

The True Story of Planet Mars: A Portuguese Utopia about Food and Public Health

Maria Luísa Malato¹ & Manuel Loff²

Everyone has to be fed, and every utopia must have arrangements in place so that food is available as needed, and in utopias such arrangements are closely related to the entire economic, political, and social structures of the society.

Lyman Tower Sargent, "Everyday life in utopia: food", 2015

The True Story of Planet Mars – entitled *História Autêntica do Planeta Marte*, in the Portuguese original – is a peculiar and rare piece of literature. It is a fragile edition (the cover was made of thin paper) dated from 1921. At the top of the cover, just a name, with capital letters: Henri Montgolfier. After the title, a brief indication: "Translated by José Nunes da Matta". From the content, it looks like an edition of an old scientific book about what was known about Mars in the eighteenth century. The book has a flat map of the planet with its canals marked and, in the inner pages, some mathematical considerations about the coordinates of the planet, the duration of its days, months, and years, as well as a comparison with what happens on Earth and some observations about Mars's geography.

After all, who was Henri Montgolfier, the "author"? This name can make one think that he could be vaguely related to the Montgolfier brothers, who had carried out the first flights on hot air balloons in France, during the eighteenth century. But the two brothers were named Joseph-Michel (1740-1810) and Jacques-Étienne (1745-1799). The name of the "author" arouses some suspicions: Henri Montgolfier was surely a pseudonym... And the same happens with the scientific content; the flat map includes also the planet's railway lines, as well as detailed information on the fauna, flora, agriculture, and economy of Mars, as well as on the Martians' type of diet...

In fact, the reading of the text confirms the presence of a Portuguese utopia, written by José Nunes da Matta in 1921, under a French name, Henri Montgolfier. This "author" is described as a French revolutionary who left planet Earth using a hermetic vehicle to get to Mars, shortly after Napoleon came into power. He expressly claims that he is not related to the famous Montgolfier brothers, despite the fact of sharing with them, but only by chance, French nationality, the

surname, and the passion for hot air balloons. Disappointed by the French Revolution, Henri Montgolfier knew a better society on Mars, where the principles of the French Revolution were achieved. He wrote a book about Martian society and he explains that he had launched around 50 copies of the book from Mars to Earth, of which 47 had been returned to, and located on, Mars. His remaining hope was that the three missing copies had reached their destination: the planet Earth. He asked whoever found one of them to deliver it to the Louvre Museum, where it should be kept for the use and benefit of Humankind, to whom Montgolfier dedicates the book, since a higher good belongs to all Earth (*idem*: 3 and III-IV). According also to this fiction, the Portuguese José Nunes da Matta is the name of the translator and editor of Montgolfier's document, after finding one of the copies by accident on a Guernsey beach, on 31 January 1885 (Matta 1921: I).

The invention of hot air balloons and Montgolfier's experiences were already common in utopian and non-utopian narratives from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (see Lynn 2010), and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries they were progressively replaced by complex rockets (see Malato 2014, *passim*). Also, the use of different planets to locate eccentric ways of living is an ancient strategy, at least since *True Stories*, written by Lucian of Samosata during the second century A.D. (and Matta's title choice, *The True Story of Planet Mars*, is no doubt reminiscent of Samosata's title). Voyages to the Moon or other planets can be found in the bibliography of Kepler, John Wilkins, Cyrano de Bergerac, Fontenelle, Voltaire, Edgar A. Poe or Jules Verne (see, e.g., the research of Hatzenberger and Horowitz). Between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, Mars becomes a famous planet thanks to the stories by Gustavus W. Pope (*Journey to Mars the Wonderful World*, 1894) and Edgar Rice Burroughs (with 11 stories of the Barsoom Series, beginning with *A Princess of Mars*, in 1912), or *The War of the Worlds*, by H. G. Wells (1897-1898), dramatised in 1938, by Orson Welles. Another example is *Aelita or The Decline of Mars*, a novel about a socialist utopia located on Mars by Alexei Tolstoy (1923), which became a film in 1924, directed by Yakov Protazanov. Mars was not only the god of war, the god of rupture, but also an agricultural guardian, the god of the sickle, the father of Romulus and Remus with Rhea Silvia. He was celebrated by the Romans in March and October, at the end and at the beginning of the military season, and at the beginning and at the end of the farming season. In *The True Story of Planet Mars*, War and Agriculture are also incompatible and complementary: they cannot exist at the same time, but war is seen as a good opportunity to improve farming techniques; and agriculture as a good pretext to justify the war. We certainly must not forget that this utopia was written after the Great War (1914-1918) and prefigured the development of the agricultural industry in Europe.

In Portugal, where utopia seems invisible (see Vieira, 2016), utopian texts are often mixed with other texts. In *The True Story of Planet Mars*, life and literature go once again side by side. If we research a little into the life of José Nunes da Matta, we find that he was well known during his life. He was, after all, a public figure, although not very well known nowadays. He was born in Portugal, near Castelo Branco, on 2 January 1849, and died on 19 January 1945, in Parede (Cascais), near Lisbon. He was a distinguished member of the Portuguese Navy, the author of several studies about the international hour, a mathematician concerned with the safety of navigation,

and even the author of several dramas (see Lima 2010). A school was once named after him. We can also find a few pages on the internet about him. Some texts say that he was a passionate Republican and a great philanthropist. He is featured on the Portuguese Freemasonry Dictionary (*Dicionário da Maçonaria Portuguesa*), under the name of Júlio Graco, perhaps simultaneously evoking Julius Caesar and the Gracchus brothers, reformers of Rome's agrarian laws in favour of the less powerful. In fact, Matta also wrote about agrarian laws in Portugal, especially after 1910. He was a friend of Bernardino Machado, President of the First Portuguese Republic. He served in the Portuguese Navy where he eventually held the rank of Vice-Admiral. He taught at the Portuguese Naval School. He published several scientific papers (in particular about astronomy and various marine and aeronautical navigation problems). For pragmatic reasons related to global navigation, his commitment to making Portugal adopt Greenwich Mean Time (presently known as Coordinated Universal Time) was crucial, especially for political reasons. He was also an author who became especially interested in writing philosophical poems and plays: a comedy written by him won an award from the Lisbon Conservatory of Theatre (the probable cause of the inclusion of his name in a well-known diatribe by Almada Negreiros, the *Manifesto Anti-Dantas*). He also wrote many essays about the rural economy and its economic value. In fact, the footnotes that José Nunes da Matta included in *The True Story of Planet Mars* make a direct reference to some of his own works on these issues.

The utopia, in general, seems to be legitimised by a political disappointment and a political commitment (see Mannheim 1960, *passim*). A comparison between the biographical data on both José Nunes da Matta and Henri Montgolfier helps us to establish many connections between the quality of life on the two planets, Earth and Mars, as well as between the future that is proposed for Earth and the utopian civilisation on Mars. Matta, as Montgolfier, lives between discontent and hope. Matta describes Montgolfier as a man disenchanted with the French revolution, first because of the Jacobin *Terreur* and the Thermidorian reaction which made him "become horrified with revolution", but especially after Napoleon took power on 18 Brumaire 1799, "bringing down the Republic that had been cemented with so much blood and tears". The historical analogy is, nevertheless, a confusing one. By describing Bonaparte's coup of 18 Brumaire as having taken place on 5 October 1799 instead of 9 November of the same year, Matta, a disenchanted Portuguese Republican, clearly implies that the 5 October 1910 Portuguese revolution was historically similar to Napoleon's 1799 anti-Republican coup. In fact, October 1910 was an enthusiastic time for progressive liberals and, however disappointing the post-1915 Portuguese political process may have been for a fairly conservative Republican such as Matta appears to have become, the 18 Brumaire was quite the opposite, shutting down any hope for a new French Republic and opening the way for the Empire, an authoritarian warmongering regime. *The True Story of Planet Mars* is an auto-fiction (*latu sensu*, as defined by Jacques Lecarme or Vincent Colonna), where the fiction of Montgolfier disguises the autobiography of Matta. Instead of mentioning the "Revolution", i.e. the French one, Matta's alter ego mentions, as any Portuguese Republican would do, that "the Republic I hoped for was not producing the miracle I aspired to" (Matta 1921: 6). In this sense, Matta's narrative, posing as Montgolfier, is undoubtedly

a reflection of that post-World War One political and cultural pervasive sense of disappointment, described by Freud as “The Uneasiness in Civilisation”.³ But instead of engaging in the general tone of *brutalisation* of politics and social relations (see Mosse 1990 and Traverso 2016), what is interesting about Matta’s somewhat naïf utopia is its hybridised political project, somewhere between a liberal romantic approach to social happiness and a rationalistic technology-focused regenerating programme for human society.

This utopia seems also to expose a tension between two kinds of violence: the violence of changing and the violence of not changing. Both Montgolfier and Matta are politically moderate. The fratricidal cruelty of the revolutionaries brings disappointment to them both: J. Nunes da Matta and the political evolution at the beginning of the twentieth century; Montgolfier and the Reign of Terror at the end of the eighteenth century. They also loathe the dictatorial tics, and the quirks of the so-called “saviours” of the people. J. Nunes da Matta finds Montgolfier’s text abroad, in Guernsey, an island of expatriates, mythically present in Victor Hugo’s readers. And Henri Montgolfier leaves France and reaches Mars just after the political ascension of Napoleon.

Such parallels are important in the text, since the critical distance is a false spatial distance, and a false temporal distance. In Montgolfier/Matta’s utopia, Mars is a planet deliberately similar to Earth, not only in terms of its climate, its fauna, its flora, its economy (Matta 1921: 57-63), but also of its human geography and history (*idem*: 68-72). As often happens with political programmes conveyed through this kind of political fiction, the analogy is clearly intended to be intelligible in *earthly* terms. Mars is like Earth especially because they have a similar kind of inhabitants.

As with many political fictions, *The True Story of Planet Mars* is interested in food. The abundance of food sustains most utopias. Economic or social systems are designed to guarantee the survival and happiness of individuals in community. Martians are taller than the Earthling – particularly because they eat better, and the regularity of the planet’s climate, as well as selective reproduction, helped in the prevalence of some physical traits. Martians were also subjected to evolution, as described by Darwin – even though Darwin’s *Origin of Species* is suspected of being an attack on the divine origin of Martians, Martians believe that more important than knowing if God created Martians is to act in a divine manner, thereby dignifying His creation (*idem*: 28 and 63). Martians are also submitted to global migratory flows – but the migratory flows on Mars must also be read in conjunction with the search for food and the globalisation of eating habits on Mars (see *idem*: 58, 60; max. 61-63). In fact, the search for food on Mars was not caused by the lack of food, but by different rhythms of production. In this, *The True Story of Planet Mars* is no different from other utopias:

No hunger was central to most, together with no work or at least no hard work, no fear of wild animals, no death or no easy death, [...]. Everyone has to be fed, and every utopia must have arrangements in place so that food is available as needed, and in utopias such arrangements are closely related to the entire economic, political, and social structures of the society. (Sargent 2015: 14-32; see also Sargent 2016: 25)

The importance of food grows when social happiness in Mars is compared with misery on Earth and the importance of utopian thought is emphasised. If “today” (in 1921) Martians are happy citizens (with no diseases, no wars, no problems about their food), they were not like that a few centuries earlier. In fact, back then, they were like Earth inhabitants “today” (in 1921): unhappy people under- or poorly nourished. What sets the inhabitants of Mars and the inhabitants of Earth apart does not have much to do with race and its traits, even though they are addressed, it is mainly related to some political decisions that were made only on Mars (not on Earth) after a Great War, a global war. On Mars the war had led to a debate and to a new way of doing politics. Like the War of 1914-18 on Earth, the Great War on Mars had produced an enormous number of military and civilian casualties, as a result of the industrialisation of the war, the use of aircraft, submarines, chemical weapons, and infected trenches. To explain how the Great War on Mars had started, Montgolfier/Matta describes a kind of *Clash of Civilizations* on that far-away planet: “two very powerful neighbouring nations, one of the white race, the other of the yellow race, using some sort of futile unimportant pretext, went into war with all their considerable might” (Matta 1921: 69).⁴ Matta’s choice for establishing a deep motivation for the war is a typical social-Darwinist one, although his new world order project should not be essentially seen as such. According to Montgolfier’s narrative, war was a result of “racial hatred” that had apparently been disguised prior to the conflict, but which surfaced in all its “brutality”, and gradually every white-race nation joined the belligerent nation of their race, while the yellow-race nations did the same (*idem*: 70). War on Mars was nevertheless described as being longer (seven years) and clearly more devastating than the 1914-18 one on Earth: “more than half of the combatants were killed or left crippled in the very first clashes” and the “more audacious and robust young men had been swallowed by the war”, which meant that “the number of women became a lot higher than of men”, pushing the former, “taken by a high sense of patriotism”, to “march into war” as well (*idem*: 70-71).

What was depicted as an “unimportant pretext” caused a great number of major consequences on the planet; facing a shortage of food, its citizens acted blindly, driven by the famine and a powerful survival impulse. In both cases, too, starvation, along with a lack of hygiene, helped to spread the plague and many other diseases after the armistice was signed. To explain how the war inevitably had to end, Matta depicts “the Plague [as the] third and final Stage of the War”, thanks to which, “in less than one hundred days, over 130 million Martians died” (*idem*: 71-72). The analogy with the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic is all too obvious. The way the Martian Great War ended is quite revealing of Matta’s worldview: while the *Plague* was still devastating the planet, “the yellow-race armies, in spite of having secured some advantage over the enemy”, exactly like the German Army on the Western Front a few months before the 1918 Armistice, “called for a cease-fire, immediately accepted” (*idem*: 72). Although the peace process as described by Montgolfier/Matta was significantly different from the one held in Versailles in 1919, paving the way for a “Grand Congress and Social Revolution on Mars”, Matta did not refrain from representing the victors as the *white* Martians, “a more majestic race”, responsible for “every remarkable scientific achievement” (*idem*: 82).

Like the Earth's inhabitants, the Martians had also been tempted to think that their global problems could be resolved through nationalist solutions. They had also made rhetorical speeches about peace, goodwill and solidarity, evoking pro domo the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Knowing that the food shortage was the war's main driving force, and that education and science could be used for the benefit of minorities (*idem*: 86-9), the Martians, for a while, wanted to return to the historical routine: the power games (between men and women, employers and workers, white people and people of colour, educated people and the ones who were marginalised, in any case, masters and slaves), ending up by forgetting their common humanity. The "translator", José Nunes da Matta, comments in a footnote that the Martians were then replicating the false ideals that promoted the Washington Naval Conference on Earth, putting together the major naval powers that had been engaged in the war (except for Russia and Germany): they promoted, again and again, the idea of a free market, with no taxes, no frontiers, no legal constraints, or customs control (*idem*: 98n). They denied, again and again, the emergence of "unexpected and outdated" ideas, which, for that reason alone, are said to be "absurd" (see *idem*: 83 and 100-1). And they ignored, again and again, what leads people to war: famine, a survival impulse, ignorance, and lack of communication. In *The True Story of Planet Mars* (ending with a "Final Explanation" signed 1 October 1921), the reference to the Washington Naval Conference (held from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922, formally announced by President Harding on 11 August 1921) clearly shows the importance of the political context to the readers at the time. In a footnote, the "translator" José Nunes da Matta explicitly regrets the inefficiency of "the present Congress of Washington" (*idem*: 98n).

Also shattered by a Global War, the Martians had learned to focus on what mattered: the survival of their humanity. To discuss that question, an "imponent Congress of Nations", with delegates from the "Senates" of the "main municipalities" (a sort of pre-modern reincarnation of the medieval Portuguese *Cortes*), meets at the "capital of the most important yellow-race Empire". The idea was to reconstitute Mars's social fabric and to ensure "a stable peace for the future and maximum possible happiness". Montgolfier/Matta significantly conceive the process following the end of the Great War as a "Social Revolution" (*idem*: 72). Thus, nothing could be more archetypal of the post-World War One historical cycle: Revolution, peace, a new form of happiness.

Under the influence of a philosopher (Constantinio), Martians adopted four fundamental principles: universal language, international government, interracial marriages, and population control.

Language was not important anymore. Following a first proposal by Constantinio, the Martians had a standardised language of communication since then (none of the existing languages, but some kind of Esperanto).

National power was not important anymore. Martians adopted a common policy regarding its economic and energy resources (like soil, water, electric energy). And they also established general access to education, beyond nationality, class, race, or gender. That meant that fighting for coal, for oil, for food, or for education had become pointless (*idem*: 59).

Races, moreover, became undetectable. Mars downplayed the issues of race and nation, having for many generations engaged in interracial marriage; they all knew themselves as hybrids. Their natural needs were compatible with industrial production.

On Mars, the size of the population is controlled by avoiding the formation of megacities (see *idem*: 27, 94, 101) and procreation in unhealthy conditions is prevented by promoting the sterilisation of the ovaries.

But, aware of the early 1920s confrontational perception of *revolution*, Matta, in this case explicitly writing as the translator of Montgolfier's text, takes a very hard anti-Bolshevik stance, tainted with a ferocious elitist and prejudicial perspective. In his last remarks, Matta stresses that all those who might think that "Montgolfier's interesting work is an indirect justification of the cruel and savage Bolshevik Socialist experiment in oppressed, hungry and unhappy Russia" would be wrong. Quite the opposite, "between the two social states", Russian Bolshevism and Martian "human and rational Socialism", "there is a deep abyss separating them": Bolshevism is "an anti-social State, corrupt, vicious and horrifying, supported by terror, moved by ignoble, vile and odious feelings, dancing over social misery and ignorance", while the Martian "social State", according to Matta, was "honest, sublime, and even divine, based on intelligence, illustration and noble, generous affectionate and altruistic feelings". Along the same lines, Martians were "physically, psychologically and morally equal, or almost, living in the most affectionate and quiet fraternity", while in Russia "thousands of human-faced wolves [...], martyr and devour a hundred million lambs, human-faced as well"; on Mars, "everyone knows how to read, to write, and to count, to work, to think, to play every instrument, and to sing", and Martians are "healthy, robust and have perfect figures", while in Russia "most people are stupid and ignorant, and thus illiterate, they barely know how to work and are only used to suffer, to submit to, to moan" (*idem*: 120-121).

The essence of Matta's text is a whole new social order, one based on a social engineering process, characteristic of the same atmosphere that produced – in a different sense – dystopias, like *Metropolis* (Thea von Harbou's 1925 novel, adapted for the screen by Fritz Lang in 1927). Matta, a military officer when the Great War ended, shared some core moral and political values with those in the West who, since the late nineteenth century, according to John Jordan, trusted "technology, through a particular set of symbolic renderings, [to realign] politics [as it did] in the early and mid-twentieth century" (Jordan 1994: 1). His utopian Mars in fact reflects some of that "postwar liberalism [that] blended a preexisting belief in social perfectibility with a growing confidence in sophisticated methods of analysis and coordination" (*idem*: 100). It is nevertheless important to understand that the need for a new social order emerges in Matta's text not only because of the devastation caused by the war, but also because of a sense of *decadence* that Matta/Montgolfier detects in the Martians' "general demoralisation and ineptitude, in deep contrast with remarkable scientific achievements" (Matta 1921: 69). These were not a result of the war but were already present before it. Matta should therefore be taken as one of those *degeneration*-focused Western pessimists in line with Max Nordau's 1892 influential essay *Entartung* ("Degeneration")⁵ who, a few years after the war, would subscribe to most of Oswald Spengler's ideas in *The Decline of the West*.⁶

However, the inspiration of several philosophers from the eighteenth century is also clear in José Nunes da Matta's utopia – Leibnitz and his dream of a universal language, Condorcet and the ideal of intellectual "perfectibility", Laplace and the possibility of predictions based on knowledge. But one of the most important is *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, which is

about the equation between population and subsistence. Written by Thomas Robert Malthus in 1798, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* is no doubt a reference to Nunes da Matta, who is also concerned with the relationship between population and its subsistence:

I said that population, when unchecked, increased in a geometrical ratio, and subsistence for man in an arithmetical ratio. [...] We will suppose the means of subsistence in any country just equal to the easy support of its inhabitants. The constant effort towards population, which is found to act even in the most vicious societies, increases the number of people before the means of subsistence are increased. The food therefore which before supported seven millions must now be divided among seven millions and a half or eight millions. The poor consequently must live much worse, and many of them be reduced to severe distress. The number of labourers also being above the proportion of the work in the market, the price of labour must tend toward a decrease, while the price of provisions would at the same time tend to rise. The labourer therefore must work harder to earn the same as he did before. (Malthus 1798: 18, 29-30)

However, Montgolfier is not reading Malthus in the eighteenth century. Unlike Malthus, he rejects sexual abstinence or monastic chastity, which he considers violent and ineffective, as they promote prostitution, masturbation, and syphilis. He is also already pointing out the benefits of the so-called “Green Revolution”, the industrialisation of agriculture (see Matta 1921: 26-7, 83, 90-2, 105, 119). Some measures are certainly controversial, now and then. Montgolfier, like Matta, defends the sterilisation of couples with mental or economic problems, with the help of science (but before the invention of the birth control pill), and is a long way from considering any plan of genocide or mass extermination. Even though Matta is very critical of Hitler’s legislation as early as 1935, he defends sterilisation to prevent the reproduction of mental disorders or physical handicaps:

It’s not through forced labour, o mighty Hitler, that you will raise the great nation that you are leading to the superiority of well-being, power and glory, but through the sterilisation that, *in partibus*, you have already adopted. This measure, normally applied to boys and girls before puberty, if their bodies are deficient and their spirit is ill, this measure will only lead the German nation to the sublimity of perfection and well-being. [...] The forced labour, under threat, will always have the mark and meaning of slavery; and even happiness, o untiring and frightening Hitler, even happiness, when imposed by force, has the bitter taste of slavery. (Matta 1935: 11)⁷

He really believes (in 1921, as in 1935) that a eugenic program of sterilisation could start to transform humanity, both by preventing some situations of famine, disease, and poverty, which, according to this school of thought, are mathematical consequences of an unequal distribution of food, knowledge, and properties, and by improving the “well-endowed”:

Call me crazy, whatever you want. But nobody has yet proven me, with straight and loyal arguments, that it’s not a crime against humanity to give birth to children, knowing for sure (or having the duty of this knowledge) that over them will fall a life fated to sufferings, inherited from their parents, almost always accompanied by misery, famine, griminess, and at last a painful death, the poor couples being the ones who have more children. (*idem*: 3-4)⁸

For those who see in these words the seeds of the *Lebensborn* programme, we must remind them that those ideas are in some arguments for practising abortion or giving a child up for adoption. As Harry Bruinius showed in 2006, eugenics experiments were better for all the world. In 1921, the year of the Second International Eugenics Conference in New York, the eugenics project was present in several Western countries, from America to Europe, in universities, and newspapers. And it is clear that Matta has a strong commitment with the *Polis* (his books testify it easily).

But, as well as a sociological essay about the future of the Earth, Matta’s utopia is about Earth’s present. Utopia is a mirror of the future that wants to reflect what the present is not: the space between utopia and dystopia is narrow (see Neusüss 1971). The tension between a splendid future and a chaotic present is explicit in Matta’s literature. This can be seen in a political document like *Chaos or the Human Disorder and a way to avoid it* [orig. *Caos ou O Pandemónio humano e meio de o evitar*] (1931) where José Nunes da Matta developed some scientific ideas already presented in his utopia *The True Story of Planet Mars* (1921). Also, in several footnotes in his fiction, José Nunes da Matta exposes Portugal’s contrary example, where venereal and mental diseases are a common thing (Matta 1921: 100). Quoting several books of his own, José Nunes da Matta, the false translator, proves that everything that is good on Mars is already known on Earth, in 1921, which is confirmed by science or common sense. From the beginning of the book, its conclusion is implicitly expressed: the “joyful Eden” that Mars is today, as a reasonable consequence of “revolutionary, and yet wise ideas”, an “upbeat spirit”, a “natural sincerity”, a genuine belief in the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity may not be betrayed by selfishness or by hypocrisy, like those principles usually are (see *idem*: 5-6, and also 22). Matta describes a society where men and women have the same education and the same capacity to work (even if women are often described as *companions*), where men share domestic work with women, where divorce is not a religious or social problem, where children and animals are well cared for, where jealousy is a false sense of property and not a kind of love (even if the polygamy is occasionally reasonable, although, on the contrary, polyandry is not), where mental diseases are cured with respect for the individual, music and hygiene, and where food is the main medicine.

On Mars, a new social behaviour can be pictured, inter alia, by the continuous references to new eating rituals followed by the Martians, and afterwards by the new inhabitant of Mars, Henri Montgolfier. The possibility of the utopian world is described by an nutritional metaphor: the social body, as well as the physical body, by inducing a bilious disease, has the possibility of “transforming nectar into bile”, bile being associated with envy and greed (see *idem*: I).

There is no doubt that Henri Montgolfier is an Earthling who is disappointed with the behaviour of his fellow Earthlings. The way he chooses to leave Earth raises the question of

whether he leaves for exile or to commit suicide. However, the only food that Henri Montgolfier chooses to take with him into outer space is a curious choice: in his spacecraft, this Frenchman from the eighteenth century would only take Port wine, mixed with water and honey.

As we will find out when he arrives on Mars, the wine, the water, and the honey are part of the Martians' typical diet (very similar to the Mediterranean diet!). Nevertheless, the body of Henri Montgolfier on Mars suffers a preliminary process of purification. When he arrives on Mars, he is in a situation of lethargy, between life and death. The Martian doctors revive him with radium and electricity but focus mainly on long massages to his stomach and his intestines (see *ibidem*). Then, he goes through ten days of music therapy, with music and singing that massage his ears and brain with vibrations, followed by further sessions of long massages focused, once again, on expelling "everything there was inside his stomach and intestines". The formation of a new life and identity is accomplished by a diet of a progressive complexity. For three days, he is fed as if he were an unborn child, through a tube with a nutritious liquid that contains the chemical elements of his body fluids, as saliva, gastric juice, and bile (*idem*: 12). After that, when he opens his eyes, he starts to ingest liquid food. Only after thirty days is the new being introduced to solid food, always easy to digest. When he starts having four meals a day, the meals are always complemented with music: seeing the dances and hearing the music produce certain states of mind essential to mental health (see *idem*: 13-14). The process of socialisation becomes more complex when the main character (re)starts walking. Like a child, he is now more distracted by the art of painting and by looking out over a landscape. During his recovery, he learns how to eat "as a Martian"; he always eats a proper meal, with a vegetarian base that includes all kinds of fruits and vegetables, leguminous plants and cereals. We are near, perhaps, to the vegetarian utopias of the early twentieth century (see Reis 2004). But the references in Matta's utopia seem only to proclaim the benefits of sobriety in an omnivore's diet: from time to time, Montgolfier eats fish, and, even more rarely, on ritual occasions, he eats meat. As a sweetener, he uses honey. Every day he sits at public tables where everyone lives together in the utmost fraternal way, sharing each piece of food, produced in different ways and at different times by every member of the community. He takes care of bodily hygiene before and after the meal. He chews his food slowly, mixing it well with saliva, savouring it without gluttony (Matta 1921: 102 and 111-115). Like every Martian, he always pays attention to the environmental consequences of agriculture and industry: he treats and recycles the organic waste in agriculture, creating clean forms of energy and reducing the physical effort and the contact with less salubrious substances. In general, the Martian eats as he makes love: carefully but without passion, with no sense of possession, ignorant of what gluttony and jealousy are (see *idem*: 105).

Henri Montgolfier is a new man after that. From the window of his bedroom, Montgolfier delights himself with the variety of agricultural landscapes on Mars. Gardens, farms, and forests are equally beautiful; those three spaces seem to correspond (as in the medieval concept of Virgil's wheel) to three different kinds of an aesthetic behaviour: lyrical, didactical and epic poetry. But the landscape and the maps naturally reflect three different levels of diets and the quality and variety of life that the Martians seek. Farms feed the body, but gardens and forests feed the soul with

different states of mind. The gardens and the forests have a social value; the secular specimens of trees inspire the inhabitant of Mars with their beauty and strength. But they also have a material value. The Martian values the tree, even the one that only bears flowers, because he is aware of its economic and scientific value; trees protect the soil from erosion, provide oxygen and shade and add taste to life (see *idem*: 47 or 60). According to Henri Montgolfier, on planet Earth similar trees would be cut down right away (see *idem*: 15, 16, 17, 18, 47). According to his translator, José Nunes da Matta, in Portugal, "The cult of the tree is just an act". This could be proven by law no. 4,700, passed during the "dictatorship of Sidónio Pais" (on 26 June 1918), and not revoked by the "incompetents", as Matta calls them, who succeeded him (see *idem*: 47n).

Honey and the economic value ascribed by the Martians to apiculture is the main icon of that diet (*idem*: 60). Here again, the "translator" José Nunes da Matta comments on the great differences between politicians on Mars and politicians in Portugal. On Mars, the law values the work of bees; in Portugal, legislation ruins apiculture. Government in Portugal does not see the link between Nature and Economy. It is also blind to the relationship between Body and Spirit. In Portugal, government overcharges musical instruments with taxes and neglects even the value of musical therapy in mental hospitals (*idem*: 68n, 100). Martians have a solid musical education (they all sing or play at least one instrument), because Government takes care of the welfare of its citizens (e.g. *idem*: 68n, 116). In Portugal, economic status goes along with greed and disrespect: distinguished people can eat too fast or disregard other people's rights (*idem*: 102n, 109n, 110n). But Martians do not use gold, precious stones, or arrogant words; they appreciate healthy hair like gold, bright eyes like diamonds, and kind words as the only kind of superiority (*idem*: 116, 109-110).

Food, Health and Beauty are parts of the same structure. To eat is part of Henri Montgolfier's physical and spiritual recovery; when he feels more tired, he is given aromatic goat milk to drink, and some delightful cakes with honey, served in a bowl of pure crystal (*idem*: 19). Banquets are simple but always accompanied by music. Everything with the utmost simplicity (*idem*: 116-7). *Mens sana in corpore sano*, the Martians often say this, yet in other words, because they do not know Latin (*idem*: 108). The beauty of the citizens of Mars (male and female) is an indication of how healthy they are, and their health is based on a genuine, healthy, and natural diet, according to Lavater's principles of Physiognomy (1817). On Mars, perfumes (like jewellery) are useless, as the best perfume and greatest beauty come from hygiene and a good diet. These principles were already written by Ernst Baron Von Feuchtersleben (1806-1849). He was an Austrian physician (and also a philosopher and a poet), very well known in Portugal thanks to Ramalho Ortigão's translation of one of his books about food, beauty, and knowledge, *Hygiene da alma/ Hygiene of the Soul* (1873), published in 1921, too, like Matta's utopia.

The only drawback in this perfect world on Mars would be monotony (*idem*: 105). Greed, adultery, and gluttony are pointless. Desire is not moving Martians anymore. Why would one want to be wealthier, have more love partners and more food if, everywhere, everything and everyone are equally good? This is the main problem with utopia, if we believe that utopia is an unaccomplished world and not a provocation, like it should be, according to Morus: something that we must speak about.

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Notes

1. This article was prepared within the Strategic Program Alimentopia / Utopian Foodways (PTDC/CPC-ELT/5676/2014 | POCI-01-0145-FEDER-016680). Translations of this Portuguese utopia, *The True Story of Planet Mars*, were by Paulo Galante. Co-author: M. Luísa Malato, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Portuguese and Romance Languages, University of Porto, Portugal. Main research fields: Utopian Studies, Comparative Literature, Rhetorical Studies, Eighteenth Century Studies. Email: mlmalato@gmail.com.
2. Co-author: Manuel Loff, PhD in History and Civilisation (European University Institute, Florence), Department of History and Political and International Studies, University of Porto, Portugal. Main research interests: Political, Social and Ideological History of the twentieth century; Memory Studies: social forms of (re)construction of collective memory. Email: mloff@letras.up.pt.
3. Published in Austria in 1930 as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, Vienna, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag. See Freud 2002.
4. See original: "duas nações vizinhas muito poderosas, uma de raça branca e outra de raça amarela, dando como pretexto uma qualquer futilidade sem importância, entraram em guerra com todo o seu respeitável poder".
5. See Mosse 1968.
6. See Spengler 1991 [originally: *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, 2 vols.: 1. *Gestalt und Wirklichkeit*, Vienna, Braumüller, 1918; 2. *Welthistorische Perspektiven*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 1922].
7. See original: "Não é com trabalhos forçados, poderoso Hitler, que levantará a grande nação, de que és o mentor, ao apogeu do bem estar, poder e glória, mas sim com a esterilização que, *in partibus*, já adoptaste. Esta, ao ser empregada a valer em rapazes e raparigas antes de atingirem a idade da puberdade, no caso dos seus organismos serem imperfeitos e possuírem taras doentias, esta sim, esta poderá levar a nação alemã à sublimidade da perfeição e bem estar. [...] O trabalho obrigatório, à força, terá sempre o cunho e a designação de escravatura; e a própria felicidade, incansável e tremebundo Hitler, quando imposta à força, essa mesma, também tem o sabor amargo da escravatura".
8. See original: "Chamem-nos doido e tudo o que quiserem. Mas o que ninguém nos provará, com argumentos perceptíveis e leais, é que não é um crime de lesa-humanidade o deitar filhos ao Mundo, tendo-se de antemão ou devendo-se ter a certeza que, ao verem a luz da vida, sobre estes pobres desgraçados deve impender a nefanda condenação a torturantes sofrimentos, herdados dos pais, quasi sempre acompanhados de miséria, fome, imundície e por fim morte dolorosa e horrível, visto serem os casais pobres e miseráveis que mais abundante procriação fazem".