912 e 1914, as artes na América estarem a sofrer profundas transformações. E os grandes conseguimentos que estavam a reconfigurar o panorama artístico da Europa começavam a desembocar nos Estados Unidos.

Entre 1912, quando Harriet Monroe publicou em Chicago a sua nova e influente revista *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, e 1914, quando *The Egoist* foi dado à estampa, quando o Vorticismo conduziu à produção de *Blast* e Margaret Anderson fundou em Chicago *The Little Review*, o jovem Ernest Hemingway começava a sua educação escolar em Oak Park, um subúrbio da grande metrópole do estado de Illinois, numa altura em que Mable Dodge Luhan, protectora das artes, proclamava: "It now seems as though everywhere, in that year of 1913, barriers went down and people reached each other who had never been in touch before . . . The new spirit was abroad and swept us all together" (qtd in Shor 87). Oak Park e os seus cidadãos viviam separados de Chicago e do

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resto do mundo, bem como de toda a efervescência artística da América e da Europa.

Com a possível excepção da autobiografia de Benjamin Franklin, escassas eram as obras de autores americanos no liceu de Oak Park. Predominavam as obras de Literatura Inglesa e qualquer curso formal sobre Literatura Americana era uma inexistência no currículo da instituição. Mais tarde, depois de um período de aprendizagem jornalística, Hemingway foi exposto à obscenidade da guerra e a manifestações sem precedentes de devastação e caos. O fenómeno bélico provocou, na brutalidade das suas manifestações e consequências, um profundo abalo na consciência literária americana. Tal facto é tanto mais verdadeiro quanto é certo que muitos daqueles talentos literários que se começam a impor nos anos vinte, ou experimentaram directamente a violência e a irracionalidade daquele conflito – John Dos Passos, e.e. cummings, Hemungway – ou ficaram pelo conhecimento dos meandros da instituição militar – F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner. Instituindo-se como presença exaustiva das inflexões da modernização, a 1ª Guerra Mundial representou o excesso de hostilidade no limite do insustentável, concentrando em si e na exposição do negativo a imagem desoladora de um mundo fragmentário e incoerente, "nunca antes" invadido por um tão alto grau de desfiguração:

> Daring as never before, wastage as never before,
>
> Young blood and high blood,
>
> fair cheeks, and fine bodies;
>
> fortitude as never before
>
> frankness as never before,
>
> disillusions as never told in the old days,
>
> hysterias, trench confessions,
>
> laughter out of dead bellies (Pound 64).

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A Grande Guerra, não se manifestando propriamente como uma inspiração central do modernismo – movimento já florescente nos anos anteriores a 1914 -, foi detonador inequívoco da crispação entre arte e caos e um culminar de negatividade que encontraria resposta na sensibilidade modernista que se prolongaria para o pós-guerra.

Quando, seguindo o conselho de Sherwood Anderson, Hemingway viajou para Paris em 1921, conviveu com um grupo de expatriados, incluindo Gertrude Stein e Ezra Pound, e com um grupo de artistas e escritores com quem aprendeu a 'to make it new'. Durante a sua estada em Paris. Hemingway envolveu-se profundamente com a sua geração literária e com o seu tempo. Significativamente, *In Our Time* viria a ser o título do volume contendo os seus primeiros contos, escritos em vénia ao Anderson de *Winesburg, Ohio* e ao Joyce de *Dubliners*, e nos quais deu corpo a um novo estilo de ficção. Trata-se da primeira obra hemingwayana de referência e ponto alto do seu experimentalismo. Em "Out of Season", um conto com três personagens principais – um velho e um casal desavindo – o marido diz à mulher:

> "I'm sorry you feel so rotten, Tiny," he said. "I'm sorry I talked the way I did at lunch. We were both *getting at the same thing from different angles*."
> "It doesn't make any difference," she said. "None of it makes any difference"
> (Hemingway, "Out of Season" 99, itálico meu).

Para Hemingway, o futuro escritor, "getting at the same thing from different angles" fez toda a diferença. Fez dele um modernista.

O primeiro conflito mundial do século XX viria a alterar profundamente a mundivisão hemingwayana. Em Maio de 1918, Hemingway era um jovem ansiosamente idealista e expectante da honra e glória que vivia o seu primeiro e fugaz momento de Paris. Para quem, após juvenis incursões no campo de uma

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escrita jornalística ou de uma escrita ficcional imitativa de Ring Lardner (iniciadas em 1916 no semanário e na revista literária do liceu de Oak Park, respectivamente *The Trapeze* e *Tabula*), apenas tivera uma breve aprendizagem jornalística no *Kansas City Star*, Paris representava naquele momento apenas o espaço físico de passagem para a frente italiana de combate e não o espaço mítico da vertigem artística e da excitação intelectual: qualquer manifestação do modernismo estava completamente ausente das possibilidades culturais e da bagagem de interesses do jovem Hemingway. Do que agora se tratava era de dar corpo a uma outra potencialidade mítica que, nos primórdios do século XX americano, ecoava na retórica da coragem perante a morte tal como era exaltada pelo reverendo William E. Barton, no triunfalismo heróico da excelência física e moral de que Theodore Roosevelt era lenda viva e, obviamente, no fraseado oficial de que   Woodrow Wilson, com a sua propaganda da guerra, era expoente máximo. Estes estímulos, a par das leituras hemingwayanas coincidentes com esse tempo – Frederick Marryat, Kipling, Horace Walpole, Horatio Alger e a previsibilidade de sucesso dos seus heróis – ajudarão a delinear as pulsões vitais que levaram Hemingway ao abandono do conforto elemental do norte do Michigan e da segurança protectora de Oak Park, bem como da sua mediania baça.

Para a maioria dos jovens americanos que atravessaram o Atlântico, o empolgamento que o espírito de uma revitalizada cruzada despertava fizeram associar o evoluir do acto bélico à progressão de um jogo. Michael Reynols contextualiza esse estado de espírito: "With the frontier gone, with the Indians tamed or buried, American games became the new proving ground. Hemingway's generation came of age with a new definition for manhood: a man must excel in competitive sports" (Reynolds 26). Daí que não surpreenda a retrospectiva confissão de Hemingway: "I was an awful dope when I went to the

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last war. I can remember just thinking that we were the home team and the Austrians were the visiting team" (*Men At War* 8).

Mas seria em 1918, com o seu ferimento em Fossalta di Piave, que a guerra lhe pareceu atingir o cume da perversidade e da obscenidade. O retorno à América e a Oak Park, em Janeiro de 1919, foi o embate com um mundo pré-modernização. A reassumida opção pela escrita jornalística – no *Toronto Star Weekly*, no *Co-operative Commonwealth* e, acima de todos, no *Toronto Daily Star* (publicação que, ao nomeá-lo seu correspondente na Europa irá servir de trampolim e de suporte financeiro para a sua arrancada em Paris) -, para além de lhe proporcionar um privilegiado ponto de observação da cena americana, permitia-lhe o retomar da continuidade de uma prática de escrita já patenteada nos anos anteriores à guerra. Por outro lado, o fermento da expatriação insinuava-se entre todos quantos se mostravam em conflito com os tentáculos do materialismo desenfreado da América e com o correspondente deserto cultural e literário. Quando, em Dezembro de 1921, concretiza a sugestão avisada de Sherwood Anderson e se instala em Paris para aprender a redistribuir o real pelas palavras, Hemingway vai fundamentalmente iniciar o diálogo com um novo espaço – "a last preserve of imagination, homeland of genius" (Wasserstrom 145) -, que em breve se tornará o núcleo por excelência da expressão literária americana.

A revisitação de Paris foi o fascínio da descoberta dessa "glamorous, legendary, Arcadia for postwar disillusionment" (Wickes 7) que Montparnasse representava e cujos cafés (*Dôme*, *Rotonde*, *Select*) constituíam, no dizer de Malcolm Cowley, "the heart and nervous system of the American literary colony" (57). Essa vivência parisiense do escritor em formação representou também o contacto com uma geração anterior de modernistas (Henry James, T. S. Eliot, Pound, Stein) mas fundamentalmente o compromisso com a festiva mobilidade artística de Paris. É aqui que uma geração – tradicional e erradamente

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considerada como "perdida" mas essencialmente insatisfeita – se lança em novas formas de interpretação e de nomeação artística. Paris foi também o encorajante convívio na *Shakespeare and Company* de Sylvia Beach – "Between 1919 and 1941 it was the American writer's club" (Wickes 187) -, onde encontra, entre outros, Pound e Joyce. Paris foi ainda o aceder ao sopro da iniciação com Stein, foi o contacto com a pintura impressionista e com o pós-impressionismo de Paul Cézanne, foi o sentir do voluntarismo do discurso modernista do pós-guerra e o estar no espaço de gestação desse mesmo modernismo. Tratava-se de um discurso que exigia um modo novo de ver o real e que, concomitantemente, advogava a eliminação da abstracção enquanto agente falsificador desse mesmo real.

A aprendizagem em Paris começou por ser, essencialmente, uma obsessão com o processo de *escrita* e não com a procura de *assunto.* Um passo inicial e decisivo veio de um ensinamento de Gertrude Stein: "If you keep on doing newspaper work you will never see things, you will only see words and that will not do, that is of course if you intend to be a writer" (213). Esta urgência em disciplinar o acto de ver assinalava os primórdios de uma técnica que irá organizar o texto hemingwayano em função de um lugar retórico que é o do olhar. Tanto na curvatura que ao longo de toda a sua obra se detecta como na sua prosa não-ficcional, o olhar, também lugar do saber, irá marcar presença saliente no contexto de uma estética dos sentidos de que Hemingway se fez oráculo. Mas o fulcro da questão residia nos modos de apropriação e recomposição do real visto, na transposição do olhar para a escrita que o fixa ou, segundo Gertrude Stein, na descoberta da relação entre "vision and the way it gets down" (214). A auscultação coercível ao real, assente numa espécie de resíduo de energia que a palavra mantém mesmo quando desligada do seu valor conceptual, surge impregnada por uma subjacente estrutura formal do vernáculo que Stein igualmente ajudara a valorizar. É no encontro com tais evidências que

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Hemingway se liberta da cadência e da temporalidade jornalísticas e define as potencialidades dimensionais do seu próprio olhar e estilo.

Em 1935, num passo abundantemente citado de uma das suas obras de não-ficção - *Green Hills of Africa* - Hemingway daria voz a um dos seus frequentes juízos literários: "All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*" (26). A câmara de eco que Hemingway encontra em Twain tem a ver com a objectividade descritiva do romance, com a autenticidade das emoções da personagem Huck Finn, impondo-se, na sua dimensão essencial, pela recriação peculiar de uma linguagem despida de artificialismos, uma linguagem coloquial, vernácula, "unliterary", o discurso de personagens "unsivilized". Hemingway colocava desde modo o escritor clássico do século XIX à frente do seu tempo, antecipando aquela rejeição das convenções e mudanças radicais que o modernismo viria a assumir. Contudo, Harold Bloom afirmou a propósito de Hemingway: "[H]is peculiar excellence is closer to Whitman than to Twain, closer to Stevens than to Faulkner . . . He is an elegiac poet who mourns the self, who celebrates the self (rather less effectively) and who suffers divisions in the self" (1, 2) . Walt Whitman, o bardo da América e o profeta do novo – considere-se, a título de exemplo, "To a Locomotive in Winter" e "Years of the Modern" – impunha-se como presença e desafio aos praticantes do modernismo. Como afirma Alan Trachtenberg: "Modernism emerged in America and shaped itself at least in part as a diverse collective response to Whitman's call" ("Walt Whitman: Precipitant of the Modern" 197).

Por outro lado, o modernista Wallace Stevens considerava Hemingway "the most significant of living poets, so far as the subject of EXTRAORDINARY REALITY is concerned" (412), sublinhando desse modo o magistral uso hemingwayano de imagens poéticas na sua linguagem para transmitir as emoções e a condição mais íntima e extrema das suas personagens. Se é certo que Stein instava Hemingway a utilizar a repetição na sua escrita (como ela

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própria praticava nos seus textos cubistas sobre Picasso e Cézanne), foi Pound, o poeta imagista, quem mais convincentemente educou Hemingway em termos de elementos visuais e de economia de linguagem. Um exemplo muito citado é o clássico *dictum* hemingwayano de influência poundiana: "Prose is architecture, not interior decoration; and the Baroque is over" (*Death in the Afternoon* 181-2). Num outro registo, Nicholas Joost afirma: "Hemingway's achieved hard 'stripped' manner is the manner of an Imagist in prose" (48).

Uma estreita dependência literária em relação a Pound, de 1922 a 1924, permite que os ecos do imagismo poundiano pareçam dar um novo sentido às digressões de Stein, ao rigor da palavra, à apologia da meticulosidade, à direcção adequada do olhar. A particular importância dada por Pound, com especial incidência nos primeiros anos da década de 20, a uma corrente da tradição literária francesa sediada em Flaubert e na sua defesa de *le mot juste* e da disciplina artística – postulados que, de resto, terão influenciado a própria Gertrude Stein – ganha um estatuto de obstinada precisão e subtil dominância na sua aplicação à arquitectura de escrita de Hemingway, como este irá reconhecer: "[H]ere was the man I liked and trusted the most as a critic then, the man who believed in the *mot juste* – the one and only correct word to use – the man who had taught me to distrust adjectives as I would later learn to distrust certain people in certain given situations" (*A Moveable Feast* 102). Tendo estabelecido como dificuldade máxima "to put down what really happened in action; what the actual things were which produced the emotion that you experienced" (*Death in the Afternoon* 2), a insistência na palavra exacta impunha-se a Hemingway como medida eficaz na depuração da sua escrita, a qual ele ansiava ver a contornar o espaço jornalístico onde ela predominantemente se exercera e a caminho de uma outra prosa "much more difficult than poetry. It is a prose that has never been written. But it can be

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written, without tricks and without cheating. With nothing that will go bad afterwards" (*Green Hills of Africa* 27).

Para se atingir tal marca, o narrador de *Green Hills of Africa* estabelece que, entre outros factores, tem de haver disciplina, a disciplina de Flaubert. E a recorrente apetência hemingwayana pelo pódio literário irá manifestar-se na convicção de que, tal como William Faulkner, irá superar Flaubert, o mestre. Os pontos de perspectiva de Pound, expressos inicialmente no contexto do imagismo e posteriormente adoptados no aconselhamento a Hemingway, possibilitam a este uma inovadora percepção dos novos paradigmas do olhar e da integração destes no tecido da escrita. O efeito acumulado dos momentos da lição poundiana traduziu-se inicialmente numa escrita minimal, denotativa, cuja escassez é procurada no carácter severo da experimentação de meios e num esforço de rarefacção do real. Os contos e poemas de *Three Stories and Ten Poems*, os contos e os "quadros" intermédios de *In Our Time*, os motivos de paródia em *The Torrents of Spring*, o pulsar do concreto em *The Sun Also Rises* e os contos de *Men Without Women* apontam no sentido de uma estética que, pela sua tentativa de concentração no real mínimo, se situa nos limites do silêncio. Para a geração do pós-guerra, os pressupostos de Pound aparecem como uma conveniente autoridade teórica propulsora da liquidação da abstracção, entendida esta como índice de refracção que se instala entre o homem e o real e cuja inépcia procede à deformação desse mesmo real.

Imbuído das tendências dominantes do tempo em que iniciou a sua aprendizagem e prática de escrita, Hemingway sintetiza a noção de abstracção como impostura instalada no cerne do real num passo da sua ficção que foi sintomaticamente considerado como "the great statement against the butchery of the First World War", mas também " a kind of manifesto of modern literature" (Barrett 45):

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I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of the places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete name of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates" (*A Farewell to Arms* 143-4).

O passo em questão é, antes de mais, um dos mais evidentes exemplos da latente obliquidade hemingwayana nas relações entre o acto de fazer literatura e o de a tomar como objecto de reflexão. Frederic Henry, a personagem que dá voz ao protesto, rejeita "glória", "honra", "sacrifício" no mesmo contexto em que não subtrai uma outra abstracção: "dignidade": "'dignity' may be a less tainted abstraction than 'glory', but it is nevertheless an abstraction. Furthermore, the names and numbers of villages and roads, rivers and regiments, are not 'the thing itself'; they are abstractions" (Broughton 18).

No que tange a esta difícil aprendizagem da palavra, Hemingway vai apropriar-se dos postulados de Pound, ao mesmo tempo que é tocado pelo fascínio do património parisiense das artes plásticas, especialmente pela pintura de Cézanne. As provas de voluntária filiação são explícitas: " I was learning something from the painting of Cézanne that made writing simple true sentences far from enough to make the stories have the dimensions that I was trying to put in them. I was learning very much from him but I was not articulate enough to explain it to anyone. Besides it was a secret" (*A Moveable Feast* 23). Hemingway encontrou em Cézanne uma mesma predisposição para confiar na intensidade

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do olhar e na sua harmonização com os outros sentidos, ao mesmo tempo que se deixava fascinar pelo entretecimento de forma e cor que se traduzia num equilíbrio coordenado. Este, por seu lado, dependia de uma aguda consciência oficinal que omitia criteriosamente algumas cores, linhas e volumes, que concentravam, nos seus pormenores essenciais, uma parcela valorizada do real observado. Com Stein, Hemingway apercebera-se da relação abstracta entre palavras; das paisagens de Cézanne vê desprender-se o vigor de uma perspectiva que casava o real com a abstracção. Observa Kenneth Johnston: "The oblique rendering of more than meets the eye; the repetition of line, color, and motif; the fusion of simplicity and complexity; the union of abstraction and reality; the elimination of non-essential details – the 'secret' of Cézanne may also be discovered in Hemingway's landscapes" (30). É este desvio em relação a um realismo fotográfico que faz com que as paisagens de Hemingway, à semelhança das de Cézanne, tenham a capacidade de exprimir igualmente "inscape, the *Gestalt* or essential form underlying the surface appearance" (Grebstein 164).

Para Hemingway, no contexto modernista de fuga ao caos, de procura da essência dos seres e das coisas, de atitude crítica em relação ao mundo, a eficácia geometrizante das novas práticas artísticas constituía uma estratégia depurada na elaboração profunda da sua escrita, não imediatamente perceptível na simplicidade superficial do seu texto. Jornalismo, Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Paul Cézanne são alguns dos "diferentes ângulos" através dos quais se estribam as escalas de uma peregrinação pela almejada verdade do real finito e pelo investimento prolongado na escrita, bem como no tempo e memória que fazem o escritor. Os contornos do modernismo emergem implícita e significativamente nos anos de Paris como formulação operativa de transfigurações que anexam um mundo invisível ao mundo visível, por forma a que cada parcela do real participe numa significado universal e se exponha ao infinito da alteridade. Assim é que a ficção hemingwayana se decide entre a fidelidade às contradições da

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fenomenologia dos sentidos e uma espécie de dobra interior que, concomitantemente, acoita a virtualidade de outros sentidos. Aqueles sentidos radicalmente novos que a literatura modernista constrói nas suas invenções formais em resposta a um mundo absurdo, vazio, fragmentado. E que chegam a atingir um conseguimento cimeiro na escrita de Ernest Hemingway.

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Metaphor, Narrative and Reality in the Life Sciences

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Introduction

In our daily lives, we take the reality of our world, both the social and physical dimensions, very much for granted. Most people understand reality to mean the sum of the things we see around us – the trees, animals, planets, people and so on. What we might call our external reality. We might also include some more abstract ideas such as space and time. When we wake in the morning, we expect the sun to rise, and we assume that what we experience everyday exists independently of our ability to conceive it or form theories about it. As Lorenz states:

> What causes us to believe in the reality of things is in the last analysis the constancy with which certain external impressions recur in our experience, always simultaneously and always in the same regular pattern, irrespective of variations in external conditions or in our psychological disposition. (Behind the Mirror 3)

Scientific laws help explain such consistencies through concepts such as 'cause and effect'. The sun will rise in the same place tomorrow because science has shown us that the earth rotates on its axis as it moves around the sun and we believe scientists when they tell us that objects in our physical world are made up of tiny particles which we cannot see, like atoms, molecules and electrons. Furthermore, we believe that such scientific theories are constantly being refined to bring us closer to a better understanding of our world and how it really functions.

But are we being somewhat naive in this view of reality? Great philosophers have puzzled over the nature of reality for centuries. The Greek

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philosopher Plato proposed that our perception of an object is merely a shadow of the true object, and that we can never hope to perceive reality because the 'things in themselves' exist in a perfect world of ideas, which is outside our ability to perceive. Conversely, Aristotle believed that we perceive objects in the natural world, and then form abstractions and ideas about them in our mind. Throughout the ages philosophers such as Descartes, Berkeley, Hume and Kant have all pondered the true nature of reality (Baggott 69-98). More recently, research carried out by quantum physicists has called into question the nature of reality once more. This research has revealed that particles at the quantum level behave in inexplicable ways. Particles such as photons are capable of being in two places at the same time and can behave as both particles and waves depending on what type of measurement scientists decide to make (Penrose 35), and modern physics seems incapable of explaining why the theories of Newton and Einstein, which are so accurate at describing our physical world, simply do not apply at the quantum level. The "Copenhagen Interpretation" is the name given to the interpretation of the relationship between quantum theory and physical reality by Danish physicist Niels Bohr and colleagues. This insists that the properties of particles like photons do not exist unless they are exposed to something with which they can interact, such as a measuring device, and that we can never discover the true nature of physical objects. This has led modern day philosophers speculate that "there is no ultimate theory that captures reality… because there is no true image of reality as such, but only reality under a certain description in a determinate conceptual framework" (Alves 365).

The Role of the Language of Metaphor and Narrative in Reality

How does language relate to reality? Bohm suggests that knowledge is "the ground both of reality and the knowledge of this reality" and that all knowledge is "produced, displayed, communicated, transformed and applied in thought"

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(63-64).   Hopp argues that the division between language and thought is mistaken, as "both are in reality two aspects of one and the same thing (qtd. in Lorenz, Behind the Mirror 183).   In this way language and our knowledge of reality are inextricably interwoven. Indeed, Bohm is so convinced that the subject-verb-object structure of language is responsible for our view of the world, with each subject being considered a separate entity that he proposes a new form of language, the rheomode, in which a basic role is given to the verb rather than the noun. This, he proposes, would change our world view from one of fragmentation to one of flow, where actions merge into one another in an unbroken movement of existence, which he believes is the true nature of reality (37).

Here, several aspects of language and reality in relation to the life sciences will be addressed. The first of these is the use of metaphor which Lakoff believes is the principle mechanism through which we understand abstract ideas and carry out abstract thought (244). In this way we use metaphor in our speech to describe what happens in our world and to reflect our world views. Then, how narratives act as codes through which messages about our "shared reality" (White 6) can be transmitted will be examined.   This relationship between metaphor, narrative and reality will be exemplified using ideas from the life sciences. Firstly, metaphors in the area of microbiology and genetics will be explored, and the wisdom of using metaphor to express our theories about science will be discussed.   Then, the use of narrative in science will be considered, and some historical accounts of disease and their relationship to reality discussed.

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METAPHOR AND THOUGHT

Aristotle defined metaphor as "… giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species or from species to genus". (qtd. in Ricoeur 13).This classical theory assumed that metaphor was confined to poetic language where "one or more words for a concept are used outside of their normal conventional meaning to express a 'similar' concept" and that everyday language had no metaphor (Lakoff 202). However, Reddy (322) showed that everyday English was predominantly metaphorical and that metaphor was conceptual rather than linguistic in nature. The word metaphor is now used to mean a "cross-domain mapping in the conceptual system" which involves "understanding one domain of experience…in terms of a very different domain of experience" (Lakoff 206). Metaphors are therefore a way of helping us to understand abstract or unstructured ideas in terms of more structured, concrete concepts, and Lakoff (204-205) believes that the discovery of a "huge system of everyday, conventional, conceptual metaphors" reveals that it is metaphor that structures our everyday conceptual system, and that when talking of abstractions or emotions "metaphorical understanding is the norm". As an illustration of this he gives many examples of how metaphor is used to convey more abstract ideas of time, state, causation, action, purpose and means through more familiar concepts such as motion, entities and locations (Lakoff 220-224).

He gives the example of love being conceptualized as a journey in expressions such as "our relationship has hit a dead-end street" or "look how far we've come" (206). Here, he talks of the metaphor as being a mapping from the source domain, which in this case is journeys, to the target domain, here, love. Lakoff describes the correspondences that characterize the LOVE-AS-A JOURNEY MAPPING as, "the lovers correspond to *travellers*, the love relationship corresponds to *the vehicle*, the lovers' common goals correspond to their

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common *destinations* on the journey, difficulties… correspond to *impediments to travel*" (207).

Metaphors in Science

Being a means of conveying abstract ideas, metaphor plays an important role in scientific discourse, and scientists use metaphor to help convey their world view of reality (Hoffman 393). One example of this would be the metaphor used to explain how genetic information contained in the deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) molecule can be 'read' and its message transformed into 'information' which is then used by the organism. In this process, the segment of DNA that contains information in sequences of chemicals known as nucleotides is called a gene. Each gene contains the information to create a protein. Proteins, to use another metaphor, are often referred to as cellular building blocks, as they are necessary components in all cells. In this protein making process, a chemical known as an enzyme binds to one strand of the DNA double helix. This enzyme moves along the DNA producing a strand of RNA (ribonucleic acid) which is complementary to the DNA strand and is known as messenger RNA (mRNA). This process stops when the enzyme reaches a sequence which signals the end of the gene. This complementary copy of the DNA is then transferred from the nucleus to another part of the cell where the corresponding protein is made in structures called ribosomes (Pelczar, Chan and Krieg 355-359).

Here, it would appear that a metaphor to describe this process could be, THE GENETIC CODE IS A TEXT. Here, the source domain is a text, the target domain is the genetic code, or DNA, and the correspondences which characterize the mapping are:

The 4 nucleotides which make up DNA are represented as *letters (*A, T, G and C, which stand for adenosine, thymine, guanine and cytosine). Groupings of these nucleotides into genes correspond to *messages*. Copying the information on the

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DNA onto the mRNA corresponds to *transcription*. The process by which the information on the mRNA is used to make proteins corresponds to *translation* (Pelczar, Chan and Krieg 355).

This metaphor is realised by using vocabulary associated with reading texts to talk about the transformation of DNA into protein. For example, transcription, which would normally be associated with copying texts, is used to refer to the process of copying the DNA. Similarly the process of transforming DNA into a protein is known as translation, which most commonly refers to communicating the meaning in one language text to an equivalent meaning in another language text.

A further analogy could be made between the way the mRNA molecule carries the message to the ribosome where processing takes place and proteins are formed, and the process of reading. Here the mRNA is analogous to the optic nerve transmitting an electrical signal produced when light enters the retina while reading. The ribosome, where the protein is made, is analogous to the brain where the electrical signals are transformed into images. In addition, it could be suggested that in the same way as the literary work is created through an interaction between the text itself and reaction of the reader to the text (Iser 281), so the individual is a product not only of the genetic text but also of his or her personal experiences in the world.

Other metaphors which could be applied in biology are that of THE BODY IS AN ENVIRONMENT and INFECTION IS WAR. The first of these metaphors can be understood as a mapping from the source domain, an environment, to the target domain, the body. Here, the organisms generally found in the healthy human body correspond to *residents*. These indigenous microorganisms, which under normal circumstances do not cause disease, correspond to the *normal flora*. Particular areas where organisms grow correspond to *ecologic niches* in the human body. Growth of pathogens i.e. organisms which cause disease after

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removal of the normal flora through, for example, antibiotic treatment corresponds to *colonisation* by pathogens, resulting in disease (Pelczar, Chan and Krieg 454-470).

In the INFECTION IS WAR metaphor infection by a microorganism corresponds to an *invasion* or *attack*, which the host organism tries to *resist* or *combat***.**   External defence mechanisms, for example, the skin, correspond to *barriers***.** The initial response of the body corresponds to the *mobilisation of an array of defence mechanisms* against the invasion. The function of lymphocytes, a type of white blood, corresponds to the *killing* of undesirable cells by *punching holes* in their membranes. Defence equipment of cells corresponds to an *arsenal* of antimicrobial substances. Initially the body uses nonspecific mechanisms but these are replaced by mechanisms of specific immunity which correspond to *reinforcements***.**   The recovery of tissues which suffered breakdown after infection corresponds to *rebuilding* or *repairing***.**   Unsuccessful resistance corresponds to *death.* (Pelczar, Chan and Krieg 475-495).It is interesting to speculate that these last two metaphors could result from the use in the biological sciences of an explanatory framework based on the Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest. Here man is locked in a constant struggle for survival in a world full of microorganisms, with the ultimate winner being the one which has best evolved to suit its environment.

Metaphor and Reality

Although some scientists are against the use of metaphors in theory, most are favourable. Indeed the physicist James Clark Maxwell stated that metaphors are not only "legitimate products of science, but capable of generating science in turn" (qtd. in Hoffman 396). Merleau-Ponty (88) exemplifies our necessity to put our ideas into words, and in this way clarify them suggesting that "there is a 'languagely' meaning of language which effects the mediation between my as yet

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unspeaking intention and words and in such a way that my spoken words surprise me myself and teach me my thought".

However, we should perhaps be wary of accepting the metaphors we create to explain our world view, the phrase Bohm (xi-xii) uses to describe our "general notions concerning the nature of reality". Shotter (88) suggests that ways of talking fundamentally influence what we can 'see' in the world and Wittgenstein similarly refers to how the language we use might portray an erroneous image of the world when he says "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably" (qtd. in Shotter 79). Such talk of pictures, world views, images and our ability to 'see' the world would lead us to believe our sight and mental images are of utmost importance in our perception and understanding of the world. Indeed the English word *theory* has its roots in the Greek word meaning *spectator.* However, Rorty warns that "it is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions" (12) suggesting that our philosophical enquiries into our reality are shaped by visual or reflecting metaphors rather than the nature of our mental activities themselves. He goes so far as to say that if we desire to change our perception of the world, "we have to get the visual, and in particular the mirroring metaphors out of our speech altogether" (Rorty 371).   Indeed, in recent years quantum mechanics has made us consider carefully how, simply by the act of observation, we can change that which is being observed. Alves (386-387) states that all reality is submitted to interaction with a measuring device, be this a type of machine or our eye, and that this disturbs the knowledge acquired. He further states that the measuring apparatus itself produces phenomena of a special kind depending on the parameters used in the measurement, and that properties of physical systems result from interactions between the systems themselves and the apparatus. He suggests that the idea that things are not

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altered by our visualisation of it is a *fiction*, which he describes as being "a rather useful device to deal with complex realities in the absence of a true knowledge or a sound theory about its nature" (Alves 381). The Greek root of the English word fiction is *fingō*, which means 'to invent,' and over time, man has invented stories, or narratives to transmit messages about "the nature of a shared reality" (White 6). Let us now turn our attention to narrative and reality.

NARRATIVE AND REALITY

> Narrative is a primary cognitive instrument – an instrument rivalled, in fact, only by theory and metaphor as irreducible ways of making the flux of experience comprehensible (Mink, 132).

As Mink states, the temptation to make sense of our activities and those of others by reconceptualising them within an ordered, coherent text of our own is very great. White suggests that narrative is "a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted (White 6). Furthermore Scholes (207) claims that humans love telling stories and that "our need for chronological and causal connections defines and limits all of us – helps to make us what we are." White also claims that narratives not only represent events occurring in chronological order, but that they transmit meaning (9).

Narrative and Science

The fact that narratives transmit meaning explains why they have been used by scientists to transmit their theories. Landau (262), points out that, "any set of events than can be arranged into a sequence and related can also be narrated" and remarks that scientists may often not realise "the extent to which they use narrative in their thinking and in communicating their ideas" (264-265). She

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explains how Propp identified thirty one actions, or functions, which were constant elements of the fairy tale. For example, the hero may "build a castle to pass a test, protect himself or celebrate his marriage", (qtd. in Landau 263). Propp further suggests that narrative can be represented as a string of such functions and that all stories can be described as variations of this deeper structure (qtd. in Landau 22). In addition, Landau (264) claims that that various writers on the subject of human evolution have proposed a series of events to describe man's transition from tree dwellers to civilised moral beings which reflects these events, common in fairy tales. In this scientific narrative, our human ancestor, the hero of the story, is portrayed as a humble tree dweller, who either through choice or necessity departs his home (the trees), and starts on an adventurous journey by becoming bipedal. He then moves to a new realm where he must survive a series of tests in the form of harsh climate or predators. However, through his special gift of intelligence man finally triumphs and rules his domain. Although it would seem highly unlikely that anthropologists would deliberately try to fit theories of human evolution into a narrative framework, Barthes (79) notes that narrative "is simply there like life itself… international, transhistorical, transcultural", and for this reason, it may be impossible to present scientific theories as anything but narrative.

Historical Accounts of Disease: Fact of fiction?

It would seem reasonable to suggest that man has always 'invented stories' to explain the unknown. Historically, scholars speculated over the origin of living organisms and believed that they could develop spontaneously from non-living matter. This theory was only discredited in the 15th century, and it was only in the 17th century that the role of microorganism in disease was proved. Before this, disease was believed to be caused by "an imbalance between the four humours (blood, phlegm, yellow bile [choler] and black bile [melancholy]",

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supernatural forces, or poisonous vapours (Prescott, Harley and Klein 8). Bubonic plague, which ravaged Europe for the first time in 1347/48 after it had been introduced into Europe via infected black rats carried on boats with returning crusaders, is caused by the bacterium *Yersinia pestis.* The resulting pandemic, known as the Black Death, was responsible for the death of about a quarter of the population of Europe (Cruickshank *et al.* 357). However, due to ignorance of this mode of infection, Jews throughout Europe were accused of starting the disease by poisoning streams, wells and food during the period of 1348 to 1351, and were "exterminated em masse" (Cohn 4).

White examines the value of narrative in the history of historical writing, of which there are three basic types, the annals, the chronicles and the "history proper" (9), and asks how we find the true story behind historical records. In annals, events are ordered in chronological order, but no attempt is made to structure these events to give them an order of meaning, nor do annals possess a central subject, beginning, recognizable end or presence of a social system (11-14). A chronicle, on the other hand is a narrative and "…has a central subject… a proper geographical centre… a proper social centre…a proper beginning in time" although the order of events is still chronological and it simply ends, without concluding (20-21). However, White (20) warns that the chronicle is marked by a "desire for a kind of order and fullness in an account of reality that remains theoretically unjustified" and that the impulse to narrate could be a result of a wish to represent an authority "whose legitimacy hinged upon the establishment of 'facts' that were of a specifically historical order" (22). The manner the story is told is therefore not unbiased and relates tales of particular human communities from a particular point of view, selecting events the writer considers important, but omitting others, and the aim is ultimately "to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine" (18).

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Ergotism and the Finnmark Witch trials

One such narrative is related to witch trials in Northern Norway during the 17th century. This narrative, presented principally in chronicle form, was written by Hans Hanssen Lilienskiold, the district governor, who firmly believed in the reality of witchcraft (Alm 404).It has as its central subject the witch trials, its geographical centre, Finnmark in northern Norway, its social centre, the legal system and court cases against those accused of witchcraft and a proper beginning in time, 1610. This manuscript was written at the time of the witch trials and is largely based on court transcripts with some personal commentary by Lilienskiold, the central authority in the story. It tells of the trials of 137 people, mostly women, 92 of who were sentenced to death by burning or hanging (Alm 405). Those accused confessed under torture of being visited by Satan in the shape of animals and to have the ability to inflict harm on others, especially by causing their limbs to become painful and wither. Others confessed to causing tingling sensations and convulsions in others and to have themselves been bitten by the devil in the fingers, arm or foot. Yet others believed they could fly, some became so deranged they believed they were in hell, and some were involved in the deaths of others (Alm 409 -411). In this puritanical, protestant society, it is unsurprising that inexplicable behaviour be attributed to the devil, especially when some of those confessed alluded to flying, a skill attributed to witches. Lilienskiold's records show that these accusations started in 1638 and continued till 1692.

One could pose the question as to why such individuals were thought to be witches. Lorenz (On Aggression 84) suggests that all cultures have a normative pattern, and that "man's fidelity to all his traditional customs is caused by creature habit and by animal fear at their infraction". The aberrant behaviour of those accused of witchcraft in Finnmark could only have come about due to this fear of what is different or unknown. This narrative of

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witchcraft told to explain what happened in Finnmark could also be compared to one of the oldest narratives, that of Adam and Eve. In the biblical story, the Devil comes to Eve in the form of a snake and persuades her to eat of the forbidden fruit – an apple from the tree of knowledge. In Lilienskiold's records, mention is made of the Devil in the form of animals such as cats, dogs and birds (Alm 408-409), and the witchcraft, or sin, is consumed in foodstuff. In the Christian biblical story, the devil convinces Eve that if she eats the apple, she will become more God-like with special powers, and in the story of witchcraft, those who have acquired the magic do indeed appear to have special powers to cause illness and even death in others (Alm 409). This combined with the fact that the vast majority of those convicted in the Finnmark trials were women (only 7 from a total of 83 were men, and all but one of these was of a different ethnic origin), could lead us to believe that comparison between events in the 17th century and those in the Bible would lead authorities present at the trial to announce the same fate for those found guilty as was promised for Adam and Eve – death.

However, modern science provides us with another possible explanation for these extraordinary events. Finnmark is situated in the far north of Norway where grain production was very low, and most grain, in the form of rye, was imported. Wild grain was also used in times of hardship (Alm 411-412). However, both these grains are notorious for their susceptibility to infection with *Claviceps purpurea* a fungus which grows on grain, especially rye, during wet seasons. Its growth caused the formation of an ergot, which comes from the old French word for cock's spur, argot (van Dongen and de Groot 109), and which appears as a black spur on the ear of grain. It this was not removed before being eaten, it caused ergot poisoning, which takes two distinct forms, gangrenous and convulsive. This is caused by the production of chemicals known as alkaloids, by the fungus, some of which are very poisonous and others psychoactive. These cause a variety of symptoms such as tingling in the skin, vertigo, headaches,

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muscular contractions, stomach pains, convulsions, and neurological and visual disturbances, often experienced as the sensation of flying (van Dongen and de Groot 111).   Other alkaloids cause vaso-constriction which may eventually lead to gangrene (Alm 404-405). These effects are consistent with the symptoms mentioned by those involved in the Finnmark witch trials, with the withering and eventual loss of limbs being caused   by gangrene. Another reason to believe that ergotism is a plausible explanation for the happenings in Finnmark is that the defendants often mentioned consuming witchcraft in bread, porridge or beer, which could all have been produced with rye infected with *Claviceps.* Indeed many of the statements mention that they consumed food containing something black "the size of a barley grain" which could be the infected ergot. The fact that many other trials were being held throughout Europe during the period of the Finnmark trials (1638 – 1692) in countries such as Germany, France and Switzerland suggests that climatic conditions in Europe could have favoured the growth of the fungus during this period (Alm 414), and a possible reason for the eventual decline in prosecutions after 1672 could be a change in climate after this period. Interestingly ergotism has also been by implicated in the Salem witch trials in the USA, (Alm 404), and could also be a possible explanation for witch trials held in Scotland (Alm 404).

Yet another related 'narrative' is that of the disease known as St Anthony's fire. The convulsive form of ergotism was more common in Norway and other Northern European countries, but the gangrenous form was more common in Southern and Central Europe (Alm 405). The first mention of this type of ergotism can be traced to Germany in 857AD, when Fuchs mentioned that "A great plague of swollen blisters consumed the people by a loathsome rot so that their limbs were loosened and fell off before death" (qtd. in van Dongen and de Groot 110).   As mentioned above, victims of gangrenous ergotism suffered burning pains, especially in the limbs, gangrene and accompanying

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blackening of tissue, and eventual loss of mummified tissues and limbs (Bryden 46). The frequent epidemics of this form of ergotism were known as St. Anthony's Fire, 'Holy Fire' or *Ignis Sacer* because of the intense burning sensation in the limbs, with this 'holy fire' being considered a sign of divine wrath (Bryden, 46). The Catholic church devoted a patron saint, St. Anthony, to those affected, and during the 12th and 13th centuries people flocked to the hospitals of the Antonines where they were treated with cooling elixirs. The fact that many recovered was probably due to the hospitals providing non-contaminated bread (van Dongen and de Groot 111). Descriptions of the suffering of St. Anthony would appear to suggest that he himself suffered from ergotism, causing pain, but in this case religious, rather than demonic visions.(Alm 405). This condition was illustrated in the art of medieval times and the famous St Anthony Triptych painted by Bosch and housed in the Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga, in Lisbon, shows many of the treatments for ergotism and includes strange flying beasts and other strange scenes, which could have reflected those experienced by those suffering ergot induced hallucinations (van Dongen and de Groot, 111).

Why would those suffering from the hallucinatory form of the disease, such as those in Finnmark be burnt as witches, whereas those suffering from the gangrenous form of the disease be appointed a saint to whom they could pray to help alleviate their symptoms?

It could be that the hallucinogenic form of the disease more obviously transgressed the social customs Lorenz refers to, thereby causing greater fear in the population and a greater response from the authorities. It could also be that those who suffered the gangrenous form of the disease could already be seen to be suffering divine wrath in the form of the unbearable burning sensation in their limbs, the Ignis Sacer, or Holy Fire, which could in itself be seen as in some way purifying.

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Scientific Theories and Reality

It was mentioned in the introduction that we believe that scientists are constantly refining scientific theories to bring us closer to a better understanding of the world and how it works. If we consider the story above of the Finnmark witch trials then this would indeed appear to be the case. What was attributed to demonic possession in the 17th century is now known to be caused by a fungal toxin. However, if the authorities of the day could be so convinced of the reality of witches that they were prepared to sentence those accused to a very cruel death, could it be that our scientific theories of the present are simply part of another socially constructed reality? Thomas Kuhn suggests that 'normal science' is based on the assumption that scientists know how the world is (5) and that because of this "normal science often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments". Only when an anomaly "subverts the existing tradition of scientific practice" do we have a scientific revolution (6) when past scientific achievements, or paradigms (10) are declared invalid and an alternative paradigm takes its place (77). When this paradigm shift is complete, the profession changes its goals, methods and views of the area under research (85). In this way, scientific reality is simply whatever we decide it is in relation to our historical development of scientific understanding, and our current scientific theories of the world could seem as preposterous to scientists in the future as demonic possession seems to us today.

Conclusion

It was suggested in the introduction that although we take the reality of our world very much for granted and few people even stop to consider what reality is, this is a naïve world view, and that reality is something much more complex. But will we ever discover the true nature of reality? Can we ever expect to arrive

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at one true theory of everything? Perhaps what science has taught us is that absolute certainty is "an idol" (Popper 280), that "we do not know: we can only guess" and that our guesses are guided by "faith in laws, in regularities which we can uncover- discover" (Popper 278). Alves (384) states that the concept of "bare reality" is meaningless and that our perception of reality is always necessarily "an anthropological, culturally laden, conceptual and sensible presentation of reality" (366). It would seem that our quest for the true nature of reality may be never-ending, especially if we believe Albert Einstein when he said "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one"

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