

Modernism, Joyce, and Portuguese Literature

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**Abstract:** Carlos Ceia, in his article, "Modernism, Joyce, and Portuguese Literature," discusses parallels between James Joyce's work and texts by modernist and contemporary Portuguese novelists such as Antunes, Brandão, Negreiros, Pessoa, Saramago, Sá-Carneiro, Silva Ramos, and Velho da Costa. In his analysis, Ceia focuses on the role of myth, the notion of the (anti-)hero, the solipsism of interior consciousness, narrative techniques, and linguistic experimentation. Ceia argues that while it is impossible to detect direct influence by Joyce on Portuguese writers, it is in the context of the parallel paradigms of modernism we are able to discover the Joycean impact on both modernist and contemporary Portuguese literature. For example, in Velho da Costas novel *Casas Pardas*, the author's fictionalization of the stream-of-consciousness mode of narrative is innovative because it goes beyond *Ulysses's* Molly Bloom's exemplary discourse and the modernist pattern for self-reflexivity. The post-modern novelist is obsessed with the mastering of fictional discourse and with the fictional discourses of his/her literary heritage and thus, in order to achieve this, the novel has turned into metafiction, metafiction has turned into discontinuities, and textuality has turned into intertextual relations with well-known works of art of the past. Joyce and his experimental novels opened up new possibilities and vistas to literature and Ceia argues that it is in this sense and context we should understand the impact/influence of Joyce's work and of modernism in modern and contemporary Portuguese literature.

**Carlos CEIA**

### **Modernism, Joyce, and Portuguese Literature**

In this paper, I discuss aspects of the role of myth and the notion of (anti)-hero in the works of major modernist writers in contemporary Portuguese literature and the question of James Joyce's impact on Portuguese literature in the context of modernism. I am aware that the only explicit trace of Joyce in Portuguese modernist literature is a mere biographical curiosity: the most important Portuguese writer of the twentieth century, Fernando Pessoa, owned a copy of the first edition of *Ulysses*. However, he had clearly never touched it: I checked this copy at Fernando Pessoa's House, in Lisbon, and the volume is as new. On the other hand, it is not surprising that we should find this novel in Pessoa's private library since Pessoa was ahead of his contemporaries, not only because of his education in South Africa and his fluency in English but also because he was both a visionary and an avid reader of everything new in literature. However, it is of importance that even if this explains why a first edition of *Ulysses* should have fallen into the hands of this exceptional poet, it still remained unread, and Pessoa's work shows no discernible trace of an influence. It is a weak argument to establish a symbolic connection between Durban (where Pessoa lived from the age of seven) and Dublin, a similarity between Joyce and Pessoa's primary and secondary education, and a common interest in messianic myths and Egyptology (see Margarido 158-62). A further aspect of the lack of impact of Joyce's work in Portuguese literature is that Portuguese modernists tended to follow what was happening in France rather than other European literatures. At the same time, I contend, it would be of interest in literary and culture scholarship to analyse parallels in modernist and contemporary texts in Portuguese literature with specific reference to texts by James Joyce (for a discussion on modernism in the context of Spanish literature, see, e.g., Losada Goya <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol1/iss2/1/>>).

The trend towards self-reflexivity and the use of the stream-of-consciousness technique of narration that appears in English, French, and German modernist texts can also be found in such anti-novels as Mário de Sá-Carneiro's *Confissão de Lúcio* (1914; *Lucio's Confession*, 1993), Bernardo Soares's *O Livro do Desassossego* (1982; *The Book of Disquiet*, 2001; Bernardo Soares is Pessoa's semi-heteronym, with texts written before 1914 and never published in book form during Pessoa's life), Raul Brandão's *A Farsa* (1903; *The Farce*) and *Húmus* (1917, *Humus*), Maria Velho da Costa's *Casas Pardas* (1977; *Grey Houses*), Almada Negreiros's *Nome de Guerra* (1938), Lobo Antunes's *Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996; *The Inquisitor's Manual*, 2003), Manuel da Silva Ramos and Alface's *Os Lusíadas* (1977; *The Lusiads*), and José Saramago's novels. We can say that the modernity of *Ulysses* and of *Nome de Guerra* flows together in this point: both are exercises of stream-of-consciousness in narrative form, although in different proportions. For Joyce, experimentation is laboratorial and philosophical; for Almada, everything comes down to an exercise of self-analysis transcribed in literary form. It is important to note that the introduction of the technique of stream-of-consciousness in the modernist novel represented, at least in the British case, a counter-answer regarding the social realism that dominated the novel of the second half of the nineteenth century. The influential 1921 text of Virginia Woolf, "Modern Fiction," inspired by *Ulysses* (published in a series at the time of Woolf's writing of her article), includes Woolf's statement that the novel should face the problems of individual conscience: "Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this.' Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives myriad impressions -- trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms ... life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end" (149-50). For Woolf, this purpose can be reached if we drop the kind of "materialism" that drags us to social problems, and if we adhere to a type of spirituality Joyce represents. Almada Negreiros, in this sense, is also a "spiritual" writer. For example, in his *Nome de Guerra* experimentation is reduced to the level of the psychology of the characters and to the work of drawing the scripture of the novel while the text never reaches the high level of experimentation in any of Joyce's texts. At the same time, *Ulysses* and *Nome de Guerra* are innovative novels of modernist

experimentation, in the respective literatures, because they represent the inner reality and the nearest everyday thing to people without demanding any type of redemption.

Before I examine the modernist trend towards self-reflexivity and the use of stream-of-consciousness and their importance, it will be useful to contrast Pessoa's poetical interpretation of the figure of Ulysses with Joyce's reading of the Homeric myth. Pessoa worked on the Ulysses myth to present us with his vision of the artist-as-hero, a topos with a great tradition in European literature extending from Dante to Byron down to the modernists (for a seminal discussion of the hero in literature, see Miller). However, as we know, Joyce's approach deviates from that of his precursors. In his letter to Carlo Linati, dated 21 September 1920 and attached to the first draft of the novel, Joyce declares: "My intention is to transpose the myth *sub specie temporis nostri*" ("Letter to Carlo Linati" 146). Thus, Joyce's Ulysses exceeds the condition of a common hero; by contrast, Pessoa's poem "Ulisses" follows the classical symbolism of the myth. The figure of Pessoa's Ulysses explains the universal vocation of a nation always looking for new civilizations and knowledge, following the example of great heroes of the past, whether they really existed or not: "Myth is the nothing that is everything. / The very sun opening up the heavens / Is a marvellous yet silent myth: / The mortal corpse of God / Alive and undressed. // He, the one who made his port here, / Found existence in his very non-being. / His non-existence sufficed us. / Because he did not arrive he arrived / And so created us. // Thus legend slips / Across reality / And, on seeding it, steals away. / Below, life, that other half / Of nothing, just dies away" (my translation) ("O mito é o nada que é tudo. / O mesmo sol que abre os céus / É um mito brilhante e mudo: / O corpo morto de Deus, / Vivo e desnudo. // Este, que aqui aportou, / Foi, por não ser, existindo. / Sem existir nos bastou. / Por não ter vindo foi vindo / E nos criou. // Assim a lenda se escorre / A entrar na realidade, / E a fecundá-la decorre. / Em baixo, a vida, metade / De nada, morre") ("Ulisses" 112). Pessoa has chosen this myth because of an old -- and false -- reading of the name of the capital of Portugal, Lisboa/Lisbon: during the Renaissance, Portuguese humanists managed to interpret cleverly the etymology of the name of the city as follows. Ulysses once landed in a place called Ulissepona ("This, the one who made his port here") and founded the city later known as Lisboa. But if Ulysses, for us, is more important for what he represents than for where he purportedly went ashore, what does the myth represent for Pessoa and for Joyce? Pessoa's line "Myth is the nothing that means all" encapsulates, I believe, the mythical worldview of both Joyce and Pessoa, assuming, for now, that myths are positive sources for social behaviour, according to classical thought. The ethics of myths, from a modernist point of view, implies something else: a nation can evolve on the basis of a moral understanding of the human values we have inherited. Pessoa believed in the myth of Ulysses as the founder of Lisbon as Joyce believed on rather ingenious theories such as that of the Phoenicians reaching Ireland by circumnavigating the Iberian Peninsula and that the Irish language was of Phoenician descent (on this, see, e.g., Seidel). Further, Joyce's 1907 lecture "Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages" is an example of his trust in spurious texts on ancient mythology, in the same manner as Pessoa appraised the myth of Ulissepona. Both Pessoa and Joyce refer to -- unfounded -- myths that buttress an idea of identity and of the origins of a people, language, or city based on the prestige of heroic antiquity. For both therefore the myth is the "nothing that means all" for more than social behaviour, and it involves the investigation of myths of cultural and national identity and origins.

If we accept the notion that myth "means all," we must take into account the revolution in values supported by the two modernist writers, although Joyce is much more meticulous working with the Homeric material than Pessoa who addresses the same material in a lesser symbolic and creative way. Myths may be a positive source for social behaviour, as in Homer's time, but, in the first decades of the twentieth century, ethics represents a source not for society in general but directed to the individual. The focus is often on the individual mind while at the same time it is also true that social and political issues are constantly brought into the foreground and made to interact with the individual's mind, as in Joyce's "Cyclops," for example, where cultural and political nationalism and its ethics are under scrutiny: the individual and society are in constant interplay and all of this is related to and underpinned by a structure of and references to myths. Joyce might have wanted to create a modern hero, and he does so thanks to a "wandering Jew" called

Leopold Bloom, whose father was a Hungarian Jew who committed suicide. Bloom is a cheerful citizen most of the time in *Ulysses*, except when he thinks of his male family line and the infidelity of his wife. While Ulysses in Pessoa's poem is still the Homeric hero, distinguished as an exceptional human being, Joyce's Ulysses is hardly an exceptional being, but rather a complex citizen lost in contradictions: on the one hand, he is in a decadent world of gluttony, defecation, urination, dementia, masturbation, voyeurism, alcoholism, sado-masochism, and coprophilia; on the other hand, he reveals himself as a generous, inquisitive, civic-minded, caring, witty, and patient individual. We can find this complex world in Portuguese modernist literature too, mainly in the poetry of one of Pessoa's heteronyms, Álvaro de Campos ("Triumphal Ode," published in 1915 in the first issue of *Orpheu*), and in the poetry of Negreiros ("The Hate Scene"), another craftsman of words whose writings cannot be traced to a single tradition. For example, the poem "A Cena do Ódio" ("The Hate Scene") contains provocative lines such as the following:

I rise up a pederast booted by imbeciles / I deify Myself as Meretrix, the ex-libris of Sin / and I hate everything that is not to Me for laughing at Myself / I satanize myself as Tara on the Rod of Moses! / The punishment of snakes is laughter in My teeth, / Hell burning My singing! ... / You, who call yourself Man! ... / Go on living your bestiality in the Night of my eyes, / go on swelling your ambition-bull / 'til your stomach bursts frog. ... / I shall, meanwhile, use my throat / to insult you, oh beast! ... / You always arrive first... / I always return tomorrow... / Now I shall wait until you die. ... / And you too, loathsome politicians, / who, once elected, exploit patriotism! / Maquereaux of the Nation that gave birth to you ingenuous / and lays you out for burial ignominious! / And you too, shabby journalists / who tickle and do other things / to public opinion! ... / Ah! How clearly I feel that I was born / from a plague of jealousy. / I am the seven plagues upon the Nile / and the soul of the Borgias in torment!" (*Almada Negreiros (1893-1970)*)

<<http://www.instituto-camoes.pt/cvc/literatura/eng/ALMADA.HTM>> ("Ergo-me pederasta apupado de imbecis, / divinizo-Me Meretrix, ex-libris do Pecado, / e odeio tudo o que não Me é por Me rirem o Eu! / Satanizo-me Tara na Vara de Moisés! / O castigo das serpentes é-me riso nos dentes, / Inferno a arder o Meu cantar! ... / Tu, que te dizes Homem! ... / Vai vivendo a bestialidade na Noite dos meus olhos, / vai inchando a tua ambição-toiro / 'té que a barriga te rebente rã. / Hei-de, entretanto, gastar a garganta / a insultar-te, ó besta! ... / Tu chegas sempre primeiro... / Eu volto sempre amanhã... / Agora vou esperar que morras. ... / E vós também, nojentos da Polític / que explorais eleitos o patriotismo! / Maquereaux da Pátria que vos pariu / ngénuos / e vos amortalha infames! / E vós também, pindéricos jornalistas / que fazeis cócegas e outras coisas / à opinião pública! ... / Ah! Que eu sinto claramente que nasci / de uma praga de ciúmes. / Eu sou as sete pragas sobre o Nilo / e a alma dos Bórgias a penar! ("A Cena do Ódio" 47-49)

A similar display of the full range of the language of sexuality is of course found in Joyce's *Ulysses*, particularly the "Circe" chapter -- see, for example, this view of women as "the cloven sex," distinguished by absence, not presence: "BLOOM (Absently.) Ocularly woman's bivalve case is worse. Always open sesame. The cloven sex. Why they fear vermin, creeping things. Yet Eve and the serpent contradict. Not a historical fact. Obvious analogy to my idea. Serpents too are gluttons for woman's milk. Wind their way through miles of omnivorous forest to sucksucculent her breast dry. Like those bubblyjocular Roman matrons one reads of in Elephantuliasis" (721) -- or when Molly's thoughts turn to matters of sex in the "Penelope" episode: "that delicate looking student that stopped in no 28 with the Citrons Penrose nearly caught me washing through the window only for I snapped up the towel to my face that was his studenting hurt me they used to weaning her till he got doctor Brady to give me the belladonna prescription I had to get him to suck them they were so hard he said it was sweeter and thicker than cows then he wanted to milk me into the tea well hes beyond everything I declare somebody ought to put him in the budget if I only could remember the I half of the things and write a book out of it the works of Master Poldy yes and its so much smoother the skin much an hour he was at them I'm sure by the clock like some kind of a big infant I had at me they want everything in their mouth all the pleasure those men get out of a woman I can feel his mouth O Lord I must stretch myself I wished he was here or somebody to let myself go with and come again like that I feel all fire inside me or if I could dream it when he made me spend the 2nd time tickling me behind with his finger I was coming for about 5 minutes with my legs round him I had to hug him after O Lord I wanted to shout out all sorts of things fuck or shit or anything at all only not to look ugly or those lines from the strain who knows the way hed take it you want to feel your way with a man theyre not all like him thank God some of them want you to be so nice about it" (1023-24). The literary approach to the language of sexuality moved from Victorian moral containment in the nineteenth century to the free art of lust by

the beginning of the twentieth century. "Rezai a Luxúria" ("Pray for Lust"), cried Negreiros in 1917 in his poem "Ultimatum Futurista às Gerações Portuguesas do século XX" ("Futurist Ultimatum to the Portuguese Generations of the Twentieth Century") to persuade the new generation of artists to adopt a new attitude and abandon for good the constraints of the Symbolist aesthetic. The construction of a new modern hero had to include the individual's freedom from every moral constraint including sexual freedom. If *mythopoesis* is story-making, all deconstruction of values is allowed, because myths should not be read as sacred history. This is the lesson of Joyce's *Ulysses*: a story not to be told but to be studied over a long period of time. What is truly innovative in Joyce's approach is the fact that modern myths are not stories to be shared but stories to be manipulated and re-told in the light of what we do today. We are not asked to respect and revere our past more than our present. This is the new mythology of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Pessoa's poem "Mensagem" ("Message") is the work of a disciple of Homer in the sense that Pessoa believes his country can recover all its past glories. But it is rather contradictory that Pessoa asks us to revere the past in such a way that no reference to the present should appear. As I read his text, there is no present in his Portugal of the 1930s to be revered since there are no more heroes. The only inspiration left for the poet is in a return to past glories, if the modern artist, in Pessoa's terms, wants to find a meaning for the present where he is living. Pessoa's protagonist, Ricardo Reis, for example, is a modern pagan, unsatisfied with Christian doctrines, choosing instead to worship the ancient Greek gods. Pessoa's poetry is the pinnacle of his own architecture of myths, even if we conclude that the assumed "new mythology" of the beginning of the twentieth century is a flaw in this case, since Pessoa/Reis works exactly with the common knowledge of Greek mythology. In this respect, Pessoa is closer to Yeats than to Joyce since they both sought to restore national pride by exhuming old beliefs in literary symbols as signs of unity and self-possession. Richard Kearney comments correctly on reading the *mythopoeia* of Yeats and Joyce: "In our literature [there are] two opposing tendencies. One led by Yeats sponsored mythology. The other, including Beckett, Flann O'Brien, and Joyce, resolved to demythologise the pretensions of the Revival in the name of a thoroughgoing modernism; it endeavoured to liberate literature from parochial preoccupations with identity into the universal concern of language as an endlessly self-creative process. Yeats offered the myth of Mother Ireland as spiritual or symbolic compensation for the colonial calamities of historical reality. The mythological Mother would restore the lost national identity by calling her sons to sacred rite of blood-sacrifice ... since reality told a story of division and dispossession, Yeats replied with answering symbols of unity and self-possession" (13-14). In the end, Joyce understood before any other modernist artist that there was a risk to capitulate to the modernist cult of individualism, if the aim of literature was to be the simple deliverance of symbolic narratives of identity to achieve self-liberation. Joyce offered us an alternative model of universality that is not necessarily in blind compliance with our mythical heritage or with the promoting of exceptional individuality: Ulysses, Penelope, and Telemachus are European models for every man and woman longing for liberation from a constricting and repressive society.

In the above-quoted letter to Carlo Linati, Joyce adds that each adventure should create its own technique. This is the theory behind Joyce's fictional discourse analysis. When Leopold Bloom says to himself: "If we were all suddenly somebody else" (159), this is not just another statement on the magical transformation of one's self into another character. Joyce is telling us that the characters in *Ulysses* are prefigured by similar characters in Homer's *Odyssey*. In contrast, Pessoa is a master of doubling and in a way he accomplishes in poetry what Leopold Bloom dreams in fiction, and he plays continuously with identities. Pessoa, who brought Walt Whitman's free verse to Portuguese literature, was inspired by the "Song of Myself" in Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* where Whitman justifies his contradictory character as a sign of magnitude and not something to be criticised: "Do I contradict myself? / Very well then I contradict myself, / I am large, I contain multitudes" (51). Pessoa is asking to be compared to that magnitude; because he himself contains multitudes, he believes that only superficial things never contradict themselves: "Be plural like the universe!" he admonishes in his *Páginas Íntimas e de Auto-Interpretação* (57). This condition of plurality and the feeling of containing multitudes inside our selves are exactly what define Leopold Bloom as a universal character. As a fictional and emblematic character, an everyman who con-

tains multitudes, Pessoa is (a) Leopold Bloom. We are entering a world well known in European literature before the Second World War: the world of deep self-analysis, which includes such canons as Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*, Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, Kafka's *The Castle*, and Pessoa's/Soares's *The Book of Disquiet* -- they all give us access to the minds of anti-heroes who only have their inner thoughts to sustain themselves. Among the countless questions to be queried and studied, Joyce gives us the task of deciphering Bloom's thoughts: "What, reduced to their simplest reciprocal form, were Bloom's thoughts about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom and about Stephen's thoughts about Bloom's thoughts about Stephen? He thought that he thought that he was a Jew whereas he knew that he knew that he knew that he was not" (910). This move towards fictional research of the entrapment and anguish of the individual is, in my view, the best key to any comparison between modern Portuguese fiction and the complex world of the stream-of-consciousness in Joyce's fiction. In fiction, inquiries into consciousness are not just a modernist tendency. I illustrate my argumentation with regard to Pessoa and Joyce by reference to our contemporary, the Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, who offers us a fictional exploration of the theme in his acclaimed novel *Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* (*Blindness*). In the novel, Saramago uses a quotation from the Bible's *Book of Exhortations* as the epigraph to his story: "Se podes ver, olha; se podes olhar, repara" (1) ("If you can see, look. If you can look, observe" (1; note that the epigraph is of course fictitious; on the question of author, see Saramago <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol2/iss3/1/>>). Blindness is a metaphor for general human weakness when confronted with the world. In several interviews about this book, Saramago argued that his intention was to prove that we are not perfect and virtuous as human beings. That is why the characters of this novel are unnamed -- "names are of no importance here" (1) says one of them -- since they operate as universal types. Near the end of the novel, when the blind people have their vision restored, one of the allegorical protagonists remarks that we are blind, blind people who can see, but do not see. In chapter twelve of *Ulysses*, "Cyclops," recalling the episode of the *Odyssey* in which Ulysses escapes death by blinding Cyclops, an Irish nationalist merely named "the citizen" (representing the Cyclops, not Ulysses), is another unnamed character, a "Noman," as the victorious Ulysses told the giant Polyphemus his name was. It is known that Joyce's parallel to Polyphemus is this character called the citizen. Here we are introduced to allegorical blindness through which it is possible to see what the common being cannot grasp. It comes in satirical mode, as in "Cyclops," where it is not just blindness but also one-eyed, one-sided vision, unable to discriminate complex realities:

And J.J. and the citizen arguing about law and history with Bloom sticking in an odd word. -- Some people, says Bloom, can see the mote in others' eyes but they can't see the beam in their own. -- Raimeis, says the citizen. There's no-one as blind as the fellow that won't see, if you know what that means. Where are our missing twenty millions of Irish should be here today instead of four, our lost tribes? And our potteries and textiles, the finest in the whole world! And our wool that was sold in Rome in the time of Juvenal and our flax and our damask from the looms of Antrim and our Limerick lace, our tanneries and our white flint glass down there by Ballybough and our Huguenot poplin that we have since Jacquard de Lyon and our woven silk and our Foxford tweeds and ivory raised point from the Carmelite convent in New Ross, nothing like it in the whole wide world. Where are the Greek merchants that came through the pillars of Hercules, the Gibraltar now grabbed by the foe of mankind, with gold and Tyrian purple to sell in Wexford at the fair of Carmen? Read Tacitus and Ptolemy, even Giraldus Cambrensis. Wine, peltries, Connemara marble, silver from Tipperary, second to none, our farfamed horses even today, the Irish hobbies, with king Philip of Spain offering to pay customs duties for the right to fish in our waters. What do the yellowjohns of Anglia owe us for our ruined trade and our ruined hearths? And the beds of the Barrow and Shannon they won't deepen with millions of acres of marsh and bog to make us all die of consumption? -- As treeless as Portugal we'll be soon, says John Wyse, or Heligoland with its one tree if something is not done to reafforest the land. Larches, firs, all the trees of the conifer family are going fast. I was reading a report of lord Castletown's. (481-82)

Apart from the fact that it has yet to be proven that Portugal is an immense treeless country, the allegorical vision of blindness extends to blindness of inner consciousness in the Proteus episode, when Joyce's Stephen Dedalus examines the internal world of solipsism. He can only find the "ineluctable modality of the visible" by closing his eyes and withdrawing from everything known to them, and then he hears himself walking (the "ineluctable modality of the audible") until he opens his eyes to find that the world was "There all the time without you: and ever shall be, world with-

out end" (51-52). Stephen's closing his eyes is a symbol for the blindness of solipsism, where one has to measure the relation of inner vision and outer reality in order to find out what would it mean Being-in-the-world (the specific union of man with the world in Heidegger's philosophy). Allegorical blindness, which could be appraised in these Heideggerian terms -- something build in our existential constituency to better understand the external reality -- can amplify everyone's vulnerability to the order of things. The world is as it is, but we are always trying to change it according to our most vain desires and deceits. Being-in-the-world here indicates to our effort to fit in the outside world. In Saramago's view, the truth is what we cannot bear to see. This is also the case of Stephen Dedalus: allegorical blindness is a way to explain our paradoxes and hidden truths, or blindness to one's own blindness, which is, after all, the true subject matter of Pessoa's and Saramago's writing. The obvious comparison between Stephen Dedalus's blindness and the tradition of allegorical blindness is with such masterpieces as Camus's *The Plague*, Kafka's *The Trial*, or Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. Reading Saramago's text on the subject, Bob Corbett adds to the comparison H.G. Wells's short story "The Country of the Blind" (1911), where allegorical blindness is an excuse for the representation of a blinkered society, peopled with men who can see but who are not the enlightened ones

(<<http://www.webster.edu/~corbetre/personal/reading/saramago-blindness.html>>). Faced with all these dystopian worlds, the individual faces the same kinds of problems: the dark side of ethics is before him/her, and then he/she has to attain true knowledge of herself/himself by renouncing the belief that an individual who sees is always an enlightened human being. This is not magical realism, but, rather, a straightforward view of morals. Let us go back to Saramago's story, when the ophthalmologist deals with the fact he has become as blind as his most recent patient: "He turned to where a mirror was, and this time he did not wonder, What's going on, he did not say there are a thousand reasons why the human brain should close down, he simply stretched out his hands until he touched the glass, he knew that his image was there watching him, his image could see him, he could not see his image" (*Blindness* 29) / "Depois virou-se para onde sabia que estava o espelho, desta vez não perguntou Que será isto, não disse Há mil razões para que o cérebro humano se feche, só estendeu as mãos até tocar o vidro, sabia que a sua imagem estava ali a olhá-lo, a imagem via-o a ele, ele não via a imagem" (*Ensaio sobre a Cegueira* 38). This is also the case with Stephen Dedalus's brief and self-controlled blindness: Joyce and Saramago are not legitimating a new path through which man may reach enlightenment; rather, they are showing us that there is no such a thing as a unique view of the world capable of changing the way things are known to us. No one has the power to know the right way to enlightenment. Everyone has to try, by one's own means, to find the way.

It is typically Joycean to come to the conclusion that such a quest will be successful only through the examination of one's consciousness. As in the world of Stephen Dedalus, stream-of-consciousness in Pessoa's world signifies being lost in a mosaic of dreams and mirror-questions such as "Who am I?," "What makes me write?," "To whom shall I turn?," etc. This pattern of inner quest along with the re-invention of anti-heroes that we find in Proust, Joyce, Woolf, Kafka, Pessoa, and many others, could already be found in Raul Brandão, who preceded all these masters, publishing two ground-breaking novels at the beginning of the twentieth century, *A Farsa* (1903; *The Farce*) and *Húmus* (1917, *Humus*). In Brandão we have the invention of characters whose main goal in their fictional life is the metaphysical inquiry of themselves: "I need a God that pays attention to me, that listens to me, that knows I am suffering and can see me suffering. I need a God that saves me or that condemns me. I need a God that can give me shelter. I need a mind higher than my own and in contact with mine" (*Humus*; my translation) / "Preciso de um Deus que me atenda, que me escute, que saiba que sofro e que me veja sofrer. Preciso de um Deus que me salve ou que me condene. Preciso de um Deus que me ampare. Preciso de uma inteligência superior à minha e em comunicação com a minha" (*Húmus* 119). The modernist hero faces time as his last adversary. God plays a role, often on the side of time; God and time are the undying enemy of humanity, in particular the individual who has only himself/herself as a companion. Time is not any time: in the case of Ulysses's one-day story and in the case of the apparently traditional opening of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* -- "Once upon a time and a very good time it was there

was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was coming down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo" (1) -- time is always a door to a symbolic world built from artistic imagination. Modernist heroes do not question time apart from their own existence. But individual time has to signify a universal symbol. That is what the young Stephen Dedalus seeks in his challenge to the meaning of the most universal of symbols. In spite of the many questions it poses, Joyce's *Ulysses* is a book of possible answers to the human stage-show where God is expected to appear as a consequence of humanity's arduous self-reflection. Joyce created a model for interrogating one's consciousness that is a result of the survival of so many contradictory possibilities of personal existence. The type of character he helped to consecrate seems to argue, "I'm looking for answers, therefore I exist."

Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom are famous characters because they appear to not do anything as yhey suffer, they think, they walk, they wander, they contemplate, and they even do thinking about thinking. One sees this also in Saramago's work, which uses frequently common people rejecting volition, as is the case with Doctor Ricardo Reis, the central character of a fictional interpretation of Fernando Pessoa's famous heteronym, in Saramago's 1984 novel *O Ano da Morte de Ricardo Reis*. Saramago's protagonist is similar to Stephen Dedalus in that he has the audacity to proclaim to the world his role as a spectator and not a participant citizen: he is satisfied to be "Serene and watching life from a distance" in the exact mood we find young Stephen's looking at the sky in search of distant memories: "his eyes were still fixed calmly on the colourless sky" (157). Although Stephen watches life "from a distance," he is capable of some breakthrough acts, as when he teaches, or when he delivers a letter to a newspaper, or when he presents a theory on *Hamlet*. Saramago's Reis remains a passive citizen all the time, watching life literally from a distance. It has been argued it is discourse that is the real hero of *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, because of the mastering of language and the display of many narrative techniques. One could suggest, as Joyce does, that the author should not be visible in the text and that mastering the building of the novel is something to be credited to the novel itself. This has been the case of one of the two most acclaimed Portuguese novelists of today, António Lobo Antunes, arguably José Saramago's favourite rival. In a rare confession by a contemporary Portuguese novelist who has actually read *Ulysses*, Lobo Antunes disagrees with Joyce's mastery because the text represents, he argues in an interview, an authorial mark rather than a unique textual mark:

Yesterday I was reading Joyce's *Ulysses*, and I consider this novel fantastic as regards its verbal richness, but, at the same time, I was a little annoyed because I didn't understand what justified all that extraordinary verbal lushness. Easy pirouettes, the fantastic showcase of a powerful skill for verbal inventiveness, it reflects a certain sense of futility because it does not help the plot in terms of narrative effectiveness. On the one hand, it is important to dominate language, words, but for me that is not enough because, in the end, you would see that it isn't the most important thing. The important thing is for the book to be made by itself, that it can have an existence of its own, and that its value can be measured by itself, and not because someone has done it. With Joyce, we are always feeling his skill, his learning as a writer is an imposition on us and we are all the time observing that it is him, Joyce himself, who is behind everything. That reminds me when I speak to some French people. I always have the impression that they are saying to me: 'Look how intelligent I am.' We are not the ones supposed to be intelligent, the book is" (my translation) / "Ontem estava a ler o Ulisses de Joyce e considero que a novela [sic] é fantástica do ponto de vista da sua riqueza verbal, mas, ao mesmo tempo, aborrecia-me um pouco porque não percebia ao serviço de quê está esse extraordinário alarde verbal. A pirueta pela pirueta, o mostruário fantástico de uma imensa capacidade de invenção verbal, fica um pouco no vazio, porque não ajuda a história no sentido da eficácia narrativa. Por um lado, é importante dominar a linguagem, as palavras, mas a mim inquietar-me-ia muito ficar só nisso porque, no final, percebe-se que não é isso o importante. O importante é que o livro se faça sozinho, que tenha existência própria e que valha por si mesmo, e não que alguém o tenha feito. Com Joyce, estamos sempre a sentir a sua habilidade, a sua perícia como escritor é-nos imposta e estamos todo o tempo a notar que é ele, o próprio Joyce, que está por detrás de tudo. Isso recorda-me quando falo com alguns franceses. Tenho sempre a impressão de que me estão a dizer: 'Olha como sou inteligente.' Não és tu que tens de ser inteligente; é o livro que tem de o ser." (29)

This is a rather confusing assessment of Joyce's erudition, as if an author could ever be separated from his/her creation. In the first place, Lobo Antunes's views go against structuralist and post-structuralist interpretations of Joyce, which see his work precisely as language generating its own meanings independently of any authorial intention. For instance, Jacques Derrida eulogized *Finnegans Wake* as a "great paradigm" in which Joyce: "repeats and mobilizes and babelizes the

(asymptotic) totality of the equivocal he makes this his theme and his operation, he trips to make outcrop, with the greatest possible synchrony, at great speed, the greatest power of the meanings buried in each syllabic fragment, subjecting each atom of writing to fission in order to overload the unconscious with the whole memory of man: mythologies, religion, philosophies, sciences, psychoanalysis, literatures" (149). In Lobo Antunes's novels, the language of fiction is rather depending on syntax and prosody than on the babelization of narrative or "the whole memory of man." Besides, anonymity is not a solution for finding the real value of a work of art, as Lobo Antunes seems to believe, invoking in that same interview William Faulkner who wished that his works could have been published anonymously. The value of fictional discourse can be assessed in many other ways. In spite of all the obvious differences of language and style and his own objections to Joyce's work, Lobo Antunes's prose shares with Joyce the same preoccupation with the framework of discourse. They are both experimental novelists who work on the fictional text as the surgeon works on the human body. In his most recent novels, Lobo Antunes is looking for a kind of cleansing of language, using new discursive forms of prose and prosody, to use a phrase used to level criticism at controlled conventions in late nineteenth-century French literature, and this in my view can be compared to Joyce's programmatic writing in *Finnegans Wake*. For instance, in Antunes's *Manual do Inquisidores*, the protagonist's consciousness wanders to three different time periods and we are forced to follow these leaps between fictional commentaries and reports in order to retrieve the meaning of the novel. The novel is about the disturbing story of Salazar's regime related in the mode of narrative of stream-of-consciousness by characters damaged as a result of brutal authoritarianism. In a crazy swirl of narratives, very much like what we experience in Joyce's *Ulysses*, in spite of the obvious differences of subject matter, I contend that it is the intensity of the individual voices that grabs the reader's interest. To communicate what consciousness has to say when caught in a river of troubles can be learnt in any of Joyce's Dedalus fictions while it is the kaleidoscopic mode of expression that we find distinctive, but not at any cost. Lobo Antunes alternates between "reports" and "commentary" of the events and the thoughts of all protagonists of his novel. Appropriately, the reviewer of the novel in *The New York Times* states: "Ostensibly a novel, it is closer to baleful puppet theater, one whose grotesque figures caricature a reality beyond the reach of realism" (Eder

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9401EED71231F936A25752C0A9659C8B63>>).

In such a theatre, Lobo Antunes cannot deny that his novel relies on fooling the reader in a game of polyphony, so that the modernist slogan "Stop making sense!" as hailed once by Portuguese futurist poets in their manifesto *Portugal Futurista* (1917), may prevail at all times.

The difference between Joyce's approach to the question of narrative writing and building and that has been adopted by many contemporary postmodernist novelists is, in my view, quite simple: Joyce did not have to express his view addressing directly the reader, but rather in direct dialogue with language itself. The question of writing by contrast can derive from reading Joyce's fiction and becoming aware that it is impossible to equal, let alone surpass, the limits Joyce has established in and for the novel. It is as if Joyce has created a myth: language is a kind of a monster that only a great writer can tame. One can of course try, as Maria Velho da Costa did in her novel *Casas Pardas* (1977; *Grey Houses*), where she follows Joyce's lesson on how to write an interior monologue in a section of the novel called "Monólogo do Soldado quando Cão" ("Monologue of the Soldier as a Dog"), a highly creative piece of writing that serves both as a mirror of non-sophisticated language and the verbal expressions of nonsense:

It's not that, woman, you also locked them away from my mother, here am I worn out, today I was three hours in the van with those stupid students howling all round us, short and long throws and one of those hit the top of the van with a stone as if our head had been hit inside and then our lieutenant commanded us to attack and I was pissed off because the guys were about to thrash a bunch of kids running through the grass and the brushwood around, with the mad dogs, one of them stung her face, a strong girl, thanks to her hair otherwise the dog, stumbling against each other, and the bravest chasing after us, hallooing at a distance, damn it, our commanding officer had already advised us that order should be maintained and this and that, Goddamn you, crooks and dealers you can get them, I don't fancy shooting anyone, I've done too many patrols in winter with snow from the station up to the top of the mountain, 'member?, but it seems that those guys don't wanna go to war, I don't either, fuck me, they promise a lot of stuff, the military this, the military that, you'll have classes, you'll have food, that if you stay at the quarters it's better than sowing one seed to

keep four with the hoe between your fingers, that you don't have to go to France, and then you'll see it's a rubbish salary, and now you have to cover up your mates whipping up the dogs against the lads' shins." (My translation) / "Não é isso mulher, também mos fechastes à minha mãe, estou mas é aqui derreado, hoje estive três horas metido na carrinha com os cabritos dos estudantes a berrar à volta, ele era curtas e compridas e um até acertou no tejadilho com uma pedrada que parecia que era no dentro dos ossos da cabeça e depois o nosso tenente inda deu ordens para a gente avançar e chateei-me de agora a malta ir malhar num estendal de putos todos a pirarem-se por aquela erva afora e mais os matorrais à volta, com os cães que pareciam danados, um até abocanhou uma cachopa na cara, uma raparigaça, o que le valeu foi os cabelos senão levava-lhe metade, a empegarem uns nos outros e os mais afoitos a fazerem-se à gente, a açularem de longe, rais parta, que o nosso comandante já nos tinha avisado que a manutenção da ordem mais isto mais aquilo, porra, malfeitores e passadores da raia inda vá que não vá, que eu não gosto de andar a meter chumbo em ninguém, fiz muita patrulha debaixo da neve do posto aos cabeços da serra, alembras-te?, mas parece que os gajos o que não querem é ir para a guerra, também eu não, olha que porra, prometem uma catrefa de coisas à gente, que a guarda isto, que a guarda aquilo, que dão escola, que dão cantina, que a vida de posto sempre é mais certa que andar a semear uma para arrecadar quatro com a enxada nas unhas, que escusa um gajo de ir malhar com os costados à França, e vai-se a ver é uma miséria dum vencimento e agora para andar a cobrir os camarradas a atçar os cães às canelas dos ganapos. (170)

This fictionalization of the stream-of-consciousness mode of narrative is innovative because it goes beyond Molly Bloom's exemplary discourse and the modernist pattern for self-reflexivity. The post-modern novelist is obsessed with the mastering of fictional discourse and with the fictional discourses of his/her literary heritage. In order to achieve this, the novel has turned into metafiction, metafiction has turned into discontinuities, and textuality has turned into intertextual relations with well-known works of art of the past. *Casas Pardas* is a grabslap-up meal of intertexts, with ingredients taken from all over history. These are many similar examples whose problems of writing are reflected in fiction. But even where a post-modern novelist loses his power to bring under control his ability to write, he will precisely use that frustration as the subject matter of his art. We can see that in another Dedalus-like character in contemporary Portuguese literature: the anti-hero of the anti-novel in Augusto Abelaira's 1982 *O Bosque Harmonioso* (The Uncluttered Wood). This multi-layered novel makes us believe that there existed once a new manuscript of the Portuguese classical work *O Bosque Deleitoso* (The Pleasing Wood), but the reader will never know what kind of book is being written, the "new" *O Bosque Deleitoso* or a fictitious manuscript about which a book, *O Bosque Harmonioso*, is being written? I propose that with Abelaira's text we reach the boundaries of the novel as a literary genre in Portuguese literature and perhaps beyond. We know with Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* that there is no such a thing as the boundary of the novel, but what we are facing with a narrative that is a fictionalization of a classical and lost narrative, as it is the case with *O Bosque Harmonioso*, is the ultimate test of the novel. The author gives the reader some special advice: "I am not writing a novel, but an erudite work. If you ever think this is a novel, close the book" (my translation) / "E eu não estou a escrever um romance, mas um trabalho erudito. Quem supõe ser um romance que feche este livro" (73). One of Joyce's most significant contributions to modern literature is the idea of the novel as a narrative encyclopaedia. Joyce's well-known self-presentation of Ulysses is: "It is also a kind of encyclopaedia. My intention is not only to render the myth sub specie tempus nostri but also to allow each adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being interconnected and interrelated in the somatic scheme of the whole) to condition and even to create its own technique" (Letter to Carlo Linati" 271). The encyclopaedic nature of discourse is not only the accumulation of information but also the/a portrait of life itself: *Ulysses* is an encyclopaedia of human life, just as it is a kind of encyclopaedia of human knowledge through language. In contemporary Portuguese literature, from modernism onward, several novelists have decided to go in the same direction -- the undomestication of style, language, and discourse as never experienced before. In addition to the previously discussed authors I would list Nuno Bragança is a prime example. His 1969 novel *A Noite e o Riso* (The Night and the Laughter) depicts a journey through the mind of an anti-hero similar to Stephen Dedalus who wanders through Lisbon in search of contact, including the way in which he should interact with women. The night of Nuno Bragança's Lisbon is a territory of debauchery and individual decadence similar to the territory inhabited by Leopold Bloom in his Dublin wanderings: "One of my mates was Tomás Guttierres. 'Let's go and fish for whores,' he suggested. In silence we approved, I and the other fellow, who was a fictitious painter called Leandro Helena

Rubinstein. We steered calmly to the Intendente. Suddenly, two shadows, bitter quarrel, on the point of practical gestures. A couple. What hit my eyes and stayed there was the woman's unbound hair, in the wind, restlessly turned into the top of a beech tree as if it was messed up by the north wind, a beauty running to the stars of the sky which is swept away. 'That one,' I said. 'She's not unavailable,' observed Leandro Helena Rubinstein. But Tomás: 'We'll make her available and that's it.' At night and already with a few drinks it was like that" (my translation) / "Um dos meus companheiros era o Tomás Guttierres. 'Vamos pescar pegas,' sugeri. Caladamente concordámos, eu e o outro, que era um pintor fictício chamado Leandro Helena Rubinstein. Rumámos sossegadamente para o Intendente. Nisto, dois vultos, discussão acesa, à bica de gestos práticos. Um casal. O que me saltou à vista e ficou nela foi o cabelo solto da mulher, ao vento, remexidamente feito grande copa de faia despenteada a sopros de nortada, beleza assente de encontro às estrelas do céu assim varrido. 'Aquela,' disse eu. 'Está ocupada,' observou o Leandro Helena Rubinstein. Mas o Tomás: 'Desocupa-se e andou.' À noite e com uns copos era assim" (127). Compare now Bragança's Lisbon with Joyce's Dublin nightscape: "General thirst. Good puzzle would be cross Dublin without passing a pub. Save it they can't. Off the drunks perhaps. Put down three and carry five ... (BLOOM PASSES. CHEAP WHORES, SINGLY, COUPLED, SHAWLED, DISHEVELLED, CALL FROM LANES, DOORS, CORNERS.) THE WHORES: Are you going far, queer fellow? / How's your middle leg? / Got a match on you? / Eh, come here till I stiffen it for you" (*Ulysses* 79, 659-60). Bragança's novel is a banquet of free prose and free style. The writing is similar to Joyce's in that aspect as well and the opulence of language and the quest for new forms for fictional prose end up taking over the plot. Writing as writing, writing on writing, or writing against writing seems to be the new art of post-modern fiction. Bragança ends his novel on an ironic, pseudo-Romantic note: "I write this under an ash tree which actually is a dry pine tree" (my translation) / "Escrevo isto debaixo de um freixo que por acaso é um pinheiro seco" (228). To me, this last chapter or "panel," as it is called, is an exercise in the relish of fictional writing.

In 1977 Manuel da Silva Ramos and Alface, together published *Os Lusíadas* (The Lusiads), a true *omnium gatherum* or a collection of all things possible and imaginable, which, glued together, end up as a novel. Unrefined prosody and syntax and a medley of foreign languages, colloquial speech and underground dialects are all part of the original style created in this text, that alludes directly to their precursor James Joyce, as in the following recreation with English and French languages: "(Reading) A booklook cooking a luke cake: the roof's poeerty. the sonnehate: the ice crime's faceprose: the sick's seaside of romance Viviane: my just masturbation of Trieste: ana pivia plurumbrella: my yo-yo day: when cinema is for a young right man its right portito: wine: no no: arttriste and exiliome: surend night: au revoir mister Duvivier: o vivere! Ahmen and whybluesky. A bananality for your tongueball. You dance, Silvia Beach? Unknown river on an unsuspected land. God denied me thrice to eat the dubliner cock and Moses prepared the plot of the tables of the law for my believing in sancta simplicitas of writing. Unknown teeth, lapsus liquor, disappear in my words. Please, leave Ulysses poor in Zurich. But walking on stilts in this boomk. The raven of Edgar turns around the lamp of Aladino. Who is writing? Boris Karloff, of course. And why? By copyblood reasons. The servant's return is older than the paper. And the paper, for your time, is the vampide of future, look Mister Present da Silva Passe, I read, although. Turpitude" (178). The novel has a few inserts of text in English and other languages, ancient and modern. The passage quoted here is written in English, as a parody of the global language of post-industrial societies. On the other hand, the dialogical strategy of the text includes a play with foreign phrases as they were being gradually incorporated into Portuguese after the Revolution of 1974. The authors of the text adopt the parodic style of such as Laurence's *Tristram Shandy* and prose styles and narrative devices of Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*. They follow Sterne's manipulations of the printed page, playing with all sort of sentences, fragmented texts, and intertexts whereby we encounter the complete demolition of narrative linearity, where no story is told, and no sentence is completed within the frame of reference of a conventional plot. The authors dish out a buffet of disruptive languages and there is even a thin sheet of cork in the middle of the book, to ensure that the "lucky" owner of this book will have it saved when he or her sinks, an allusion to Camões who sunk and saved himself and his master-piece by swimming with one hand

and holding the manuscript of *The Lusiads* with the other. Functioning as a parody of traditional novels, especially those interested only in straightforward plots and narrative linearity, this novel is designed to deconstruct any illusion of reality.

*The Lusiads* parodies not only Camões's classic epic poem but also tries to say that we can but laugh at the idea of having an epic view of the society in which we live today (today here means, literally, Portugal in 1977, right after the Revolution of 1974, when democracy was restored, but the moral of the book still stands). This post-modern *Lusiads* is *Finnegans Wake* with a laugh and without the purpose of making history in Portuguese literature with language testing. It is, rather, as I suggested previously, an encyclopaedia of a-historical characters and events, literary styles and allusions, rhetorical devices, and graphic amusements, all of which are taken, used, combined, fragmented, discarded, scattered, and alienated to produce one of the most original (but today forgotten) novel of post-modern Portuguese fiction. Joyce wanted his *Ulysses* to be an "epic" and an "adventure" as well as serving as an "encyclopaedia." *The Lusiads* is all of that turned up-side-down: a mock-epic populated by anti-heroes and a gathering of narrative techniques. *Finnegans Wake* is a literary thesis on the pun since its words are not Standard English, but portmanteau fabrications or imaginary words in which different words from various languages and non-languages are present, but also as an identifiable Anglo-Irish syntax and accent, and predominant vocabulary. It is this ultimate celebration of language that we can experience in *The Lusiads*, too. But are we actually reading the unreadable? I found on the world wide web an unsurmountably large number of complaints on *Finnegans Wake*'s illegibility. Clearly, we cannot and should not read these experimental masterpieces in the same spirit as when we go to the movies to enjoy *Star Wars*. To enjoy works like *Finnegans Wake* or *The Lusiads*, one has to be reconciled with literature in the first place, in the sense that the reader should not have any prejudice towards the controlled conventions of literary theory. This is not a new story. Samuel Johnson asserted in 1776 that the popularity of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* would not last because "Nothing odd will do long" (qtd. in Boswell

<<http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/boswell/james/osgood/>>). In my mind, there is no doubt Johnson would have said the same of Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* and most likely also of *The Lusiads* or Saramago's *Blindness*. Joyce and his highly experimental novels opened up new possibilities and vistas to literature, making us rethink its boundaries. I propose that it is in this sense and context we should understand the impact/influence of Joyce's work and of modernism in contemporary Portuguese literature.

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