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Apresentação

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

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Presentation

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

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

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EDITED BY:

SOFIA DE MELO ARAÚJO

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A Prefatory Note

Sofia de Melo Araújo

CETAPS

Via Panoramica continues its endeavour to be a panoramic path from which, and in which, sights and views are expanded, grow, and develop. Following our project to disseminate new work in an open-access format, this issue again opens our doors to young researchers, to voices yet unheard, and to precursor approaches. Thus, we attempt to cater to the need for scientific outlets on Anglo-American studies in Portugal.

In "[R]Evolution in Foreign Language Teaching - Giving Voice to International Teachers", Nicolas Hurst and Edita Bekteshi look at the different ways innovation is perceived in varied teaching contexts and query the barriers between perceiving change to teaching and learning practices as evolution and as revolution. Professionals are listened to and from that stems a defence for the implementation of glocally appropriate approaches to foreign language teaching and learning. Ana Leão, too, focuses her essay "Interculturality in English Language Teaching" on teachers' perceptions and beliefs as they influence, and even determine, their goals, performance, and results. This is done by reading into the balance between cultural diversity and communicative competence, as Leão aims to respond to both current and intrinsic challenges.

In literature, also, this issue delves into multiple layers of analysis and original outlooks, focusing on specific instances of creation and readership. In "The Code of Chaos - Wilderness, Language and the Circularity of Escape in Don DeLillo's *The Names*", João Paulo Guimarães tackles the ways in which American Exceptionalism and American dreams of a new world, "a plane yet unsoiled by history" go together with rejecting linear temporality, circularity of escape, and a fascination with wilderness in Don DeLillo's work and in the exceptional existence of a contemporary set of self-proclaimed "denizens of an original unpolluted paradise". Susana Correia also resorts to spatiality studies and a look at a space to develop an ingenious and original reading in her essay "A Guerra Fria e a dissolução dos conceitos público-privado em *The Bell Jar* e poesia selecionada de Sylvia Plath". Correia presents an unexpected political side to Plath by emphasising the role of the Cold War in how international politics and individual trauma trace parallel paths, dissolving the gap between public and private

in some of her texts. Finally, "Is there any way out? *Black Mirror* as a critical dystopia of the society of the spectacle", by Juliana Lopes, reads the contemporary series in the light of Guy Debord's society of the spectacle and establishes it as a critical dystopia reckoning with multiple layers of existence, performances, and social masks in the pursuit for a way out amidst hopelessness.

[R]Evolution in Foreign Language Teaching - Giving Voice to International Teachers

Nicolas Hurst

FACULDADE DE LETRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO – CETAPS

Edita Bekteshi

FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA "ISA BOLETINI", KOSOVO

Abstract

In the last few decades, foreign language instruction in Higher Education institutions (HEIs) has changed from its traditional teaching mode (transmission of knowledge) to a more modern teaching mode (development of competences); however, this change has been implemented in disparate ways in different contexts around the globe.

In terms of foreign language teaching (FLT) methodology in an international context, these changes may be seen to represent an **Evolution**, in certain contexts or a **Revolution**, in others. This study aims to give voice to FLT practitioners from just such different educational settings: professionals who are concerned with developing better FLT methodology. How difficult are the ideas of **[R]evolution** in education to describe? How easy or how hard is to put the new educative practices in place?

The conclusion is that nowadays teachers' interpretations of what is 'modern' is based on modifying students' learning behaviours through the use of effective, cognitive methods based on social-cultural interaction. The paper suggests that further methodological change has the potential to help make significant progress towards strategic development in 21st century society, particularly with issues related to interculturality, global citizenship education and the implementation of glocally (**Glo**bal and Lo**cal**) appropriate approaches to FL teaching and learning.

Keywords: Revolution, Evolution, Glocal, Culture, Foreign Language Teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

Social change is inevitable and if we reflect on the changes of the last one hundred years, we can cite several crucial domains: personal communications (the smart phone), mass transportation (high speed trains or low cost airlines) or even medicine (organ transplants, stem cell research). Foreign language education has also changed radically: these changes may have been less dramatic (more gradual) or less obvious (within the 'closed' world of classrooms) but they have certainly taken place: it would nowadays be virtually impossible to find an FLT practitioner who advocates a methodology based on the translation of large passages of literary texts or the memorization of extensive bilingual vocabulary lists. In addition to this, as Campo, Negro and Núñez point out:

> The current method of teaching has succumbed to some tremendous changes in the past 100 years, which makes us reconsider the model of teaching and the typology of the classroom, among others, as well as how to reproduce and display the information to the student (1).

However, there are also teaching contexts where we may doubt if there have really been any changes; for example, referencing 2017 data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, we see that the physical teaching/learning environment of many classrooms has remained typically the same: seats in rows facing the board, teacher at the front: students facing their teacher and 'admiring' their peers' backs; this does not show any huge change in education. Of course, some new features may have been added: white boards, colour markers, the hardware for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) but can we be certain that these 'educative ingredients' have had a 'strong effect on learning? Are the students able to speak or write more efficiently (with all these extra teaching tools)? Furthermore, when we speak about the skill of reading, there is a belief held by some older generation teachers that students nowadays do not like reading: 'they love to hate reading'. This may (or, more likely, may not) be true since young people nowadays tend to read in screen-mediated, digital environments (Eshet-Alkaai) rather than hard copy materials, but it serves to illustrate that FLT must deal with change and innovation in society if it is to be able to perform its primary function: to deliver learning. Bransford et al. with respect to learning, claim that if students understand then it improves their memory. i.e. they will remember it for a longer time. However, the longer and more complex things are to remember, the more the need to emphasise meaning. This is because our

society may be characterised by its diversity, complexity and interconnectedness; educational contexts must embrace this fact and adjust to 21st century societies' needs.

In general, when speaking about education, specifically about FLT/English language teaching, we consider it (English), as a system that contributes to general societal areas. That is, it helps its users to 'open more doors' and to be able to progress in every field of societal inquiry. Harmer, in his description about English language, points out that "English is currently a lingua franca for many people in the world… and it continues to march over the globe" (Harmer 5). FLT functions as an open social cognitive system interacting with its surroundings (through social media, through mass entertainment, through personal and commercial relationships and so on), trying to maximize the input and output in relation to these surroundings and to minimize learning pressure. Modern society involves much diversity and many competences and skills: FLT has to respond the learner needs that are resultant. Learners desired learning outcomes must be addressed through multiple teaching formats to accommodate the diverse rhythms of today's foreign language learning classrooms (Brookfield). Guidance must be provided (by the textbooks, the teachers, and the students themselves) shifting from what is already known to new learning; new specific knowledge to complement existing general knowledge: networks of understanding connected for the purpose of better learning. This ongoing challenge in teaching includes deeper and wider learning which demands locally-adjusted, modern teaching approaches:

> Today's language classroom is vastly different from that of the mid-to-late twentieth century. The focus is no longer on grammar, memorization and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to connect to others around the globe. (Eaton 16).

Considering the points mentioned above, all educational systems have probably been 'guilty' of using different solutions. A problem appears if a student who wants to study, or continue their studies in another country becomes muddled, especially when it comes to comparing two countries that may be very 'distant' from each other, i.e. in culture, in language, let alone in different courses or subjects (as is the case with international mobility students who cannot find equivalent subjects in their host institutions). Individual, national systems need to treat this as a serious issue which requires immediate correction when discussing the need for further change. Teachers need to stop and think what the educational system in that country needs to change in

order to increase learners' education in an international context, i.e. deeper and wider learning, as well as their unique, local learning experiences.

Traditional FLT that uses traditional methods was fairly widespread in many contexts, as mentioned by Richards and Rodgers, Larsen-Freeman and Harmer, but questions may be raised about the efficiency and about efficacy of consequent learning: these are the main issues when dealing with the 21st century FL learning. Scrivener succinctly describes traditional teaching as: "jug and mug - the knowledge being poured from one receptacle into an empty one", (Scrivener 15); where the teacher is the 'knower' who passes on the knowledge. The same author also warns about the risk if only these approaches are being used. Thus, 'deep' and 'wide' approaches to learning are a 'must' in modern education. Watkins explains that these deep approaches to learning are associated with specific learning environments, features of which include the role of the teacher, his/her involvement and support, and student collaboration, all of which should be taken into consideration in a modern teaching context, i.e. at both levels, local and global. Given that increasing numbers of HEI students are seeking to vary the location of their study, it seems that there are strong reasons for having systemic similarities in education, reasoning that:

- A common system of education will allow learners less complicated mobility periods in other counties.
- A common system of education would imply similar institutional frameworks which would ease the mobility administrators' burden - readymade teaching plans, control over the range of subjects on offer, i.e. within the Bologna Process.
- A common system of education would make it easier to demonstrate and deliver content within already overloaded curricula.

Based on the above, we can invoke the need for revolution or evolution within all-embracing educative systems: "[...] over the next generation, the kind of education our young people receive may prove to be more important than how much education they receive" (Blinder 10). If in some countries there is a need for some kind of evolution in education, just light adjustments or changes in education, other countries might need a genuine revolution. This means that: if in one country, the system of education does not have anything in common with other countries' education system, the 'model' of revolution (radical methodological change) should be applied. Changing the mentalities in operation in a local environment should have its main focus on an 'open' holistic educative approach, which might help the students

(as a part of modern society) to become aware of different opportunities for learning. That is, different opportunities for the student to integrate into broader, global society. The 21st century FLT curriculum should provide students with opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes within an open and diverse learning community (Halinen).

Cashia *et al* affirm that "there is a growing need for action at both national, and European level to bring about the necessary changes required for an open and innovative European educational culture based on the creative and innovative potential of its future generations" (Cashia *et al* 11). Based on that, this paper is interested in finding out HEI teachers' opinions about **[R]evolution** in education, their teaching philosophy and their views on the 21st century teaching challenges. To this end, the questions below were addressed to a group of HEI teachers drawn from countries in Europe and beyond:

- What is the 21st century teaching philosophy of these university FL teachers?
- What are the main challenges these teachers identify in FLT?
- Should there be **evolution or revolution** in education, in general?

The foundation to these questions lies in foreign language education, in our case of the English language, being considered as a global social representation of values, as also mentioned by Harmer.

Additionally, with respect to FLT, as a vehicle of global representations of social values, teachers do also play a role. This is also supported by Scrivener, who states that "teachers are learners who learn about language, methodology, peoples' life" (Scrivener 393), that is, if students learn a foreign language they learn about a foreign language, a foreign culture and help deliver universal social values. Thus the students will have more knowledge about those global social values. This only shows that the importance of knowing a FL in the 21st century naturally entails the importance of developing, spreading and balancing FLT in each country. This could also contribute to harmonizing glocal teaching/learning standards, helping teachers and learners to make fully informed teaching/learning choices. It is also based on the well-known perspective of Piaget (1971), who supports cognitive constructivism as meaningful learning that requires the learners to construct knowledge, not to receive it. This is precisely what our society, including the FL students of the 21st century need: to be actively involved in the learning process, to actively experience and take responsibility for their own learning. No teacher can learn for a student.

The study supports the concept of 'life-long learning' being applied to teachers' careers as does Scrivener who has doubts about teachers who stop learning, claiming that they also stop being involved in education (21-3). He also reasons that part of the enthusiasm that teachers should have for their profession should include taking on the role of learner, both in relation to teaching practices and to being an active learner alongside the students. All the teachers interviewed for this paper have many years of experience, and, hopefully, demonstrate they conform to this model.

This study was conducted in 2016 in Portugal with ten university EL teachers of different nationalities. The teachers in question were from Portugal (three teachers; T1, T2, T3), Serbia (two teachers T1, T2), while one teacher from Kosovo, one from Macedonia, one from the Maldives, one from Ukraine, and one from Zambia.

The questionnaire included questions about their teaching experience, teaching methods that teachers use mostly nowadays in their classes, their opinion about the teaching methods that work best, their challenges as teachers, what is their opinion about general education, and changes that are needed, in local and global contexts.

RESULTS

One important point of this paper is that if the educational systems are going to embrace change, it is necessary to look at the values and beliefs that constitute the teachers' working philosophy, i.e. a teacher's potential to generate progressive learning and satisfy students' needs within these changes.

Additionally, any teaching philosophy and the enhancement of education, both locally and globally, should take into consideration teachers' opinions about changeovers and/or slight modifications in education (with or without 'modern teaching ingredients', such as completely new subjects, or modification of the curricula, the use of ICTs, the involvement of politics, students' needs analysis, etc.), taking everything into account, to create more 'generalisable' or harmonised approaches to teaching.

Following Harmer's advice about 'unedited' responses, this paper continues by adding a selection of the international teachers' responses about the questions mentioned above. i.e. the teachers' responses are presented as they responded (*).

1. What is the 21st century teaching philosophy of these university FL teachers?

*Zambia: *My ideal classroom is one where there is mutual participation and interaction, among students and with the teacher. A teacher being one who always*

looks for new challenges with a special lens of the eye, initiating probing minds in the learners where yes or no cannot be answers without enriching them, a facilitator of learning. A student in my ideal class is one who takes the lead in driving their own learning, who can learn and re-learn autonomously or otherwise.

*Kosovo: General education has undergone many challenges nowadays. Course content planning that fits students' age and students' wishes, the development of teaching methodology and the application of those methods that students feel comfortable to exploit and benefit out of them, definition of learning objectives and the selection of evaluation methods that show fairness towards teachers' responsibility and students' knowledge, are all factors that I find valuable in education.

*Ukraine: Teacher can open the door but a student must enter by himself.

*Portugal (T1): Students nowadays have too many subjects to learn. Teachers should apply any method that engages all students. Lectures, note taking can sometimes work but students need opportunities to practice their learning. The only effective way of teaching and learning is smaller groups in which all students can make extended contribution, otherwise not all students are involved in real learning.

*Macedonia: The idea that the student is a multitasker is becoming an issue, as students do not try to learn more, they do not concentrate/focus. In order to study, the students nowadays need to 'sacrifice' something of technology. Thus it is teacher's responsibility to move from his/her comfort zone (safer zone of teaching) to more 'action' teaching approaches which can motivate students to learn and gain more knowledge.

*Portugal (T2): I have been teaching for many years, trying to streamline the teaching across different levels. i.e. trying to make the teaching material and testing much more uniform, which is obviously, definitely difficult. It would be much better if we had more teaching staff, if we could have smaller groups and devote more time to students who need more help.

*Serbia (T1): I believe that there should be more STT (students' talking time) than TTT (teacher's talking time) in class because in that way students will be more active, they will participate more and will learn more efficiently, especially English as a foreign language. Then, motivating students is also very important and I prepare my classes in that away that I pay very much attention to increase students' motivation to learn English and to communicate in the class, always bearing in mind

the teaching material that needs to be used, and how to be used. Another important thing in teaching philosophy is that students should not be afraid to make mistakes in the class because mistakes are part of the practice and learning process.

Serbia (T2): *My teaching philosophy is based on the combination of recognized teaching methodology applied to the target group and years of experience in the teaching community.*

Portugal (T3): *Teachers need to help people grow, become better citizens, better people, to take part in their communities in a more responsible way. This is also connected with challenge, as teachers they do their best by getting the students to produce something in English. Every class should produce something. It is supposed, so that has implications of about how we approach methods and teaching and everything that deals with students.*

Maldives: *My teaching philosophy has evolved over the years. I strongly believe that it is vital to maintain a strong rapport with the students. As none of the students would love to learn from a teacher that they dislike. Also, I believe that classroom is a learning environment, where everyone learns from each other, student – teacher, teacher – students, thus it is important to maintain a positive ambience in the classroom. As a teacher, it is also very crucial to take into account the different learning styles of the students and try and cater their needs when teaching. Teachers do not only act as a facilitator, but also as mentor, judge, supervisor and friend. Lastly, I feel that every teacher needs to be well prepared for the lesson. They need to be very up to date and conduct dynamic lessons that go beyond the content and challenges the students.*

2. What are the main challenges these teachers identify in FLT?

Zambia: *In this 21st century we deal with learners with a lot of access to online media and publication, hence the need to make use of technology a use tool for their learning. Unfortunately, these are available to carter for this challenge.*

Kosovo: *… These also relate to professional competencies that teachers perform in class, aiming that the results would be applied even out of class. Classroom management and objective evaluation are considered as challenges in education. The best teaching is always considered teaching that employs various challenging teaching methods, of course, with various teaching materials and teaching techniques, all aiming that national level of teaching would contribute to students' international educative competence.*

Ukraine: Lack of motivation and interest, loss of community respect to teaching professions

Portugal (T1): The biggest challenge is a large class and the effort to try to get everybody involved. i.e. opportunities to practice learning by being involved. Another challenge is to know students' names, which is very difficult based on the big number of students.

Macedonia: The students know more than we knew, because of resources, possibilities they have: interaction, technology. They are more skilful, have other skills that we could not imagine. Students nowadays know what is happening on the other side of the world. However, they do not try to develop their thinking skills and concentration.

Portugal (T2): Student population has changed ever since we started getting mobility students (considerably in the last five years). We have started to open our classes to other students from other faculties and other countries which is a huge challenge: differences in learning skills between European students and non-European students, for example, show more problematic classes. What seems pretty easy to understand for one group of students is a bit more difficult for other group because this particular group of students is not equipped with the skills that we apply in our teaching. This only shows the risk of oversimplifying things. Teaching material is another issue to be discussed. Mixed ability classes cause problems when you have to cater for the students who may find the material boring: some students are so much beyond the topic level and other things, some are struggling, and in the middle you have this sort of nondescript sort of students that find it OK, challenging enough.

Serbia (T1): The biggest challenge in my teaching is to motivate students to learn and to reflect on their learning. Also, I struggle with very heterogeneous classes and different level of students' knowledge. This means that I have to adapt my teaching to many different groups of students in one class. Further, in my class, I have 45 students in (tutorial) practice classes and 100 students lecture classes. It is not possible to control all students in such huge language classes, which I consider as the biggest challenge.

Serbia (T2): The greatest challenge in teaching is developing motivation to learn in students.

Portugal (T3): What I do in classroom is not at all based on the old learning experience. I reject experience that is dull and flat. I do not use any particular

method in isolation. I just try to get them produce and they come to university usually with quite a good level and they have been in learning experience perhaps they didn't emphasize production. So I see it as our job to change that. So more emphasis is on production: speaking and writing although it's quite difficult with such large classes. It's a challenge: How to control all of them in large classes? I have to be always on the move. One of my jobs is to make the students comfortable of using English and talk about things they are interested in. Of course, teaching material is important and we try to move away from more standardized approach of what is going in class. We find topics that are challenging enough for the majority of students and always supplement teaching with something new. Another challenge is diversity in classes-mobility students that have different learning styles. Coming from different societies, they have different learning approach. There are some mobility students who are taught in that way that they were not allowed to speak in an English class, or have never been asked to speak, actually they speak English very well. But, this heterogenic group is viewed as a big bonus, a big advantage. I don't think in any way as a disadvantage.

***Maldives**: One of the biggest challenges that I face today in the classroom is trying to keep up with the latest technology and information. Students are more engrossed in technology that they find it difficult to spend 45 minutes in the class away from their electronic gadgets such a mobile phone, tablets etc. So, in order to grab their attention, it takes a lot of energy and time for lesson preparation.*

3. Should there be *evolution or revolution* in education, in general?

***Zambia**: Revolution and evolution are both happening in education. In their conflicting ideas they help to shape the education system as well meeting the personal and societal needs. For centuries, education cannot be the same. Early writers projected many developments like communication system, transport system which are now at play but changes in education sometimes may not be very vivid as evolution is a slow but sure process. Revolutionary changes may just be there as reflective practices.*

***Kosovo**: I think that traditional system of education has undergone changes, which may be considered as revolution in education, but then again, the establishment of a contemporary education system and its 'flow' in education might be considered as evolution.*

***Ukraine**: Old does not mean bad innovations are good but to a certain extent.*

*Portugal (T1): The biggest challenge is a large class and the effort to try to get everybody involved. i.e. opportunities to practice learning by being involved. Another challenge is to know students' names, which is very difficult based on the big number of students. Things in education do get changed. If something does not work, we can change it with something else more effective.

Comparing the traditional teaching and modern teaching, the traditional teaching which was all lectures and no opportunities to express yourself, there were teachers who made the lectures quite interesting, and even then we were involved in conscious learning. But nowadays, modern teaching involves students who can get more than specific subject. They are pretty good and have opportunities to link completely different subjects.

Education should not be completely changed. I do not believe in revolution. Politics dictates everything. A new government implements new policy. How to implement new curriculum, new syllabuses within 3-4 years and then again changed? What happens if there are too many revolutions? Revolution in education cannot happen, however, teachers and students would do better if aspects of teaching would change. So I am for evolution.

*Macedonia: When analysing previous teaching methods, traditional ones, TTT methods, education needs changes, however not completely. It could be much better. Today students have too much input, and then they get it superficially. They do not engage themselves in learning. It is not deep learning. Students' attention span is very short as everything goes very fast. In order to have a much better educative system, many things need to be changed. It should be a top down thing: from the government level. Teachers should be empowered to make changes. Everything is centralized in schools. Each school says they have their autonomy but it is still not enough. Teachers' training is very important; they need in-service training. Modern education plan is that nobody should be left behind-neither teachers, nor students. Everybody should be accommodated.

*Portugal (T2): Education needs changes. We have to change our teaching according to our students' needs. However, I agree that we expect less since it is more superficial learning. Whatever method we use nowadays, is not going to work if there is no prior motivation. The group dynamic is extremely important. The use of different approaches to teaching should involve students to feel at ease where they can express themselves, express their minds. They should be exposed to different

varieties of teaching and learning, it should fit in terms of cultural aspects and fit in learning skills aspect.

*Serbia (T1): I think that both revolution and evolution in education depend on the economic and political situation in a specific country. In Serbia, in my teaching context, lots of things changed in past 20 years or so but not all of them contributed to better education, I mean, some school subjects were excluded (such as Serbian tradition and Household) and many new subjects were introduced (such as English from the first grade, Religious education, Civil education, second foreign language, Researching nature, Informatics). This brought more working hours for teachers and more learning hours for students. Teachers are not satisfied with lots of paper work to do, students are not satisfied with lots of learning hours and parents complain that they have to help their children with learning tasks every day and that these tasks are very difficult to solve. In addition, after the primary school, and before entering secondary school, students have to pass both graduation tests from 5 school subjects and to pass entrance exam. Before, we had only entrance exam. In my opinion, graduation tests are not necessary because students pass all those subjects while going to school and I do not see the point to test them again. Students were tested upon this many times during the 8 years of schooling.

*Serbia (T2): When thinking about revolution or evolution in education, the answer is somewhere in-between. Revolution implies complete change in teaching approach and, although society has been changing rapidly, teachers should also take in consideration some great benefits of teaching methodologies developed so far. So, I vote for evolution.

*Portugal (T3): Changes in education are either emotionally or politically motivated, but still there are changes. We have a massive change with Bologna system and we are still a kind of dealing with that. The Bologna system is an improvement, just for the fact that it introduced mobility students.

I am not revolutionary. We need to step back and settle down, but I think that in ELT clearly evolution should follow next revolution. We can describe the advent of the communicative approach in the late 70s as revolution. We are now in the phase of evolution, taking the communicative approach into something hopefully more locally appropriate approach, more locally effective. Since I consider that revolution in ELT was in the late 70s and 80s, now it is the phase of evolution until the next revolution.

*Maldives: Due to the advancement in technology and the vast knowledge available at our finger tips, there's a huge shift in "teacher's role" and on other

*aspects in education system. Hence, emphasis on "content" is outdated and becomes absurd. Thus, we are in a state where we need to sit and reflect on how we could educate our students. I feel that education needs to be revisited and refashioned; otherwise "we will embrace the 21st century with a 19th century mindset. And the result would be a failure" (Dasgupta, 2015). (**Reference:** Dasgupta, A. (2015) Why we need a revolution, not just evolution, in education. Available online from* http://www.huffingtonpost.in/amit-dasgupta/why-we-need-a-revolution-not-just-evolution-in-education/ *[Accessed 12 December 2016].)*

As can be seen, different teachers from different countries responded to the questionnaire, showing that although from very distant countries, their responses were somewhat similar, as will be discussed immediately below.

DISCUSSION

The FL teachers' responses show that they are all aware of their great responsibility they have towards their students: trying to teach in the best way, in order that their students learn more. Although from distant and different areas of the globe (Portugal, Maldives, Serbia, or Ukraine, Zambia, Kosovo, or Macedonia), teachers, as one of the main agents in education, show that they contend with both vastly diverse points of view and teaching issues (such as, some teachers favour revolution, while some evolution) and similar points of view and teaching issues (such as large number of students in classes, the use of ICTs). Nevertheless, all of the teachers have one thing in common: the key is being decisive and knowing how to deliver teaching, aimed only one thing: learning.

Cashia *et al* claim that teachers are key figures in constructing a creative teaching-learning climate, but policy makers and institutions should support them (9). Here teachers have indicated that innovation requires both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. As Scrivener mentions, the traditional role of teacher as an 'explainer' (17) may sometimes be efficient but one consequence is that it results in far greater proportions of teacher talking time (TTT), thus it can become problematic from a Social Constructivist point of view. The position here is that FLT needs to be built on the basis of those approaches that embrace teachers as facilitators, not as people who talk and tell students what to do, but guide them as to how to do it.

Frequent comparisons between educational systems, such as past and present, with traditional methodologies or revolutionary ones, were put forward by these international teachers. However, it should be noted that the teacher's responses (our paper is based on only ten international participants) reflect on a narrow set of

factors; a more comprehensive and large scale of assessment of further issues would need to be conducted before any more wide-reaching, global and local claims could be made. Comprehensive positions need to be established, assessed and decided upon before introducing changes into systems. The scheme should be: define the problem, plan a solution for this educative problem, test that solution and, if the planning and the changes were successful, share with others (in our case, share it with other institutions nationally and internationally). In relation specifically to FLT, a guide of 'where to start' is provided by Ellis (2005) who outlines 12 principles, based on a thorough review of the research and theory available, on which to found successful, instructed foreign language acquisition.

Surprisingly, not all of the teachers mentioned technology, which perhaps indicates a preference for a 'back-to-basics' approach which relies more on the relationships and interaction established between student and teacher rather than unnecessary technology, materials and aids. This is in line with the ideas set out in 'Teaching Unplugged' (2009) by Meddings and Thornbury which proposes a conversation driven, materials light framework focussing on the students' emergent language as a progressive, productive alternative approach to ELT. With respect to the use of technology (or not) as a teaching tool, these teachers' responses indicate that they are in step with the conclusions of Cashia *et al* who state: "replacing traditional tools with technologies does not automatically lead to creativity or innovation. The combination of traditional teaching tools with technology allows more space for experimentation, for both the teachers and the students" (40). Our respondents appreciate that modern FLT considers the involvement of ICTs is important, but not necessarily too often. There needs to be a balanced use of ICT teaching tools, just as there should be a balanced use and application of other teaching instruments, strategies and materials.

In broad terms, the paper examines 21st century ELT based on teachers' responses and it gives pride of place to the adaptation of teaching approaches based on students' needs. What the teachers mentioned, is that they try to adopt and adapt new ways of delivering teaching, which would enable substantial understanding of their contexts. This is followed by the replacement of Teacher Talking Time (TTT) with Student Talking Time (STT), that students may become more confident in learning, more open towards diversity in teaching /learning and more flexible with respect to global societal principles. As we are dealing with the 21st century students, they demand 'novelty' and teachers are in charge of offering different opportunities to achieve learning, which can be conducted through shared participation and varied

interaction. And this reciprocal involvement not only includes teacher-student and student-student collaboration, but also the management of teaching/learning, teacher-student-technology relationships; as such, there are many occasions in which the teachers' role is more of a guide/facilitator. Thus, these teachers claim to have moved from their 'comfort zone' to something more akin to an 'action zone'. The paper suggests that teachers do try to encourage learning and engage themselves more in qualitative learning. They are looking forward to new teaching techniques/materials that will help their students learn not only in class; they are eager for continuous professional teaching development: fostering new teaching techniques that enable the students move out of class and into the world. As discussed, all these are elements of the 21st century FL teachers' philosophy which can be considered (and should be considered) more as global aspects than local ones.

On the other hand, given the task of specifying the challenges they face, teachers reported their principle concerns to be sustaining motivation, followed by the large size of classes, how to encourage students' autonomy and boosting students' cognitive processes. These were all significant challenges. Also mentioned was the use of technology as a worthwhile teaching/learning tool, mixed ability classes and poor quality teaching materials. Even in this matter, the teachers' responses show similarities although they hail from very distant countries.

The responses about [R]evolution and its effect on education and society today have much in common and significantly favour progressive educative aims. Introducing suitable changes within local and global teaching contexts proved highly positive: there is a need to move towards much wider and much deeper learning. However, the teachers' responses show that while these changes are only being carried out slowly, students are offered opportunities to adapt their style of learning and aim to achieve positive performance in class (and out of the class). Teaching-learning is conducted within local, appropriate and applicable frameworks with the aim of fitting into globally-accepted, appropriate and applicable norms. This kind of balance in teaching and learning, helps students not to be overloaded, since as Bransford *et al* point out, students' memory functions better if they understand what are they learning (245), and "teaching for in-depth learning" (Bransford *et al* 239) which becomes more difficult if more and more input is given to them. Our position, based on these teachers' responses, is that in current and future systems of education, effective teaching-learning, requires well-paced, yet complex input that is consistent with the current needs of the local society.

Changes in FLT, and the role of teachers in determining the need for changes in education, means changes in the kind of students that the system 'produces'. No matter if these changes are to do with the curricula (more globalized curricula) or changes in the learning environment (virtual classrooms), or in the teaching methods and materials, they all lead towards beneficial social changes. This determination to promote change in FLT needs to be especially focussed when it comes to teaching materials and especially so when it comes to the choosing of appropriate textbooks – still the main working 'tool' of most FL teachers in most contexts. Teachers' responses show that textbooks are an important factor and that they may hinder progressive learning. The publishing industry and textbook writers need to re-focus and embrace a more [r]**e**volutionary perspective: to provide support for competent teachers, and not restrict and de-skill them, so they can make evident beneficial teaching-learning. The teachers also reflect on the need for institutional support, reinforcement and revision of old and current teaching methods (see Campo, Negro & Núñez, Harmer, Richards and Rodgers, Ellis, and Larsen-Freeman). In general, FLT within a country should contain common characteristics that fit general, global, 21st century education, emphasizing citizenship education which promotes concepts related to social welfare and improving the quality of life for people in an inclusive, knowledgeable society. This means development by making use of innovative and [r]evolutionary ideas, implementing the combined best of the traditional and the modern; and combining the best of local and global educational features.

The globalization of FLT by using locally appropriate approaches to teaching has an impact at three different stages:

- in the precise teaching context (those teachers, those schools, those books)
- in the broader local and national context (regional-state educational systems)
- in international education (as in the **E**uropean **H**igher **E**ducation **A**rea, launched in 2010))

It is apparent that improved rates of success in FLT have an important impact, having a bearing on one of the most crucial social issues in the modern world, i.e. improved levels of pluri-lingual competence and mutual comprehension. Harmer points out that "education should speak to the 'whole person', in other words, not just to a small language learning facility. In a humanist classroom, students are emotionally involved in learning, they are encouraged to reflect on how learning happens and their creativity is fostered [...]" (74). In addition to 'humanist' teaching and learning, all these teachers stated that innovative approaches are being used for the purpose of

promoting inclusive learning. Experienced teachers are usually open to innovation and changing pedagogical methods, as these teachers are. In this way, 'future' education can be passed on socially and shared cross-culturally. Here may be included changes (from the spectrum of (R)evolution) in teaching strategies and techniques, classroom management skills and teacher attitudes to do with tolerance and flexibility within the teaching environment.

The social processes and educational changes of the 21st century create current opportunities for relationship building and mutually compatible social benefit. Analysis of past and present practices in education should shape future educational policy. Success should be measured by academic achievement but also "include areas such as student engagement, participation and self-concept and community social capital (that is, to areas that have greater predictive validity for later life successes)" (Mulford 45). Above all, the challenge for teachers (and students) is to examine their local practices in the light of global tendencies, to seek locally appropriate elements of innovation, in essence, to glocalise their approach to FLT.

Conclusion

[R]evolution perhaps needs to become a buzz word in FLT: universal acceptance of innovation in education can only be achieved through action in the classroom. This means that the way of making the concept clearer is through peer classroom observations and personal reflections on what is needed for teachers (methodology) and what is valuable for students to learn (content), these are two sides to the same objective: effective teaching leading to efficient learning.

Concerning the first question dealing with teaching philosophy (values, beliefs, and goals): all teachers' responses were related to approximately the same priorities: appropriate teaching methods, the effort how to make students talk, i.e. increasing student talking time (STT) and reducing teacher talking time (TTT), locally appropriate and culturally inclusive teaching materials, a positive, achievement-driven teaching-learning atmosphere and varied and appropriate evaluation. These teachers all believe that teaching can be better and teachers could do better if appropriate approaches are being used. Regarding the challenges that are faced by these teachers' today, responses were rather vaguer: the teachers responded across a wide range of variables: large numbers of students in classes (class size), the effective use ICTs, developing empathy with the students, heterogeneous classes, students' different levels of knowledge, varying levels of student motivation, and crucially, how to put more effort into differentiating students' needs and identify students' learning

problems. All these are part of these teachers' doubts and their daily struggle of how to best meet these challenges. When discussing the third question, [R]evolution in education, these teachers consider it to be a matter of choice based on the teachers' work experience and teacher's point of view within and of an educational system. Both revolution and evolution in education are primary parts of our teaching at all levels and from time to time they can interchange if the net result aims at a positive impact in education and society. However, if we regard [R]evolution as essential, it has to be taken on by experienced teachers acting as instigators. The concept of **[R]evolution** generated a range of opinions described by the acronym below. This paper introduces the best description of the current teachers' opinions about education:

R-Recognize societal needs in order to apply appropriate teaching

E-Evaluate societal needs and deficiencies in relation to learning

V-Value change and harmonize teaching-learning

O-Organize variety in teaching-learning experiences

L-Life Long Learning applies to teachers too

U-Uniqueness but also unity in education

T-Timeliness: up-to-date teaching and learning based on societal needs

I-Independence in decision-making on classroom matters

O-Omniscience; make society want to know everything that can be known

N-Non-functioning education??? Try to change it immediately.

In conclusion, [R]evolution in education is a good framework to examine whether current FLT at a local level is aligned with current FLT at a global level. The challenge is to ensure that teaching-learning objectives are linked with broader social needs and trends. In this case, current teaching should aim to assure an international perspective to education and international opportunities (for teachers and students) that include challenging the presuppositions of local educational practices and local knowledge by increasing the value of those same things from the global context. Adopting a model of education (with all its generalizations and limitations) might really make [R]evolution in FLT possible. Any future ELT model will, almost by definition, be a 'mixture' that captures the general, global trends and combines them with the specific-local dynamics of a society (which are subject to growth and change); this process should be designed or redesigned and left to chance. In this

scenario, one crucial factor will remain constant: the need to hear the voices of our teachers.

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Interculturality in English Language Teaching

Ana Leão

FACULDADE DE CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS E HUMANAS DA UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA

Abstract

UNESCO and the Council of Europe have been working on approaches in education to develop tolerance, respect for cultural diversity, and intercultural dialogue. Portugal, like many other countries, has established the intercultural domain as a goal in the foreign language curricula. Nonetheless, this commitment to developing intercultural dialogue has been questioned by researchers worldwide who consider that action is needed to effectively promote intercultural competence in the classroom. In this article, I examine teachers' perceptions and beliefs about intercultural communicative competence in a cluster of schools in Portugal and the evidence shows that although foreign language teachers are willing to comply with an intercultural dimension, their profile is more compatible with that of a traditional foreign language teacher, rather than with a foreign language teacher who promotes intercultural communicative competence.

Keywords: *Common European Framework Reference for Languages* (CEFR), Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), intercultural domain, English Language Teaching (ELT), Teachers' perceptions and beliefs.

Resumo

A UNESCO e o Conselho Europeu têm desenvolvido esforços para promover tolerância, respeito pela diversidade cultural e diálogo intercultural no âmbito da educação. Portugal, tal como muitos outros países, consagrou o domínio intercultural como um objetivo a atingir no currículo da língua estrangeira. No entanto, este compromisso para desenvolver diálogo intercultural tem vindo a ser questionado por investigadores que consideram que é necessária ação para promover competência intercultural na sala de aula. Neste artigo, proponho-me a analisar as perceções e as convicções dos professores, num agrupamento de escolas em Portugal, sobre a competência comunicativa intercultural. Mediante a análise dos dados recolhidos, os

professores de línguas estrangeiras demonstram que estão dispostos a desenvolver uma dimensão intercultural. Contudo, o seu perfil está mais em sintonia com uma representação tradicional do professor de línguas estrangeiras do que com o professor que, proativamente, promove competência comunicativa intercultural.

Palavras-chave: *Quadro Europeu Comum de Referência para Línguas (QECR)*, Competência Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI), domínio intercultural, Ensino da Língua Inglesa (ELI), Perceções e convicções dos professores.

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

We live in a troubled globalized world. Nations are challenged by a reality of growing diversity and globalization. New technologies provide information, knowledge and communication as easily and quickly as we have never seen before. Especially children and teenagers have been impacted in particular by international television channels, Internet, video games, mobile phones, social digital networks, or new classmates coming from other countries. This new world paradigm should be enriching, yet we show inadequate discernment to live together with diverse cultures.

A report to UNESCO postulates that education, as the main means to promote Human Rights, is an "ongoing process of improving knowledge and skills" (Delors et al. 11) as well as "an exceptional means of bringing about personal development and building relationships among individuals, groups and nations" (12). From the four closely connected learning pillars presented by Delors, *learning to live together* has been given great emphasis and underpins intercultural education, which the Council of Europe (CoE) envisions as the foundation of a world "where human rights are respected and where democratic participation and the rule of law is guaranteed to all" ("Intercultural Competence for all" 14). Regarding language education, the CoE has laid out guiding principles in several documents, namely the 2001 *Common European Framework of Reference*, and, more clearly, in the September 2017 *Companion Volume* to promote an intercultural stance. The CoE advocates that the intercultural dimension is a central objective "to promote the favourable development of the learner's whole personality and sense of identity in response to the enriching experience of otherness in language and culture" (*CEFR* 1).

Since it has been established in language teaching, Byram, Gribkova and Starkey postulate that it is imperative to provide learners with skill in the grammar of a language and "the ability to use the language in socially and culturally appropriate

ways" (4). Following this shift in Foreign Language Teaching (FLT), the Ministry of Education and Science in Portugal laid out the intercultural domain goals in *Metas Curriculares*, for all cycles of English as Foreign Language (EFL) in 2015. Therefore, the intercultural domain in English Language Teaching (ELT) needs to gain prominence and become a common practice in the foreign language classroom in the first, second, and third cycles in Portugal. Consequently, this article aims to examine whether it has been promoted in the classroom.[1]

Intercultural dimension in Foreign Language Teaching

In the context of foreign language learning, Byram puts forward an intercultural model developed with Zarate as part of a collaborative work for the Council of Europe. The model consists of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse domains taken from the concept of communicative competence. It also includes components of intercultural competence such as *savoirs, savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/faire*, and *savoir être,* which is the terminology used in the *CEFR*. Although Byram added *savoir s'engager* in 1997 (figure 1), the *CEFR* does not consider it.
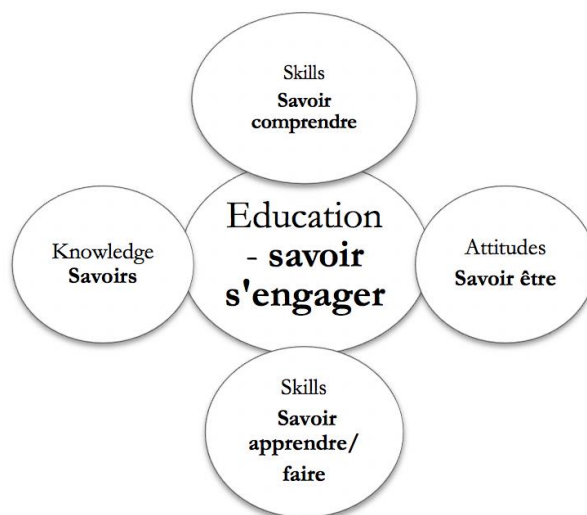

Figure 1 – Five *savoirs* (Byram, *From Foreign Language Education for Intercultural Citizenship* 69)

According to Byram, *savoirs* is the knowledge of one's own and other cultures, "the knowledge of the relationships among different perceptions of one's own and another culture and relationships in the processes of individual and societal interaction", which are linked to communication and the acquisition of language (*Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* 66); interrelated to knowledge is *savoir comprendre*: the skills of decentring and comparison are crucial to interpret and relate documents or events. In Byram's opinion, learners can acquire the skills of eliciting meanings under the guidance of the teacher in lower levels of language (67); *Savoir apprendre* is the skill of discovery and interaction to acquire new knowledge of people from other cultures about their beliefs, values, and behaviours because "every single social encounter potentially involves different values, opinions and world-views" (18); *savoir être* is crucial so that all other components of this competence may progress because learners should possess curiosity and openness to "suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to other's meanings, beliefs and behaviours" and belief about one's own meanings and behaviours (34); last but not least, *savoir s'engager,* the central concept in this framework (*From Foreign Language Education* 162*)*, is the ability learners develop to critically evaluate their own values as well as other people's values "on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products, safeguarding of the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights" (*Teaching and Assessing* 26). In spite of this centrality, all aspects of this competence are important and all of them are intertwined (76). Yet this does not mean that these components are developed at the same time with equal level of attainment. All *savoirs* are part of a life task process, which may start at primary education (*From Foreign Language Education* 83).

The Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) is, thus, the ability to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language. Hence, FLT must focus on mediation, and on producing meanings (*Teaching and Assessing* 83). In line with this definition, CoE expands the concept of mediation, which was underdeveloped in the 2001 *CEFR*, stressing the importance of "co-construction of meaning in interaction and constant movement between the individual and social level in language learning" (*Companion Volume* 33). Therefore, skills and attitudes should be promoted in the classroom as much as knowledge because language is not the only reason to impede people from understanding one another. The difficulties may be associated to a "lack of familiarity with the area or field concerned" (*Companion Volume* 120), which may infer the implication of an intercultural perspective due to an interplay of different interlocutors' perspectives.

FLT should then prepare learners to become intercultural speakers who "manage relationships between themselves and their own cultural beliefs, behaviours and meanings [... and] those of their interlocutors" (*Teaching and Assessing* 12), taking into consideration students' age and needs, ideally through a task-based approach in the classroom or through experiential activities within a notion of a "spiral curriculum" (81).

Teachers' profile within an intercultural dimension

An intercultural approach might imply an extension to the teacher's role and tasks. Teachers are expected not only to be experts in their respective subjects, but also to have deeper qualifications in general pedagogy, and also to act as guides and aids to self-development and successful interaction. According to Sercu, a Foreign Language and Intercultural Competence Teacher (FL & IC) should have the following profile (table 1), based on Byram's ICC model:

Knowledge	*Skills*	*Attitudes*
o be sufficiently familiar with the foreign cultures associated with the foreign language they teach (…); o know their own culture well and possess general knowledge that can help them explain similarities and differences between cultures to learners; o know both what stereotypes pupils have and how to address these in the foreign language classroom; o know how to select appropriate content, learning tasks and materials that can help learners become interculturally competent.	o employ teaching techniques that promote the acquisition of savoirs, savoir-apprendre, savoir-comprendre, savoir-fair and savoir-être; o help pupils relate their own culture to foreign cultures; o compare cultures and to emphasise with foreign cultures' points of view; o be able to select appropriate teaching materials and to adjust these materials should they not allow achieving the aims of intercultural competence teaching; o be able to use experiential approaches to language-and-culture teaching.	o be favourably disposed towards the integration of intercultural competence teaching in foreign language education and willing to actually work towards achieving that goal; o define the objectives of foreign language education in terms of both language learning and intercultural competence acquisition.

Table 1 – FL & IC teacher profile ("The foreign language and intercultural competence teacher" 57-58)

In spite of the importance of being familiar with the foreign cultures associated with the foreign language and of knowing their own culture as Sercu points out, teachers should be aware of a myriad of formulations to make sense of culture, the "human-made part of the environment" (Triandis viii). Above all, teachers should engage in an analysis of culture, not as an experimental science, but as an interpretative one in search of meaning (Geertz 5). Risager clarifies that hermetic views of culture and society can be found in course books as "a reproduction of society in a nutshell" ("Languaculture as a Key Concept in Language and Culture Teaching" 6), which may, unfortunately, lead to generalisations and stereotypes, if teachers and learners do not adopt a critical attitude. Nonetheless, Risager remarks that there is a shift away from a national alignment, "pointing towards a more international and transnational approach in teaching language and culture" (3), which is the underpinning of a "dynamic process through which both meanings and the boundaries of groups or communities are renegotiated and redefined according to current needs" (Byram, *Multicultural Societies, Pluricultural People and the Project of Intercultural Education* 5).

The concept of culture developed by the anthropologist Geertz, as Risager explains, "influenced language teaching in the sense that the concept of culture began to be widely used as an umbrella term for what transcended pure language teaching" ("Languaculture" 5). However, Risager admits that language teaching and culture teaching did not have much to do with each other till the research work done by Byram and Zarate (1). From then on, many foreign language teachers and researchers all over the world started to understand that intercultural learning should be part of language learning and a number of researchers have been interested in developing "the more politically oriented dimensions of intercultural learning, with special reference to intercultural and critical citizenship" (9).

Still, there are two opposite trends in pedagogy as Risager outlines: the first is that language and culture are inseparable; and the second view is that language is culturally neutral (*The Language Teacher Facing Transnationality 5)*. The former is "a conception of a closed universe of language, culture and history and mentality - a national romanticism" (185). The latter is "not far from a reconstitution of the

classical structuralist conception of the autonomy of language" (*Ibidem*). Yet Risager expresses her dissatisfaction with both views and sets forth a third position: "language and culture can be separated, and language is never culturally neutral, it carries linguaculture" (6). For example, English carries "linguaculture no matter in what context it is used, no matter where it is used, and with what topic" (8). In short, EFL teachers should consider that "[l]anguage is always cultural in some respects" (*Languaculture* 185), and language and culture teaching should transcend "the national paradigm" and set forth "a dynamic transnational and global perspective (…) centering on the study of meaning" (195).

Despite all these arguments about culture and language, one may also recall the importance of notions such as self-identity and social identity linked to culture, which teachers should also take in consideration if they intend to embrace an intercultural approach. The construction of notions of self-identity and social identity undergo an unstable continuous process, which endows its fragmented, multiple and expansive nature (Kumaravadivelu 11). The meaning of identity within education crosses a range of identity categories: race, ethnicity, sex, gender, sexuality, culture, ability and disability (3). Learners identify themselves within these categorizations, which are socially constructed (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 27). Notions of unstable continuous construction of self-identity and social identity may be helpful for teachers to develop a basis to work with children and teenagers because it can help learners understand their own identities, how others see them, how to relate to others, how stereotypes arise, and how the process of categorizing people functions. This perspective may prevent inaccurate and simplistic generalisations learners hold of the culture (s) and people (s) related to the English language, as teachers of this current study believe their learners have.

In addition to all crucial aspects considered above, teachers should also know how to select the appropriate materials that can help learners become intercultural speakers. Course books, for example, provide guidance to many foreign language teachers throughout the world (Davcheva and Sercu 90) because they provide more advantages than disadvantages. Nevertheless, coursebooks have been criticised for many reasons, for example, for "presenting a highly fragmented picture of the foreign culture and stereotypical tourist views on the target people" (91). In Portugal, for example, the publication of the new curricular objectives for the first, second and third cycles ascertains the intercultural aspect as one of the seven domains within English learning in mandatory schooling in Portugal. In spite of this, Hurst assumes that, in Portugal, some coursebooks "still reflect a simplistic view of culture limited to

a few facts and cultural trivia to do with fame, food or festivals" (26). These are isolated in special sections, which might be viewed by teachers as unrelated with other domains, and therefore optional, as this study may attest.

In fact, one of the most demanding aspects of the intercultural approach is to challenge the accepted propensity to categorise people, countries and cultures, as this current article may show. Therefore, when teaching a foreign language and culture, it is crucial to convey a realistic depiction of culture (s), and to provide opportunities to recognise objectively the characteristics of culture (s) with learners. In short, culture should not be taught as a separate content in language teaching, nor strictly related to one or two nations.

All the aforementioned aspects should be considered within an intercultural stance, and for this reason, for two decades, the Council of Europe has been recommending training to all pre-service and in-service teachers ("Intercultural Competence" 44), focusing "on intercultural sensitivity, communication skills and cultural awareness training, as well as learning how to provide a democratic and unbiased learning environment for students" (*Ibidem*). Nowadays intercultural competence implementation in the classroom should be the result of this training.

Therefore, this article aims to point out the status of intercultural competence teaching in the EFL classroom at a cluster of schools in Portugal based on the analysis of empirical data, which were collected from semi-structured interviews and from a questionnaire online.

Intercultural domain at a cluster of schools in Portugal

This section of this article intends to clarify teachers' perceptions of their current language and culture teaching practice, teachers' beliefs about intercultural competence, and to identify the profile of these teachers. Before proceeding to the discussion of the findings about teachers' perceptions of their current language and culture teaching practice, there will be, firstly, a brief characterisation of the teachers who were surveyed.

Of the fifteen English teachers who work at a cluster of compulsory education in Portugal, nine teachers responded to the questionnaire: two teach in the first cycle;

five teach in the second cycle, and two teach in the third cycle. From the data, all teachers referred as having more than ten years of experience, and their age ranges between thirty and sixty. Only two teachers of the second cycle claimed they had had some training in culture/intercultural competence at university. Due to this, the findings reported may serve to demonstrate that the implementation of an intercultural stance in this cluster might be compromised, unless the teachers' beliefs and practice shows evidence otherwise.

Teachers' perceptions of their current language and culture teaching practice

This section will focus on four different aspects: teachers' perceptions of their language and culture teaching; teachers' beliefs on their learners' perceptions; teachers' engagement in experiential activities; and teachers' views on pedagogical materials.

Regarding teachers' perceptions of their language and culture teaching, teachers at this cluster of schools strongly believe that English teaching should comply with the following main goals: motivating to learn English and promoting the development of language proficiency for communication purposes. Furthermore, most of the respondents spend more time teaching language than teaching culture because they claim that complying with the syllabus and the four skills takes nearly all of their time. Unfortunately, these findings show that teachers are not accomplishing all the curricular goals, nor are they fully motivating their learners, as they aim to do, because motivation is a "multifaceted construct", which "has a pronounced sociocultural angle" (Byram, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Language Teaching and Learning* 425-426). Teachers believe that culture/intercultural domain is a set of optional topics which can be overlooked.

On the contrary, culture and intercultural domain should be addressed in regular EFL classrooms intertwined with the other domains and should not be seen "as hermetic compartments, independent of one another" (Ministério da Educação e Ciência, *Caderno de Apoio* 3). One of the suggestions in the literature to get around this situation is to contextualise teaching to reflect that "language is always cultural is some respects" (Risager, *Languaculture* 185). This view is maintained in research areas of linguistic anthropology, translation studies, and studies of intercultural

communication since "linguistic practice is always embedded in, and in interaction with, some cultural meaningful context" (*Ibidem*). Therefore, culture should not be seen as a separate content in language teaching.

As for teachers' views on their learners' perceptions, data indicate that most teachers perceive that their learners relate the English language to the UK and the USA and hold more positive than negative traditional stereotypes of these peoples and cultures. These findings may imply that teachers are strictly relating language to these two countries and also conveying unrealistic depictions of culture through materials and teaching practice.

On the contrary, language and culture teaching should transcend "the national paradigm" and cultivate less stereotypical results in their learners by engaging in an interpretative analysis in search of meanings (Geertz 5), instead of the prevailing definite and hermetic analysis of culture revealed through this study. Since schools are places of "identity work and identity making" (Reay 2) and to avoid stereotyping, even with a positive categorisation, teachers ought to develop opportunities in the classroom for learners to understand how the process of categorising people functions. Conveying a realistic depiction of culture (s), when teaching a foreign language and culture (s), provides opportunities for learners to recognise their similarities and distinctive characteristics. These opportunities should include experiential tasks not only in the classroom, but also outside the classroom.

In terms of experiential activities, teachers at a cluster of schools in Portugal were not involved in school trips or exchange programmes in the 2016-2017 school year. Although they recognise that experiential activities develop learners' sense of otherness, teachers claim that experiential activities are risky and a great responsibility, which may show that opportunities to develop ICC are very limited in this cluster of schools.

The literature suggests that experiential activities are "powerful in developing self-awareness as well as perceptions of other countries" (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 10) and that study visits or exchange programmes are a holistic experience which provide the means of using, on the one hand, language-culture knowledge and, on the other hand, "intercultural skills and acquiring new attitudes and values" (15).

As for teachers' views on pedagogical materials, eighty-nine per cent of teachers rely on course books to comply with the syllabus. Therefore, one of the skills

teachers should possess is the ability to critically review and evaluate the materials they use. However, teachers may be lacking this skill, with only four teachers mentioning "culture information" as criteria for choosing course books. Teachers follow the course books, and, obviously, the topics these materials deal with. This may suggest that teachers convey a fragmented picture of foreign people and cultures not only because, in general, Portuguese course books, "still reflect a simplistic view of culture limited to a few facts and cultural trivia to do with fame, food or festivals" (Hurst 26), but also because teachers have not considered the intercultural domain, as one of the criteria when they adopted the current course books. Foreign language teachers should be trained to critically review and evaluate pedagogical materials, since the majority of the teachers resort to other materials to complement the prescribed course books.

Choosing the appropriate course book or other teaching materials aligned with an intercultural stance is one of skills required in Sercu's profile of the foreign language and ICC teacher (Sercu et al. 5-6). The intercultural stance seems to presuppose the acquisition of specific professional characteristics to provide learners with intercultural experience and develop intercultural understanding.

In essence, teachers should help learners transcend a monocultural perspective through their teaching and materials because younger generations are already in contact with the Other through new technologies, travelling, and migration and, as a result, they feel this influence. The exposure to the Other could imply a transitional moment "between the culture of the learner and another culture" (Kordes 301) which would serve as the threshold that could lead to intercultural understanding. For this to take place, the current practice at this cluster of schools has to teach more than the knowledge of language as a system, beyond the notion of *Landskunde*, and beyond communication skills.

Teachers' beliefs about Intercultural Communicative Competence

Regarding this topic, there is a positive correlation between teachers' opinions and their willingness. However, only two teachers are confident about an intercultural perspective in English language classes. All the others indicate some contradictions: on the one hand, they state that they wish to promote intercultural skills through their

teaching; on the other hand, they are not sure if intercultural skills can be acquired at school. These findings might also suggest that teachers, in general, do not hold a clear idea of what ICC implies over the course of English language education. The present findings may suggest that teachers are favourably disposed towards teaching ICC in foreign language education because they believe that ICC has a positive effect on students' attitudes towards foreign cultures. Moreover, teachers seem to be favourably disposed to providing opportunities for all learners to develop ICC, even when there are no children of an ethnic minority community in classes because they understand that acquiring ICC helps learners become more tolerant.

In sum, a step forward is needed to develop ICC in the foreign language classroom. Whereas a *language-culture* practice involves "knowledge, skills and attitudes concerning a specific cultural area" (*Ibidem*) associated with the target countries, the developmental process of ICC involves starting from the students' own knowledge, skills, attitudes, and cultural backgrounds so that they reflect on their own assumptions, contrasting these with the acknowledgement of the premises of others, understanding how categorisation works, and critically reviewing social constructs.

Teachers' profile at this particular cluster of schools in Portugal

There seems to be a profile of a language and culture teacher in this cluster of schools who is favourably disposed towards the integration of ICC in foreign language education.

The teachers seem to be suitably skilled to teach within the foreign culture approach, yet they may lack the skills necessary to teach towards the full attainment of intercultural competence. For example, teachers still define the goals of English language education exclusively in terms of linguistic competence. Although they recognize that their learners hold traditional stereotypes of peoples and cultures related to the English language, they do not consider these perceptions and attitudes to design an alternative plan of activities to develop ICC.

On the whole, teachers recognise the importance of intercultural education and are willing to take action in their classroom. Nevertheless, their practice is not aligned with the requirements of the foreign language and ICC teacher profile.

Conclusion

This article has shown the main principles to guide FLT and to promote *learning to live together*; the relevant aspects to provide an approach to develop ICC, mainly in language education; and the required profile for teachers to facilitate its development in their classrooms.

As this article purported to explore whether teachers at a specific cluster of schools in Portugal are implementing ICC in foreign language education, one may conclude that these teachers believe that motivating their pupils to learn English and promoting the development of language proficiency, as teaching goals, are more important than assisting in understanding identity and culture. Teachers do in fact recognise the importance of ICC and are willing to implement it in their classroom, though their teaching practice is not aligned with the requirements of the foreign language and ICC teacher. These outcomes may be due to: firstly, teachers' beliefs may tend to persevere when they are solid and steady (Sercu, "The foreign language" 68), which may compromise the development of ICC; and, secondly, the development of ICC in this cluster of schools has been jeopardised since teachers in general do not receive training on cultural/intercultural issues.

The implications for FLT in this cluster of schools can be justified from two perspectives: first, the need for developing an educational and training programme in ICC for teachers was identified, which could represent the situation of other school clusters across the country; and second, the output of this study clearly demonstrated that teachers need to collaborate and coordinate actions in-group regarding the intercultural domain.

As a result, the researcher, as an EFL teacher at this cluster of schools, has been developing a virtual space, in this case a blog[2] about ICC, to be shared with colleagues in this cluster to create opportunities for discussion and collaboration. This

strategy may provide support for these teachers as they design an umbrella project to develop ICC using experiential approaches inside and outside the classroom.

Footnotes

1 This article resorts to a master's degree project work written by its author, presented in November 2017 in Nova University of Lisbon. <http://hdl.handle.net/10362/27903>

2 <http://interculturalityefl.blogspot.pt>

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The Code of Chaos - Wilderness, Language and the Circularity of Escape in Don DeLillo's *The Names*

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João Paulo Guimarães

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

As Leslie Fiedler tells us in *Love and Death in the American Novel*, the most significant works of fiction about the New World reject linear temporality. They are exceptional because they pivot around a voyage towards the remote region of innocence – a plane yet unsoiled by history. Fiedler says that these American texts are "nonrealistic, even anti-realistic" (28) because they are animated by a "flight from the physical data of the actual world" (29). The latter is instead tamed into a "system of signs to be deciphered" (29), in hope that they will unlock the "Ideal" (29) that explains the ultimate truth underlying the plane of ephemeral facts.

In short, regardless of when they were written, "American" texts, as defined by Fiedler, partake of their nation's quest for a vantage point from which the world can be seen in its true aspect. That is what explains the American fascination with wilderness, which, in *Uncommon Ground,* William Cronon describes as follows:

> Wilderness is the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover the true selves we have lost to the corrupting influences of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape

of authenticity. Combining the sacred grandeur of the sublime with the primitive simplicity of the frontier, it is the place where we can see the world as it really is, and so know ourselves as we really are. (80)

Wilderness was what Americans had found when they first arrived in the New World. Because they already saw themselves as denizens of an original unpolluted paradise, the description of their new abode as a wild space was, however, in many ways self-fulfilling. As Donald Pease points out in *The New American Exceptionalisms*, the first settlers had brought wilderness with them in the form of the collective fantasy of the Virgin Land, which, after having been established, allowed them to repress their responsibility for historical events like the removal of the Indians:

> At its core, the metaphor of the Virgin Land was designed to fulfill Europe's wish to start life afresh by relinquishing history on behalf of the secular dream of the construction of a new Eden. The metaphor gratified European emigrants' need to believe that America was an unpopulated space. The belief that the new world was discovered and settled by the Europeans who emigrated there resulted from the coupling of a shared fantasy with historical amnesia. (159-60)

However, physical nature itself also had a part to play in this fantasy. While, according to the national fantasy, Americans were always already guileless creatures that stood apart from the sensible world of history, paradoxically, they still had to expose themselves to the natural world and to tame the latter in order to become pure. Therefore, as civilization made its progress in the direction of the western part of the continent and concurrently destroyed the wild landscapes that acted as an alibi for the nation's self-portrait, the very same people that were deploying modernity into the remotest regions of the country started to be assailed by a feeling of nostalgia for the unexplored frontier. According to Cronon, several ways to circumvent this spiritual lack were soon brought forth:

> If the frontier was passing, then men who had the means to do so should preserve for themselves some remnant of its wild landscape so that they might enjoy the regeneration and renewal that came from sleeping under the stars, participating in blood sports, and living off the land. The frontier might be gone, but the frontier experience could still be had if only the wilderness was preserved. . . . The elite

passion for wild land took many forms: enormous estates in the Adirondacks and elsewhere . . . cattle ranches for the would-be riders of the Great Plains, guided big-game hunting trips in the Rockies, and luxurious resort hotels whenever railroads pushed their way into sublime landscapes. Wilderness suddenly emerged as the landscape of choice for elite tourists, who brought with them strikingly urban ideas of the countryside through which they traveled. (80)

Don Delillo's *The Names* is a story about a group of well-to-do Americans who have discovered a new way to simulate the experience of the frontier: they immerse themselves in the wild life of unstable countries:

In the end this is what brought them out. It wasn't the local hepatitis, the cholera to the north, even the steady gunfire. It was the arbitrary nature of things. Moods and whims. Nothing the same two days running. Stray events. Life shaped by men who had the wanton force of some sudden turn in nature. (100)

James Axton, the book's narrator and protagonist, is one of these explorers. He is a risk-analyst for a multinational company that insures big corporations against several hazards correlated to the political, social and economic instability of the countries they do business with. By Fiedler's standards, Axton is a model American hero – he is not able to devote himself entirely to his marriage. After he has a one-night affair with one of her friends, his wife decides to leave him. She tells him that it wasn't so much the adulterous act itself that made her furious but the indifference with which he went about it. Axton is then, the prototype of the man on the run from the grip of responsibility who doesn't know who he is or what he wants. He therefore also fits in with those who, according to D. H. Lawrence, set off to America with no ultimate purpose in mind other than to get away:

They came largely to get *away* – that most simple of motives. To get away. Away from what? In the long run, away from themselves.Away from everything. That's why most people have come to America, and still do come. To get away from everything they are and have been. (9)

Like most of his fellow expatriates, Axton travels towards the wildness of the frontier which, by then, had to be sought in less traditional places. "I was still waiting to be

surprised by life" (102), he tells us. His intention was to open himself to the true meanings that, in the past, one would have found in the natural world. As we have seen, however, in *The Names*, the stand-in for wilderness as the touchstone of truth is the utter chaos of "complex systems" with "endless connections" (303) that, according to these characters, one could find in developing countries. The entangled branches these new pioneers had to grapple with were, in a nutshell, those of history. Axton tells us that it is in these places that one can feel the world as it really is:

> This is where I want to be. History. It's in the air. Events are linking all of these countries. What do we talk about over dinner, all of us? Politics basically. That's what it comes down to. Money and politics. . . . All of us. We're important suddenly. Isn't it something you feel? We're right in the middle. . . . The world is here. Don't you feel that? In some of these places things have enormous power. . . . Everything here is serious. And we're in the middle (97-98).

Like the American explorers described by Fiedler, however, these capitalist crusaders "flee from the sensual data of the actual world" (29). If everything in these places was serious, they certainly didn't see them as such. They do not care about history's branches at all: the fruits are all that matters, the truths that can be percolated from chaos. Their embracement of chaos is anything but selfless: they do it so that they can squeeze patterns and ideal shapes out of it. Axton tells us that, Owen Brademas, an archeologist friend of his, "used to say that even random things take ideal shapes and come to us in painterly forms. It's a matter of seeing what is there. He saw patterns there, moments in the flow" (20).

The irony is, then, that although these characters claim to be driven by a desire for complexity and immersion in the world, they always maintain a distance from their threatening surroundings. David Keller's wife, Lindsay, admits that she and her husband, a banker, stay in a region only "until [she] begins to feel [she] knows it. Until [she] begin[s] to feel responsible" (130). As Douglas Keesey points out, in "They Make the System Equal to Terror", "The American and other international jet-setters

might as well have remained in the air for all the connection they make with the natives on the ground" (121). Keesey throws this idea on the table as a response to Axon's own self-conscious remarks about his and his friends' air travels: "Air travel . . . removes us from the world and sets us apart from each other. . . . We were a subculture, business people in transit, . . . half numb to the secluded beauty down there, the slate land we're leaving behind" (254). Axton also slips in another confession with similar implications: even when he is travelling on the ground, he moves "between places, never in them" (143).

That is why he sees himself as a perennial tourist. Like the American elites previously described by Cronon, he employs the places he travels through merely as a background to his quest for meaning – they are like pockets of preserved wilderness – and never actually engages with the ubiquitous complexity he constantly extols:

> I began to think of myself as a perennial tourist. There was something agreeable about this. To be a tourist is to escape accountability. Errors and failings don't cling to you the way they do back home. . . . Together with thousands, you are granted immunities and broad freedoms. You are an army of fools, wearing bright polyesters, riding camels, taking pictures of each other, haggard, dysenteric, thirsty. There is nothing to think about but the next shapeless event. . . . One day I went out to find the streets full of children wearing costumes. . . . I didn't ask what it meant. I was happy not knowing. I wanted to preserve the surprise in an opaque medium (43-44).

Axton's lack of curiosity and deliberate detachment from what happens around him is, of course, teeming with political overtones. Like we have seen, wilderness, in the American mind, is encrusted with two paradoxical layers of significance – it is, at once, a symbol for the American conquest of complexity and a stand-in for the disavowal of the latter meaning. As Donald Pease bluntly puts it, Americans did not identify with an image of themselves as ravagers of nature and murderers of Indians because nature had, from the outset, chosen them as its true inhabitants:

> Virgin Land narratives placed the movement of the national people across the continent in opposition to the savagery attributed to the wilderness as well as to the native peoples who figured indistinguishable from the wilderness, and, later, it fostered an

understanding of the campaign of Indian removal as nature's beneficent choice of the Anglo-American settlers over the native inhabitants for its cultivation. (160)

Throughout the novel, Andreas Eliades, a Greek businessman who later turns out to be a secret agent, becomes the mouthpiece for this incongruence at the pith of the Virgin Land myth. He invites Axton to have dinner with him in order to make the latter understand the seriousness of the issues he is enmeshed in: "Andreas took me to a tavern in a half-finished street in a remote district. The place specialized in hearts, brains, kidneys and intestines. I decided this choice of eating place had not been made casually. The evening was to be a lesson in seriousness, in authentic things" (234). While they are having dinner, Eliades predictably summons before Axton's very eyes an image of the chasm between American innocence and American imperialism:

> American strategy. This is interesting, how Americans choose strategy over principle every time and yet keep believing in their own innocence. Strategy in Cyprus, strategy in matters of the dictatorship. The Americans learned to live with the colonels very well. Investments flourished under the dictatorship. (236)

Also quite predictably, his remarks fall on dead ears. Axton simply cannot yoke together the two conflicting images projected by his presence in foreign countries. Like his fellow expatriates, he will go on seeing himself as a noble explorer: "Rather than see themselves the powerful exploiting the weak, these men imagine they are intrepid explorers on a grand adventure" (Keesey 118).

Throughout the book, the protagonist incessantly disavows his connection to the exploitative apparatus of global capitalism. In order to bypass a latent political argument, every time his hotel's concierge asks him where he is off to, he tells him a lie:

> In time, I began to lie. I would tell him I was going to a place that had a name I could easily pronounce. . . . I felt childish, of course. This was part of his power over me. But the lies began to worry me after a while in a way that had nothing to do with childishness. . . . The lie was deeper in Greek than it would have been in English. I knew this without knowing why. . . . The smoky crowded places where we did business

were not always as different to us as the names assigned to them. We needed the names to tell them apart. . . . I might have been wishing an air crash on myself or an earthquake on an innocent city, the city whose name I had uttered. . . . I also lied when I went to Turkey. I could handle the word for Turkey, it was one of my better words, but I didn't want Niko to know I went there. He looked political. (103)

This scene shows us that Axton is perfectly aware that the names Americans use to pin down the complexities of a place are charged with political implications. There is, at the same time, something about them that is linked to childhood and, therefore, to the innocence that walks in tandem with the American quest for meaning on foreign lands. Childhood, in *The Names*, is linked to the American desire to elicit an order from the world. For instance, when Axton is organizing the information he collected about the problematic countries he travelled through, he feels the childlike pleasure of things falling into place:

I worked until ten that night, enjoying it, finding a deep and steady pleasure in the paperwork, the details, the close to childlike play of the telex, of tapping out messages. Even putting my desk in order was a satisfaction and odd comfort. Neat stacks, for a change. Labeled folders. . . . It was the setting of limits I thought I needed. A firmness and clarity, a sense that I could define the shape of things. (192)

Although they are disavowed, this childlike act of labeling things has deep political implications. In the extract that follows, Charles Maitland, a diplomat, makes blatant the way supposed primordial names are correlated to western domination. He tells Axton that he took the replacement of "Persia" for "Iran" (after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which ousted a pro-capitalism government) and of "Rhodesia" for "Zimbabwe" as serious blow to the way he recollected his childhood:

They keep changing the names. . . . The names we grew up with. The countries, the images. Persia, for one. We grew up with Persia. What a vast picture that name evoked. A vast carpet of sand, a thousand turquoise mosques. All the names. A dozen or more and now Rhodesia of course. Rhodesia said something. What do they offer in its place? Linguistic arrogance. . . . There's something to it, you know. This sweeping arrogance. Overthrow, re-speak. What do they leave us with? Ethnic designations. Sets of initials. . . . Every time another people's republic emerges from the dust, I have a feeling someone has tampered with my childhood. (240)

Ironically, though, "overthrowing" and "re-speaking" are the very elements that propel the novel forward – the obsession with finding the original meaning of the world by, paradoxically, subduing the extant meanings, or, as Fiedler would put it, turning the latter into "a system of signs to be deciphered" (29). Owen Brademas tells Axton a story that perfectly illustrates the degree of violence that this quest entails:

> Lately I've been thinking of Rawlingson, the Englishman who wanted to copy the inscriptions on the Behistun rock. The languages were Old Persian, Elamite and Babylonian. Maneuvering on the ladders from the first group to the second, he nearly fell to his death. This inspired him to use a Kurdish boy to copy the Babylonian set, which was the least accessible. The boy inched across a rock mass that had only the faintest indentations he might use for finger-grips. . . . This is how he proceeded, clinging from rock to rock. . . . But he made it, miraculously. . . . What kind of story is this and why have I been thinking about it lately? . . . Is that what it is [a political allegory]? I think it's a story about how far men will go to satisfy a pattern, or find a pattern, or fit together the elements of a pattern. . . . Rawlingson wanted to decipher cuneiform writing. He needed these three examples of it. . . . All the noise, babble and spit of three spoken languages had been subdued and codified, broken down to these wedge-shaped marks. With his grids and lists the decipherer searches out relationships, parallel structures. . . . After Rawlingson came Norris. It's interesting . . . that both of these men were at one time employed by the East India Company. . . . Is this the scientific face of imperialism? The human face? (80)

Owen employs this "political allegory", which shows that explorers will not shy away from sacrificing other human lives symbolically and literally to obtain a totality of meaning, as an extreme case that could be used to understand the project being carried out by a group of murderers called "The Names". They represent the epitome of the "overthrow and re-speak" procedure, since they actually kill other human beings in order to unveil the latter's original meanings. They find someone with the same set of initials as the name of the place he/she inhabits and then kill that same person with a weapon that "inscribes" these initials on their bodies. They tell Owen that what they do is "not history. It is precisely the opposite of history" (291), meaning they are interested in attaining a "Platonic orgasm" (216) that grants them access to original forms. That is why they bring their victims' names down to their basic units – the letters of the alphabet: "Each sound has one sign only. This is the genius of the alphabet. Simple, inevitable" (295).

According to Tom LeClair, their written murders are anathema to history, but also to reality, these two terms being virtually interchangeable throughout *The Names*. From this it follows that, when they make a killing, the cult members deracinate their victim from the flow of events:

> Using the implements of early writers – sharp blades and hammers – the cult members inflict themselves on other humans, pursuing the mad absolutism of literacy's "subdue and codify". The cult's "text" – their murdered victim – is isolated, detached, absolutely controlled and wholly original. Such qualities are impossible in oral exchange. (192)

In Delillo's book, orality is a synonym for the complex entanglements that the capitalist explorers find in southern Europe and in Asia. It goes without saying, then, that the term and the regions it evokes have to be understood as foils to America. That is precisely what Axton tells us during one of his visits to his wife, Kathryn, who, after they separated, went to live with their son, Tap, to Kouros, one of Greece's islands: "Why is it we talk so much here? I do the same in Athens. Inconceivable, all of this conversation, in North America. Talking, listening to others talk. . . . Something in the air. . . . The air is filled with words" (79).

The correlation between America, silence and the cult's monomaniacal desire for meaning is, therefore, what animates Frank Volterra's obsession to direct an existential western based on the The Names' atrocities. Although he says that his film will have voices, they will be "*filmed* voices" (199), the camera being, in other words, a mechanical equivalent of the instruments employed by the cult members to inscribe their victims' names. A particular part of his description of the project shall be useful for our purposes:

> The desert fits the screen. It is the screen . . . People talk about classic westerns. The classic has always been the space, the emptiness. The lines are drawn for us. All we have to do is insert the figures, men in dusty boots, certain faces. Figures in open space have always been what film is about. American film. This is the situation. People in a wilderness, a wild and barren space. The space is the desert, the movie screen, the strip of film, however you see it. What are the people doing here. This is their existence. They are here to work out their existence. This space, this emptiness is what

they have to confront. I've always loved American spaces. People at the end of a long lens. Swimming in space. (198)

Although we had never left the wilderness as a symbolic space, Volterra brings it back to the foreground. That is what, in the end, unites the capitalist expatriates with Owen and the cult – all of them go to the wilderness to confront the emptiness of their existence; all of them break free from responsibility and set out in search for the one truth that will make their life meaningful.

But, in a sense, we already knew this. The way I see it, the remarks that Volterra adds to his conspicuous emphasis on the Americanness of this particular symbolic space are what we ought to be interested in. He says: "But this situation isn't American. There's something traditional and closed in. The secret goes back. I believe it goes back" (198). Moreover, we have to take into account that the heroes in his picture are not generic Americans; they are generic humans: "figures, men in dusty boots, certain faces" (198). When, at the coda of the book, Owen is describing to Axton his last meeting with The Names, he paints a similar picture: "It was interesting how he'd chosen to finish", the narrator tells us, "impersonally, gazing as if from a distance on these unknowable people, these figures we distinguish by their clothing" (309).

These ideas allow us to shed some light on something that Owen and Axton had said some moments earlier. Emerich, one of the cultists, had rhetorically asked Owen: "What is the function of a murderer? Is he the person you go to in order to confess?" (293). That thought triggers the following dialogue:

> 'He was wrong', I said, surprised at my own abruptness. 'You weren't there to confess anything.'
>
> 'Unless it was to acknowledge my likeness to them.'
>
> 'Everybody is like everybody else.'

'You can't mean that.'

'Not exactly. Not stated exactly so.'

'We overlap. Is that what you mean?'

'I'm not sure what I mean.' (293)

Is Delillo, then, implying that the myth of the frontier is not the exclusive property of Americans? We will have to look elsewhere in order to corroborate or discard this idea.

Like Lawrence told us, what motivates people to set off towards the "new world" is, among other things, a desire to run away from themselves. That is why they become innocent by fiat. As Donald Pease explains, however, innocence cannot subsist on its own without a scapegoat onto which to pass one's guilt. Charles Maitland's son says so himself when he accuses his father of blaming others to preserve his flimsy innocence: "The whole point is to pretend not to know. As some people protect their inexperience and fear, this man protects his knowledge of the true situation. It's a way of spreading guilt. His innocence, other people's guilt" (165).

This is exactly what people in the Middle East appear to be doing, from Axton's perspective – they blame Americans for everything that goes wrong with their countries:

> America is the world's living myth. There's no sense of wrong when you kill an American or blame America for some local disaster. This is our function, to be character types, to embody recurring themes that people can use to comfort themselves, justify themselves and so on. We're here to accommodate. Whatever people need, we provide. (114).

Axton also adds that "Everyone is here, of course, not just Americans. They're all here. But they lack a certain mythical quality that terrorists find attractive" (114). This explains why Maitland, a British diplomat, can put the blame on America and proudly display his detachment from the west's imperialism: "During the worst of the

anti-American demonstrations he'd put on his Union Jack lapel badge and go walking right into it" (244).

Americans have, of course, their own scapegoats. When Axton learns that Rowser, his boss, had been sharing information on the Middle East with the CIA, his first reaction is to admit that "Those who engaged knowingly were less guilty than the people who carried out their designs" (317). However, he immediately sneaks in a remark whose purpose is to partially disentangle him from the whole affair:

> If America is the world's living myth, then the CIA is America's myth. All the themes are there, in tiers of silence, whole bureaucracies of silence, in conspiracies and doublings and brilliant betrayals. The agency takes on shapes and appearances, embodying whatever we need at a given time to know ourselves or unburden ourselves. Drinking tea, spinning in the quiet room. It gives a classical tone to our commonly felt emotions. I felt a dim ache, a pain that seemed to carry towards the past, disturbing a number of surfaces along the way. (317)

It is this classical tone, this "pain that seemed to carry towards the past", that vindicates a universal dilation of the frontier myth. When confronted with their own vulnerability, human beings in general tend to run away and look for a better life. I do not subscribe to readings like the one suggested by Keesey, who advocates that the novel ends on a positive note and opens a pathway for Axton's moral regeneration. The critic points out that:

> James decides to stop writing reports for the insurance company and the CIA, to end his infatuation with the cult's deadly silence, and to begin making his own small contribution toward a common understanding. Stating his plans in words whose ordinary nature should not make us overlook the extraordinary change in his character, James says that his goal now is 'some kind of higher typing, a return to freelance life'. Perhaps he will call his book *The Names*. (132)

Axton does say that. But he also says many more things that clash with the idea that his character has undergone a tremendous transformation. For instance, although he lets us know that he may go see his family, he still has not decided to stay put and dedicate himself fully to it. Notice how immediately after he says that his new goal

will be "some kind of higher typing" (the part that Keesey emphasizes), the idea of escape again makes its way into his speech:

> There I would glimpse my wife, spend more time with Tap, decide what to do next. Some higher kind of typing, a return to the freelance life. But where would I live? What place? When the telex began to make its noise, I left the office and went walking in the National Gardens among the plantain lilies and perfect palms (318).

In other words, he goes back to nature – he resumes his quest for meaning and for "perfect palms". If there is something that his obsession with the cult's project has taught him, it is that humanity's struggle to find an order in the face of emptiness and death is tragically circular. This is Owen's key insight about The Names. Their initial goal had been to subdue the physical world to the mind. Because they feared death, they would try to control the latter by causing it themselves:

> They are engaged in painstaking denial. We can see them as people intente on ritualizing a denial of our elemental nature. To eat, to expel waste, to sense things, to survive. To do what is necessary, to satisfy what is animal in us, to be organic, meat-eating, all blood-sense and digestion. . . . We know we will die. This is our saving grace in a sense. No animal knows this but us. . . . The final denial of our base reality, in this schematic, is to produce a death. Here is the stark drama of our separateness. A needless death. A death by system, by machine-intellect. (175)

They are, nevertheless, defeated by the redundancy of the whole scheme. As Owen tells us: "These killings mock us. They mock our need to structure and classify, to build a system against the terror in our souls. They make the system equal to the terror. The means to contend with death has become death" (308). This is probably the most important thought the book has to offer. Delillo's novel seems to be aware of the circularity that Leslie Fiedler had descried on the structure of American escape from death and responsibility – what we escape from always ends up coming back with a vengeance.

If Americans (and other westerners) went to problematic countries to embrace the natives and immerse themselves in a wilderness of truths, they eventually pay the

price for doing so. The "wild people" they welcome into their lives (and who they exploit) end up turning against them. But in a sense, Axton tells us, Americans knew they deserved it:

> They'd seemed, the troops, to have a deep need to pull things out of the walls, whatever was jutting – pipes, taps, valves, switches. The walls themselves they'd smeared with shit . . . . I thought I detected in people who had lost property or fled, most frequently in Americans, some mild surprise that it hadn't happened sooner. . . . Wasn't there a sense, we Americans felt, in which we had it coming? (41)

These "savages" smear their walls with walls with shit in order to emphasize the simple fact that one simply cannot transcend the physicality of death. The novel also seems to be saying, however, that those who are afraid to die cannot avoid trying to get away from this inevitability. Consider, for instance, Axton's reaction, at the end of the book, when he is suddenly confronted with the prospect of his death at the hands of a group of terrorists who reportedly wanted to kill his friend David Keller:

> When the gunman turned my way, I was not only the intended victim but had clearly done something (I tried to remember what) to merit his special attention. But he didn't aim and fire. This is the point. It turned out he didn't know who I was. . . . I waited for the second self to emerge, the cunning unlearned self, the animal we keep in reserve for such occasions. It would impel me to move in this or that direction, strategically, flooding my body with adrenalin. But there was only this heavy pause. I was fixed on the spot. . . . This was the only thing to penetrate that blank moment – an awareness I could not connect to things. The words would come later. The single word, the final item on the list. *American*.

Faced with his imminent death, there is only one thing that James can think of – the final item at the end of a list of his defects that he himself had composed in order to pre-empt his wife's accusations. Therefore, it is his wife (and his refusal to dedicate his life to her) who comes back to haunt him on that very moment. But the novel does not seem to be criticizing Axton – it rather appears to be asking the reader to empathize with the protagonist. Delillo's book does not posit a facile alternative to these characters' inability to commit themselves to the lives they live. When confronted with his involvement in political intrigues and murder plots, Axton does not

magically convert himself into a serious and politically engaged man like Andreas Eliades. Like many of the other characters, he is fated to be a man on the run.

We know that Owen, at least, is condemned to a perpetual escape from seriousness. After having narrated his adventures with the cult to Axton, the archeologist asks the protagonist:

> 'Are you a serious man?'
>
> The question stopped me cold. I told him I didn't understand what he meant.
>
> 'I'm not a serious man,' he said. 'If you wanted to compose a mighty Homeric text on my life and fortunes, I might suggest a suitable first line. 'This is the story of a man who was not serious.'
>
> 'You're the most serious man I know.'
>
> He laughed at me and made a gesture of dismissal. (300)

Although he has spent his life studying ancient cultures and obscure languages, Owen is aware that he only did so to evade the unbearable fact of death. He tells us that he, from a very early age, had been dogged by the image of his mother and father speaking in tongues along with the rest of the people from their Pentecostal congregation. They had attained, in his opinion, a true innocence – a prelapsarian language that unlocked for them the original meanings of the world. Owen, however, never could join them in their celebration of god's marvels because he is afraid to let go – he is afraid to die. The novel comes to a halt with an image of Owen perpetually on the run from "the nightmare of real things": "He ran into the distance, smaller and smaller. This was worse than a retched nightmare. It was the nightmare of real things, the fallen wonder of the world" (339). Unlike his parents, he cannot immerse himself in the flow of life because he simply cannot avoid being afraid: "these thoughts of pity toward things that are less powerful than ourselves would not overpower the shadowy remembrance of terror" (338). In the end, he is not a serious man because he is very much like David Keller, who, after having survived the terrorists' attempt to take his

life, goes back to the old self-conscious refusal to acknowledge his own mortality: "David would recover without complications, cracking jokes in the mandatory American manner, the cherished manner of a people self-conscious about death" (329).

Owen's momentous insight is, then, that these jokes that one cracks are themselves cracked at the core: death always manages to reappear from the crevices. That is why one has to keep coming up with new jokes that give meaning to one's life. When Owen attains this epiphany, James tells us that "There was a strange radiance in his face . . . the full acceptance, the crushing belief that nothing can be done" (308). Nevertheless, the archeologist takes this as an ultimate defeat – his life has become an endless contradiction. The novel hints that he will eventually die in that room in Lahore in which he tells Axton his tale. The protagonist, however, has gained something from Owen's stories: "I came away from the old city feeling I'd been engaged in a contest of some singular and gratifying kind. Whatever he'd lost in life-strength, this is what I'd won" (309).

The ultimate difference between Owen and James is, then, that while the former refuses to face the circularity implied by the escape towards the wilderness, the latter goes on to celebrate life in its utter imperfection. At the outset of the novel, the narrator had told us that he didn't want to visit the Parthenon because there was something absolute and final about it: "It's what we've rescued from madness. Beauty, dignity, order, proportion." (3). He adds that "It looms. It's so powerfully there. It almost forces us to ignore it. Or at least resist it. We have our self-importance." (5). In the home stretch of the book, however, the narrator is finally able to visit the monument. This is the real change in his character – he has realized that beauty and order are beyond humanity's reach although humans are doomed to keep looking for them. As David Cowart contends:

> The monuments of the Acropolis, looming above the aimless, inconsequential lives of the characters from the very beginning, are recognized only at the end as not that which we have rescued from chaos, not as fragments of some richer and better and more coherent order of the past – but as an embodiment of humanity's grief at imperfection and mortality. (179)

In the Parthenon we then find an equivalent of Volterra's camera, the instrument we use to frame the brittle orders that we impose on the world. And, once again, the figures that the camera implies are not described as generic Americans on the run, but as generic humans – anyone could be behind this metaphysical camera:

> The old box camera remains untended on its tripod, the black hood lifted in the breeze. Whereis the photographer, the old man in the battered gray jacket with sagging pockets, the man with the sunken face, dirt in his fingernails? I feel I know him or can invent him. It isn't necessary for him to appear, eating pistachio nuts out of a white bag. The camera is enough. (331)

In the end, if what James finds in the Parthenon is "a cry for pity" (330), then what the novel has to offer is precisely a modicum of wholehearted compassion for those who set out in pursuit of a New World.

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A Guerra Fria e a dissolução dos conceitos público-privado em *The Bell Jar* e poesia selecionada de Sylvia Plath

Susana Correia

FACULDADE DE LETRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO – CETAPS

Abstract

This paper intends to analyze *The Bell Jar* and a selection of Sylvia Plath's poetry focusing on the dissolution of the boundaries between the public and the private spheres during the Cold War, due to a new anticommunist containment ideology. In order to do so, I will resort to an analysis of naturally oppressive spaces that expose that dissolution, while also examining some characters. Ultimately, I aim to evince how Plath subverts national conformity and how in The Bell Jar international politics and individual trauma have similar trajectories.

Keywords: Cold War; McCarthyism; public-private; politics; spaces.

Resumo

Este artigo procura analisar *The Bell Jar*, bem como uma seleção da poesia de Sylvia Plath focando-se na forma como, durante a Guerra Fria, ocorreu uma dissolução dos conceitos público e privado, em virtude de uma nova política de contenção anticomunista. Para tal será feita uma análise dos espaços que denunciam essa dissolução, espaços naturalmente opressivos, e um enquadramento a nível de personagens. Em última instância, procuro demonstrar como Plath resiste à política nacional de conformidade e como em *The Bell Jar* as questões da política internacional e os traumas individuais têm trajetórias paralelas.

Palavras-chave: Guerra Fria; Macartismo; público-privado; política; espaços.

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Sylvia Plath não é comumente considerada uma escritora política. [1] Contrariamente, quando evocada, é habitualmente catalogada como poeta confessional, poeta suicida, esposa do também poeta Ted Hughes ou, como sugere Carl Rollyson, uma Marilyn Monroe da literatura moderna (1). Neste artigo proponho, no entanto, analisar *The Bell Jar*, bem como uma seleção da poesia de Plath, demarcando-me de qualquer tipo de leitura biográfica da autora, centrando-me numa análise histórica, política e cultural. Esta leitura pretende explicar a ocorrência de uma dissolução dos conceitos público e privado, em virtude de uma política de paranoia e histerismo que emergia nos Estados Unidos da América, nos anos 50, motivada pela Guerra Fria.

Nascida em 1932, em Boston, Massachusetts, Sylvia Plath, filha de pais com ascendência austríaca e alemã, cresceu num ambiente inflamado pela Segunda Guerra Mundial sobre o qual viria a refletir nos seus diários, desde 1950, onde se indaga, por exemplo, a propósito do conceito de inimigo: "Why do we electrocute men for murdering an individual and then pin a purple heart on them for mass slaughter of someone arbitrarily labeled "enemy"? Weren't the Russians communists when they helped us slap down the Germans?" (*J* 46).

Os anos posteriores à Segunda Guerra Mundial, especialmente a década de 50 nos Estados Unidos, foram anos de contradições. Se por um lado havia paz, estabilidade económica e oportunidades laborais, uma nova ameaça Soviética pairava sobre o país e sobre o sistema capitalista americano. Assim, o período compreendido entre 1947, data que marca o início da doutrina Truman que pretendia defender o mundo do avanço comunista, até ao colapso da União Soviética em 1991 foi um período marcado por ansiedade atómica, política e militar, que se viria a denominar Guerra Fria. Efetivamente, em 1949, a União Soviética testava já tecnologia nuclear, em 1952 eram testadas as bombas de hidrogénio, e em 1957 o processo de corrida ao espaço dava vantagem aos soviéticos com o lançamento do Sputnik. Em Outubro de 1962, com a Crise dos Mísseis de Cuba, a iminência de um apocalipse nuclear nunca tinha estado tão próxima. Enquanto se preparavam para o cataclismo, os americanos foram desenvolvendo sentimentos de incerteza e vulnerabilidade, ao passo que a nível político o senador republicano Joseph McCarthy encabeçava a nova política anticomunista, o Macartismo.

A luta contra a disseminação do socialismo tornava-se agora mais pertinente do que nunca, fundamentando a intervenção americana a nível internacional numa luta que não era exclusivamente ideológica, mas também geopolítica, económica e militar. O Macartismo trazia à superfície uma atmosfera de suspeita, incentivando colegas, amigos e vizinhos a voltarem-se contra eles próprios na tentativa de detetar o "enemy at home". Simultaneamente, nas décadas de 50 e 60 surgia a ideologia da contenção, inicialmente formulada por George F. Kennan, em 1947, o ano da segunda vaga do "Red Scare", uma estratégia isolacionista cujo intuito era impedir a expansão soviética. Esta estratégia pretendia evidenciar que os valores domésticos da privacidade da esfera familiar eram uma forma privilegiada de contenção política externa. Assim, segundo Alan Nadel, como a noção de família estava interligada à ilusória noção de segurança, o culto da domesticidade era entendido como uma forma de contenção política e social que, em última instância, seria um método para conter a própria ameaça comunista (*Containment* 3; 117). Neste seguimento, parece tornar-se plausível a teoria de Peter J. Kuznick e James Gilbert quando advogam que o principal efeito da Guerra Fria terá sido a nível psicológico.[2]

Perante o clima de paranoia, a linha entre aquilo que era do domínio público e do domínio privado tornava-se cada vez mais ténue. Em *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault critica a capacidade das "disciplinas", um sistema judiciário que, no século XVIII, tinha permitido a criação de um sistema de direitos supostamente igualitário, suportado por mecanismos de micro poder, de regularem os mais ínfimos níveis da vida do indivíduo ("Panopticism" 222), demonstrando, portanto, que através das instituições fundacionais do Iluminismo houvera uma interpenetração entre a vida pública e privada. Deborah Nelson, por sua vez, argumenta que com a Guerra Fria se perdeu a ilusão da existência de privacidade como um elemento estável (Nelson, *Pursuing* xiii; 27). Assim, se as categorias público e privado já estavam inter-relacionadas, a verdade é que com a Guerra Fria e com a doutrina de McCarthy a dissolução da categoria do público na categoria do privado se agudizou ainda mais, ou seja, a vida privada dos americanos passou a pertencer ao escrutínio público e as motivações políticas passaram a determinar a vivência privada.

Em 1959, o termo "poesia confessional" designava o novo tipo de poesia escrita por Robert Lowell em *Life Studies,* contrária ao tom impessoal de estilo modernista e em revolta contra o "New Criticism". Segundo Waters, a poesia confessional violava as normas de decoro literário (380) ao tratar temas como a doença mental, a hospitalização em instituições psiquiátricas, a violência doméstica, a sexualidade, o suicídio, entre outros. Desta forma, no panorama do pós-guerra surgia uma nova

corrente poética onde a confissão, a autenticidade e a vida pessoal se afirmavam para responder à ansiedade relativa à morte da privacidade. A propósito desta corrente, Sylvia Plath comentou numa entrevista a Peter Orr: "I've been very excited by what I feel is the new breakthrough that came with, say, Robert Lowell's *Life Studies*, this intense breakthrough into very serious, very personal, emotional experience which I feel has been partly taboo…".[3] Contudo, na mesma entrevista Plath acrescentava que apesar de os seus poemas surgirem das suas experiências emocionais, o poder de manipular essas experiências era fundamental na composição poética. Por isso, como veremos, a mesma capacidade de tradução das experiências em material narrativo também ocorre na redação de *The Bell Jar*.

Público vs. Privado: as personagens e os espaços

    The Bell Jar é o único romance completo de Sylvia Plath. Publicado em janeiro de 1962 no Reino Unido, com o pseudónimo de Victoria Lucas, só seria atribuído a Plath após o lançamento de *Ariel*, em março de 1965. Partindo de elementos autobiográficos, isto é, a estadia de Plath em Nova Iorque no verão de 1953, o romance retrata o contexto cultural e ideológico da América *wasp* nos anos 50.

    O primeiro parágrafo do romance espelha, desde logo, a fusão entre reflexões de nível privado e público, nomeadamente quando Esther Greenwood, a personagem principal, reflete sobre a eletrocussão de Julius e Ethel Rosenberg, dois alegados espiões acusados de traição aos Estados Unidos por divulgarem informação nuclear à União Soviética. Neste parágrafo lê-se:

> It was a queer, sultry summer, the summer they electrocuted the Rosenbergs, and I didn't know what I was doing in New York. I'm stupid about executions. The idea of being electrocuted makes me sick, and that's all there was to read about in the papers – google-eyed headlines staring up at me on every street corner and at the fusty, peanut-smelling mouth of every subway. It had nothing to do with me, but I couldn't help wondering what it would be like, being burned alive all along your nerves. (1)

Assim, se a primeira frase aborda questões políticas e históricas, rapidamente o enfoque passa a ser o estado emocional que a eletrocussão produz em Esther. Este parágrafo é também relevante por evidenciar a ideia de vigilância contínua, que aqui assume a forma dos *headlines* dos jornais que, metaforicamente, encaram Esther, bem como a atração inconformista de Esther relativamente à eletrocussão. Torna-se,

portanto, evidente que, ao iniciar o seu único romance com uma reflexão sobre o polémico caso dos Rosenberg, Plath pretende destacar o elemento político em *The Bell Jar*. Ainda que, aparentemente, o destaque que é dado a este caso não seja preponderante, a eletrocussão dos Rosenberg estabelece uma tensão que permeará toda a obra. Ao contrário de todas as personagens da obra, Esther move-se pelo sentimento de identificação com os espiões, que são alvo de críticas por toda a sociedade. No auge do Macartismo e do estado de vigilância, qualquer indicação de inconformismo, fosse esta de caráter social, sexual ou religioso, era motivo suficiente para suspeita. Neste sentido, imperava uma necessidade de consenso nacional e de regresso à normalidade, pelo que qualquer mostra de associação às atividades consideradas antiamericanas deveria ser investigada. A paranoia e a histeria tornavam-se condições sociais, o que viria a trazer consequências psicológicas para os cidadãos, como é o caso de Esther que se sente como um ser perdido numa sociedade que não compreende; pelo que, como forma de subverter o paradigma social, opta pela identificação com o inimigo. Esther opera esta identificação psicológica através dos seus pensamentos de compaixão (*BJ* 1) e de condenação do ato de eletrocussão (*BJ* 1). Outro mecanismo de revolta para com a política interna americana é a própria trivialização da eletrocussão, pois Esther associa o caso dos Rosenberg com a memória da primeira vez que vislumbrou um cadáver, enfatizando a coincidência de eventos públicos e privados (*BJ* 1). Um leitor atento notará ainda a semelhança entre os nomes Esther Greenwood e Esther Ethel Greenglass Rosenberg, o nome completo da espiã que deu origem ao nome da protagonista de *The Bell Jar*, uma forma explícita de identificação.

A identificação com o inimigo não abarca apenas os Rosenberg. Pensemos, por exemplo, no caso de Constantin, o intérprete simultâneo russo com quem Esther marca um encontro que inclui uma visita à Sede da Organização das Nações Unidas. Durante este encontro, Esther analisa Constantin, concluindo que fisicamente este homem poderia ser americano, mas que ao contrário dos homens americanos, Constantin tinha capacidade de intuição, o que é encarado pela protagonista como um aspeto positivo.[4]

Enquanto visitam um dos auditórios do edifício, Esther repara numa jovem mulher russa que fala no seu idioma nativo. Deparada com esta situação, uma americana politicamente alinhada com a ideologia nacional sentir-se-ia ameaçada perante a jovem intérprete; Esther, no entanto, manifesta a sua vontade de identificação com ela: "I wished with all my heart I could crawl into her and spend the rest of my life barking out one idiom after another" (*BJ* 71). No seguimento da

descrição do seu encontro com Constantin, Esther apercebe-se do quão inadequada se sente, o que contrasta com o final do encontro, quando manifesta vontade em ser seduzida por Contantin (*BJ* 74). Infringindo todas as expectativas de conduta social, Esther, que se sente desajustada no seu próprio país e se sente feliz com um jovem russo, imagina ainda como seria ser casada com Constantin (*BJ* 80) e, quando este toca o seu cabelo, ironicamente Esther sente um choque elétrico (*BJ* 81), relembrando o leitor da execução dos Rosenberg.

A identificação com o "enemy within", ou seja, os cidadãos russos que viviam em solo americano, é apenas uma das formas que utiliza para subverter o paradigma americano. Outra forma de se insurgir contra a política interna é através da exposição de comportamentos coevos. Uma grande ansiedade que permeava a época era o medo de ser visto ou ouvido, em qualquer lugar, a qualquer hora. Multiplicavam-se as ameaças à privacidade do cidadão através de equipamentos de vigilância, da vizinhança suburbana, da própria televisão que invadia o ambiente doméstico das famílias norte-americanas diariamente com notícias voyeurísticas e propagandísticas, ou mesmo através dos avanços da psicanálise. De acordo com Deborah Nelson, a poesia confessional representava o contradiscurso perfeito para contrariar os atentados à privacidade ("Confessional" 38), e, à poesia confessional, acrescento *The Bell Jar* como manifestação desse mesmo tipo de contranarrativa.

No poema de 1962, "Eavesdropper" (*CP* 260-261), Sylvia Plath regista a omnipresença da vigilância suburbana no dia a dia das famílias americanas. Assim, vemos como no poema os vizinhos espiam as casas uns dos outros: "Do not think I don't notice your curtain – / Midnight, four o'clock, / Lit (you are reading)". Note-se ainda nas seguintes expressões: "Nosy grower", "Flicking over my property", "Scrutinizing the fly". Repare-se também na ideia de captura em flagrante no seguinte verso – "How you jumped when I jumped on *you*!". Logo, vemos como Plath subverte o modelo de sociedade ideal, pois os próprios vizinhos, numa tentativa de expor o inimigo e reportar atividades antiamericanas, traem a liberdade e o direito à privacidade de cada um. O mesmo tipo de raciocínio é sugerido por títulos de poemas como "Words heard, by accident, over the phone" (*CP* 202-203), que espelham e denunciam uma cultura de suspeita, denúncia, interrogação e policiamento. Contudo, isto revela uma das grandes contradições da Guerra Fria, no sentido em que, como observa Deborah Nelson, o culto da privacidade do espaço da casa e, claro está, da ideologia doméstica, era entendido como uma das maiores contribuições para o sucesso dos Estados Unidos na guerra ("History", 29). Porém, esta liberdade e privacidade eram constantemente contestadas pelo Estado e pela comunidade local. A

casa americana dos subúrbios passou, portanto, a ser considerada não só como uma representação e símbolo do consenso e identidade nacionais, como também uma metáfora primordial para retratar, por um lado, o conceito de segurança e, por outro, a possibilidade de ameaça.

De facto, nos anos 50 assistia-se ao fenómeno de suburbanização segundo o qual as casas dos subúrbios eram edificadas de acordo com um modelo homogéneo, com o objetivo de agregar num mesmo espaço famílias similares, do mesmo escalão social, das mesmas etnias e crenças religiosas. A propósito da cultura suburbana, Alan Brinkley opina em "The Illusion of Unity in Cold War Culture":

> In almost all suburbs, homes were designed to thrust the focus of the family inward on itself, not outward into the community. Suburbanites used their back yards, for recreation. They built back, not front, porches. They valued privacy more than interaction with neighborhood. (69)

A ideia de unidade não passava de uma ilusão no contexto da cultura da Guerra Fria. As casas eram construídas homogeneamente; no entanto, as famílias encontravam-se contidas nas suas próprias casas. Assim, ainda que os subúrbios estivessem organizados de forma uniforme, valorizava-se mais a privacidade de cada família do que a interação com os vizinhos. Como explica Nelson: "The suburban home was supposed to offer the opportunity to live out the democratic dream of privacy in postwar America" (*Pursuing* 85). No entanto, ainda que se preservasse a noção de privacidade familiar na cultura suburbana, essa mesma era desestabilizada pela cultura de vigilância entre vizinhos.

No capítulo dez, um capítulo que marca o traumático regresso de Esther à sua cidade natal, após o verão em Nova Iorque, existe um retrato da cultura do subúrbio que tenho vindo a descrever. Esther descreve da seguinte forma a sua casa:

> Ours was a small, white clapboard house set in the middle of a *small green lawn* on the corner of *two peaceful suburban streets*, but in spite of the little maple trees planted at intervals around our property, *anybody* passing along the sidewalk *could glance up at the second storey windows and see just what was going on*. [ênfase minha] (*BJ* 111)

Esther apresenta a sua casa localizada nos subúrbios, onde apesar de estar resguardada pelas árvores, qualquer pessoa pode ter acesso ao que se passa dentro dela. No seguimento desta descrição, Esther comenta como uma das suas vizinhas, Mrs Ockenden, habitualmente reportava as atividades de Esther à sua mãe. Por outro lado,

Esther descreve a casa de uma outra vizinha, Dodo Conway, como cercada por uma "morbid façade of pine trees" (*BJ* 112), algo considerado indesejável pela vizinhança: "It was considered unsociable in our community of adjoining lawns and friendly, waist-high hedges" (*BJ* 112). A casa dos Greenwood e a casa dos Conway espelham, portanto, uma dualidade e paradoxo, isto é, a privacidade suburbana era considerada como algo desejável e característica de uma política de consenso nacional e, por isso, quando Mrs Ockenden trespassa a privacidade de Esther isto não é considerado correto. No entanto, quando os Conway ladeiam a casa com árvores para proteger a sua privacidade, esta atitude também é considerada pouco consensual. Há, por isso, uma atitude de manutenção e rejeição dos códigos da privacidade.

Deste modo, as noções de vigilância, o conceito de panoptismo e a ideia de poder, como formuladas por Foucault, parecem ser relevantes na análise espacial de T*he Bell Jar*. Segundo Foucault, a ideia generalizada da privacidade não existiria em si mesma porque o privado enquanto conceito é infiltrado pela ideia de poder. Sobre a noção de poder Foucault afirma: "Everywhere that power exists, it is being exercised. No one, strictly speaking, has an official right to power; and yet it is always exerted in a particular direction, with some people on one side and some on the other." ("Practice" 213). No capítulo de *Discipline and Punish* dedicado ao "Panopticism", Michel Foucault reconsidera o conceito introduzido por Jeremy Bentham nos finais do século XVIII, o panótico, uma construção arquitetónica baseada numa dinâmica binária entre ver e ser visto. Assim, no centro desta estrutura panótica existiria uma torre rodeada, na periferia, por um edifício anular. Nas palavras de Foucault: "in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen" (*Discipline* 202). Esta estrutura fora pensada de forma a potenciar ao máximo um estado de constante vigilância e de controlo sobre diversos tipos de espaços, entre eles prisões, hospitais psiquiátricos ou espaços de caráter mais generalista, como escolas ou locais de trabalho. Ora, utilizando este tipo de edificação, o guarda ou supervisor que estaria no centro da torre teria a vantagem de poder vigiar cada sujeito na sua cela ou estrutura de isolamento. Assim, o panótico induziria no recluso a consciência da permanente visibilidade, o que assegura a manutenção e funcionamento do poder. Por isso, Foucault considera que, graças aos mecanismos de observação e à possibilidade de penetrar no comportamento de cada indivíduo, o panótico potencia a mobilização de poder, ou melhor: "The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power" (204). Sempre visível e sempre presente, este mecanismo de vigilância e controlo intensifica a noção de poder.

Também Esther se torna alvo de vigilância na sua própria casa, pois utilizando o binário entre ver e ser visto, quando se aproxima da janela sente-se desmascarada, sentido necessidade de se esconder: "*I felt her gaze* pierce through the white clapboard and the pink, wallpaper roses and *uncover* me, crouching there behind the silver pickets of the radiator." [ênfase minha] (*BJ* 113). Mais à frente, quando Esther desce à cozinha vê-se novamente observada: "a clump of birches and a box hedge *protected* me from Mrs Ockenden" [ênfase minha] (*BJ* 115). As curiosas vizinhas em *The Bell Jar* desafiam, portanto, as noções de privacidade.

O espaço da casa era nos anos 50 associado à privacidade, às relações familiares e conjugais, por isso, ter-se-á tornado num símbolo da democracia americana. Popularizado na cultura americana como "home sweet home", o lar era, portanto, o local de autonomia, liberdade, soberania, ou seja, um espaço que, por representar a família nuclear, se tornou uma idealização da Guerra Fria, como defende Deborah Nelson ("Confessional" 36). Consequentemente, a casa deixa de ser apenas a estrutura física da propriedade habitada, mas torna-se numa metáfora política, central para o conceito de privacidade (Nelson, *Pursuing* 75). Esta metáfora foi intensificada se pensarmos no encontro comumente conhecido como "Kitchen Debates", entre o Vice-Presidente Richard Nixon e Primeiro Ministro Soviético Nikita Khrushchev, em julho de 1959, na Exposição Nacional Americana em Moscovo, que decorreu no interior de uma cozinha representativa do lar familiar americano.

Consciente do momento político vivido nos Estados Unidos e da desvalorização do papel da mulher, a poesia confessional contribuía para o desmantelamento do discurso dominante. Na cena literária surgiam, portanto, poemas escritos por mulheres, sobre o seu dia a dia nas suas casas, algo que viria a permitir uma transformação do lar como metáfora política. Assim, ironicamente, legitimava-se a entrada na esfera privada da casa com poemas que subvertiam a domesticidade através da mera exposição desta ideologia. Como argumenta Nelson:

> Sexton, Plath, and Rich undermined the assumptions about the privacy of the home, its sanctuary from surveillance, and its nourishment of individual autonomy – that is, the foundations of the cold war discourse on privacy. Since the home of containment ideology was principally a metaphor and a contradiction, a figure of conformity as well as a libertarian individuality, exposing the metaphor of the ideal home as the fantasy that it was meant undermining a cherished ideological bulwark against totalitarianism. (*Pursuing* 77)

O papel da literatura era agora desmistificar a ideologia da contenção, confrontando o mito da privacidade da casa como fonte de liberdade, para verificar que a conformidade que a domesticidade pressupunha não passava de uma ilusão e que a casa podia também funcionar como um espaço de rebelião.

Numa ocasião em *The Bell Jar*, Esther fantasia com a hipótese de casar com um guarda prisional com quem teria filhos e aqui vemos a centralidade que a cozinha ocupa na vida da dona de casa: "It would be nice, living up by the sea with piles of little kids and pigs and chickens, wearing what my grandmother called wash dresses, and sitting about in some kitchen with bright linoleum and fat arms, drinking pots of coffee." (*BJ* 144). Mas esta cozinha é degradante e aborrecida aos olhos de Esther, que de resto já manifestara anteriormente a sua aversão à prática da culinária (*BJ* 71), e a vida de mãe pouco entusiasta, motivo pelo qual na formulação "kids and pigs and chickens" não existe pontuação que distinga filhos de porcos e galinhas.

Atentando agora à poesia, observamos como o culto da domesticidade, centrado na metáfora do lar e da cozinha, é subvertido pela exposição irónica dos próprios espaços. O poema ao estilo surrealista "Lesbos" (*CP* 227-230) retoma a ilha de Safo dedicada à amizade e amor feminino para subverter a idealização da domesticidade suburbana. Desde os seus primeiros versos, o poema, remete para o interior de uma cozinha, convocando noções de inautenticidade e performatividade pelas referências a "Hollywood", "stage curtains" e "You acted, acted, acted for the thrill". O verso "[v]iciousness in the kitchen" abre o poema com uma visão para uma cozinha dantesca, onde o eu poético feminino, com traços narcisistas, ameaça afogar pequenos gatos e onde o leitor chega a temer pelo infanticídio de uma bebé caracterizada como esquizofrénica. Entretanto, na cozinha impera o odor a dejetos infantis, o fumo dos cozinhados e "the smog of hell". O sujeito poético fala de um marido impotente que tenta manter dentro de casa e, entre as fantasias frustradas do eu poético, identificado como uma dona de casa, percebemos que é ele próprio quem está aprisionado dentro da cozinha. Em "Lesbos", a casa e a cozinha deixam então de ser um lugar privado ou idílico representativo da família tipo americana, mas exibe-se como um lugar opressivo, ainda que performativo, pois nos seus versos finais a imagem de uma mulher altamente sexualizada ameaça com a sua vingança, substituindo a mulher inicialmente oprimida.[5]

Por último, analisemos, brevemente, o poema "Cut" (*CP* 235-236), escrito no dia 24 de outubro de 1962 que, como relembra Robin Peel (192), coincide com a Crise da Baía dos Porcos. Por este motivo, surgem milhões de soldados a correr num poema que começa com a adrenalina provocada pelo corte de um polegar com uma faca, em

vez de cebolas. O deslize desta faca seria indicativo da tensão sentida no mundo e o sangue que escorre pelo poema seria uma metáfora da morte, destruição e da violência masculina (Peel 194-195). Mais interessante ainda é constatar que o poema terá sido escrito no verso da segunda página de *The Bell Jar*, uma parte do romance que retoma o incidente com os Rosenberg. O sangue feminino e a centralidade do corpo permitem-nos, portanto, concluir que a cozinha, mais do que um espaço de conformidade, pode ser um espaço de subversão do culto da domesticidade.

Uma última análise aos espaços em *The Bell Jar* deve referir as estruturas hospitalares e a pertinência do panoptismo. No capítulo doze, Esther refere que o hospital para onde é levada se situa num local isolado (*BJ* 135), descrevendo-o como uma casa grande com um alpendre circundante: "large house, with its encircling veranda" (*BJ* 135). O isolamento é reforçado pela ausência de pessoas, pelo enorme silêncio, pelos corredores longos e portas fechadas. Toda a envolvência de confinamento é fortificada pela presença de uma enfermeira robusta que observa Esther com gracejos e sibilos conspirativos (*BJ* 137). Após os tratamentos a que é submetida, Esther sente-se um "disembodied spirit" (*BJ* 139), vê-se desprovida de linguagem, pois a sua voz e poder são-lhe confiscados pelos médicos.[6] Quando Esther é transferida para a ala psiquiátrica do hospital da cidade, sente-se fisicamente confinada (*BJ* 169), bem como psicologicamente vigiada. A separar Esther da paciente Mrs Tomolillo existe uma cortina similar a uma parede branca (*BJ* 171),[7] e quando Mrs Greenwood visita a filha no hospital, Esther nota não só que a sua colega de quarto a espia como também a encara com sorrisos sarcásticos (*BJ* 172). Por outro lado, Esther repara nos médicos com as suas batas brancas, que a observam com sorrisos artificiais (*BJ* 170), disseminados por todo o relvado (*BJ* 172), pelo que, numa atitude paranóica, começa a suspeitar de todos eles (*BJ* 172). Esther conjetura que os médicos ouvem a sua conversa e, receando que se apercebam de que acabara de descobrir este plano de vigilância, opta por sussurrar no ouvido da sua mãe (*BJ* 172). Esther possui um código de vigilância interiorizado que não a permite cooperar com os médicos, mas antes opta por perturbar o funcionamento deste hospital com o objetivo de abandonar esta instituição.[8]

Seria interessante a análise de outras estruturas que exercem poder sobre o sujeito, desestabilizando as noções entre aquilo que é do domínio público e do domínio privado. Outro exemplo deste binómio seria o Hotel Amazon, metonímia de Nova Iorque, uma cidade que Esther considera nociva, e um local de encarceramento e de fronteira entre território feminino e masculino. Um outro exemplo é o cemitério, um local de configuração heterotópica de acordo com a teoria de Kevin Hetherington,

pois marcado pela sua ambiguidade, o cemitério em *The Bell Jar* é passível de ser considerado simultaneamente como um local de opressão e resistência à contranarrativa. O que é certo é que em *The Bell Jar*, os espaços, e as personagens que esses espaços habitam, são representativos da dissolução que temos até então vindo a demonstrar, pois a vida privada é invadida pelas demonstrações do poder das estruturas sobre o sujeito, o que certamente relembra aquela que viria a ser a máxima da segunda vaga de feminismo dos anos 60: "the personal is political".

Considerações Finais

Na entrevista a Peter Orr, quando questionada acerca da referência nos seus poemas a campos de concentração nazi, Sylvia Plath responde: "On one side I am first generation American, on one side I'm second generation American, and so my concern with concentration camps and so on is uniquely intense. And then, again, *I'm rather a political person* as well, so I suppose that's what part of it comes from." [ênfase minha]. A nova edição das cartas de Sylvia Plath, cujo primeiro volume foi publicado em setembro de 2017, reitera as numerosas considerações políticas de Plath relativamente ao conflito americano e soviético.[9]

Concluímos, portanto, que, contrariamente às leituras simplistas de *The Bell Jar* como romance de iniciação e do tratamento da depressão, este é um romance que retrata a América da Guerra Fria com um fôlego inovador. É um romance onde se desmistificam noções de privacidade e onde se reequaciona a retórica nacional através da arena privada da casa, da visão mítica da família americana e suas vizinhanças. Plath evidencia a relação entre a privacidade e exposição, a convergência de domínios públicos e privados, explorando ainda as intersecções políticas e culturais, espelhando a forma como o trauma nacional afeta as narrativas pessoais.

Em última análise, *The Bell Jar*, bem como a poesia de Plath, não pode ser lido em função da procura da coincidência biográfica, tem de ser lido na sua amplitude como um romance transgressivo, subversivo e político.

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1 Este estudo teve como origem a investigação realizada para a Dissertação de Mestrado realizada no âmbito do Mestrado em Estudos Anglo-Americanos e intitulada: "Política(s) em *The Bell Jar* e poesia selecionada de Sylvia Plath".

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

3 A entrevista dada por Plath a Peter Orr pode ser consultada na íntegra através do sítio online *Modern   American   Poetry*:

http://www.english.illinois.edu/MAPS/POETS/M_R/PLATH/orrinterview.htm.

4 Podemos especular que a sua capacidade de intuição, bem como a posição diplomática que ocupa, qualificariam Constantin como um excelente candidato a espião, como aliás argumenta Luke Ferretter, que, citando J. Edgar Hoover, explica que os russos designados para ocuparem funções nas Nações Unidas eram considerados potenciais espiões comunistas (108).

⁵ Também o poema "A Birthday Present" denuncia o mesmo tipo de ansiedades relativas à ideologia da domesticidade. Neste poema, enquanto cozinha e mede farinha, o sujeito poético depara-se com um presente com características fantasmagóricas que o oprime e contribui para o aumento da ansiedade: "When I am quiet at my cooking I feel it looking". Ainda neste poema, a dona de casa mostra sentir-se, metaforicamente, desagradada com as regras da culinária: "Adhering to rules, to rules, to rules.".

⁶ Curiosamente, ainda no capítulo doze, Esther revela interesse pela Deer Island Prison, antigamente situada numa ilha, mas agora descrita como uma prisão em tijolo vermelho, vedada por portões com grades e cercada dos dois lados pelo oceano. Esther questiona o guarda da prisão quanto aos motivos que levam alguém a ser preso nesta instituição, que Esther considera um local amistoso. Após saber que os presos manifestamente optam por ser encarcerados para se protegerem do frio no inverno e que dispõem de televisão e comida em abundância, Esther retorque com um "[t]hat's nice." (*BJ* 145), abandonando o guarda prisional no seu posto de observação.

⁷ Esta é potencialmente uma alusão à Cortina de Ferro, expressão que durante a Guerra Fria serviu para designar uma Europa dividida em duas partes, a Oriental sob o controlo Soviético e a Ocidental sob a influência Americana.

⁸ A propósito do tema do internamento hospitalar e do controlo do médico sobre o corpo do paciente, considerem-se alguns versos de um dos seus mais conhecidos "operation poems", "Tulips" (*CP* 160). Nos versos da primeira estrofe lê-se: "I am nobody; I have nothing to do with explosions. / I have given my name and my day-clothes up to the nurses / And my history to the anesthetist and my body to surgeons". O sujeito poético, oprimido e destituído de identidade ao entregar-se física e psicologicamente ao tratamento dos médicos, tem uma necessidade de se distanciar da política belicista ao renunciar qualquer identificação com explosões. Na terceira estrofe lemos também: "My body is a pebble to them, they tend it as water / [...] They bring me numbness in their brighter needles, they bring me sleep". Os médicos tratam o corpo da paciente como se de um objeto se tratasse e interferem na sua mente que se vê adormecida. Finalmente, na sétima estrofe o eu lírico comenta: "Nobody watched me before, now I am watched. / The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me". Nestes versos observamos como, utilizando a metáfora das tulipas, se retomam as considerações sobre vigilância, tornando-se a estrutura hospitalar um *locus* perfeito de monitorização dos seus pacientes.

⁹ Vejam-se, a título exemplificativo, as páginas 136, 169, 173, 1167, 1176-1177, da nova edição das cartas completas de Sylvia Plath (Steinberg e Kukil, *The Letters of Sylvia Plath, volume I: 1940-1956*)

Is there any way out? *Black Mirror* as a critical dystopia of the society of the spectacle

Juliana Lopes

FACULDADE DE LETRAS DA UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO – CETAPS

Abstract

One of the most appalling (and appealing) aspects of *Black Mirror* is the atmosphere of complete hopelessness in which the majority of episodes end. This essay, however, tries to prove that, at least in Nosedive, there is a way out. Using the concepts of (canonical) dystopia and critical dystopia, as understood by Rafaela Baccolini and Tom Moylan, along with Guy Debord's idea of the society of the spectacle, I will provide a theoretical apparatus to support my analysis of the episode. After identifying the main aspects which cause and perpetuate the dystopic state on the episode, the paper will also explore their effects on people. Having this context in mind, the essay focuses on the importance of performances and social masks as one of the main results of a dystopia of the society of the spectacle. Then, it analyzes the role of different characters who somehow manage to escape the dystopic order and, simultaneously, reflects on the intriguing ending that only seems to reinforce the possibility to face Nosedive as a canonical dystopia. In conclusion, this essay argues that the non-obvious ways out of that dystopian state have actually a bigger impact on the audience.

Resumo

Um dos aspetos mais espantosos e atraentes de *Black Mirror* é a atmosfera de completa desesperança na qual a maioria dos episódios termina. No entanto, este ensaio busca provar que, ao menos em Nosedive, há uma saída. Usando os conceitos de distopia (canônica) e distopia crítica, definidos por Rafaela Baccolini e Tom Moylan, assim como a ideia de Guy Debord de sociedade do espetáculo, providenciarei um aparato teórico para embasar minha análise do episódio. Após identificar os principais

aspetos que causam e perpetuam o estado distópico em Nosedive, explorarei seus efeitos nos personagens. Tendo este contexto em mente, o ensaio foca na importância de performances e máscaras sociais como um dos principais resultados de uma distopia da sociedade do espetáculo. Depois, analiso o papel de diferentes personagens que de alguma forma conseguem escapar a ordem distópica e, simultaneamente, reflito sobre o final intrigante que só parece reforçar a possibilidade de encarar o episódio como uma distopia canônica. Concluindo, este ensaio argumenta que as formas não óbvias de escape da sociedade distópica apresentam, na verdade, um maior impacto na audiência.

<p style="text-align:center">*****</p>

1. Introduction

Black Mirror is undeniably one of the most acclaimed series by the critics in the present times. Even though each episode of the dystopian TV/Internet series, created in 2011 by Charlie Brooker, has its own plot and characters, there is a common element among all of them: technology and, more importantly, how it seems to dominate everyone's lives, stimulating alienating and problematic behaviors. The society of the spectacle is intrinsically linked to these elements, as both cause and effect of the alienation provoked by technologies, which is well portrayed in *Nosedive*, the episode I chose to analyze. Relating and reflecting upon these three aspects – the society of the spectacle, alienation and technologies –, this work intends to research whether *Nosedive* can be read also as a critical dystopia and the implications it might have on the audience. Since in *Black Mirror* the main characteristics of the dystopic state are the same that define the society of the spectacle, the present essay also aims to identify these aspects according to Guy Debord's book, *The society of the spectacle* (*La Société du Spectacle,* Buchet/Chastel, 1967), relating and analyzing them to *Nosedive*.

When Debord wrote it, he was probably thinking about the cinema and the television, which, even though were extremely influent, were much less powerful than the internet and all the impact it had on the daily life. Nowadays, the spectacle is literally everywhere. Aware of this fact, the creator of the series, Charlie Brooker, said to *The Guardian*: "The 'black mirror' of the title is something you will find in every table, in the palm of every hand: the cold and shiny screen of a TV, a monitor or a smartphone" (Brooker). Each episode shows a different side of the new and "improved" (or worsened) society of the spectacle.

Even though Debord's book was written in 1967, there are many of its propositions that contribute for a better understanding of the present times. However, I deliberately chose to leave aside the political and economic aspects of Debord's text, since I believe that what relates most with this episode of *Black Mirror* is the impact of the society of the spectacle in social communication – according to him, the spectacle is "a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (7), even because the spectacle would be "the opposite of dialogue" (11).

In *Nosedive*, the first episode of the third season, the main point of critique is precisely that: Lacie Pound lives in a society where in every interaction, real or virtual, people can use their cellphones to rate others from 1 to 5 stars. Although it might seem that there is nothing new to this idea, the difference between this society and ours is that people are rated not only by their posts on social media, but also by their actions. Those called "high fours", who are rated 4.5 or higher, are "influencers" and have many privileges and discounts in different areas, which is the reason why Lacie wants to become one – she wants to rent an expensive apartment, but she will only be able to pay it if she gets the discount. When Naomi, her school friend, invites Lacie to be her maid of honor, Lacie sees in that an opportunity to boost her rating: if she makes the perfect speech at the wedding, Naomi's husband's friends – all high fours – will be impressed and will rate her positively.

However, when she hears in the airport that her flight to the wedding's dinner rehearsal was cancelled, Lacie loses control and argues with an attendant. Since the airport has a "zero tolerance on profanity" policy, a security guard punishes Lacie removing one point of her rating and putting her on "double damage": every negative rating that she receives will be multiplied by two in the next 24 hours' period. She then decides to rent a car and drive for 9 hours to get to the wedding, and when her car runs out of electricity, Lacie gets a ride from Susan, an elder woman with a 1.4 rating. Susan exposes to Lacie the absurdity of that society, but Lacie is only convinced that there is something wrong when Naomi calls and asks her not to go anymore, claiming that she cannot have a "2.6" in her wedding.

Furious and desperate, Lacie goes on, still heading to the wedding. When she arrives there, dirty, hysteric and drunk, she still makes a speech, but not the one she had rehearsed to do; Lacie exposes to the guests how she feels about Naomi's apparent perfectness and, by doing so, she also highlights the fakeness of their relationship and her "friend's" futility. Finally, she is removed from the wedding by force and is arrested (it is not clear, though, if she is arrested for invading a private place or for possibly achieving a zero rate). The episode ends with Lacie and another

man in jail offending each other – since they have nothing left to lose, they do not need to pretend anything anymore: they can say whatever comes to their minds.

2. Dystopic society: causes and effects in *Nosedive*

It is necessary, first of all, to identify the several mechanisms that create and perpetuate that dystopic state in the episode. The most evident is technology, and even though it cannot be considered a "villain", it acts as a catalyzer of negative actions and behaviors. In *Nosedive* it is directly connected to the spectacularization of daily life through social media, and it acts as an alienating mechanism. As Debord says, "the spectacle's social function is the concrete manufacture of alienation" (16).

Another aspect that maintains the dystopic structure here is the socioeconomical hierarchization of society through the rating system. According to this hierarchy, the high fours deserve rights and privileges that are denied to those who are in a lower position in the rating pyramid – they are not allowed to go into some spaces and might have health treatments rejected if there is a person with a better rating waiting for the same medical care. In other words, "all individual reality has become social, in the sense that it is shaped by social forces and is directly dependent on them" (11).

The political gap in this episode in particular also reinforces the decentralization of dystopia. Since no form of politics is shown, it reflects the fact that everyone creates that dystopia: it is not something imposed by a dictator, but perpetuated by all people. It is not, however, just "society's fault", generically speaking; it is each person's fault as well (and here lies one of the many forms of criticism directed towards the spectator).

Technology seems to be intrinsically related to dystopias – critical or canonical – and it is usually connected to some mechanism that controls the masses. This domination, however, can be much more effective if people are unaware that they are being controlled. Even though social media can be used as a powerful source of decentralized information, it might be an alienating tool, reinforcing self-centered behaviors that might evolve into numbness, carelessness and isolation (noticing that they all affect not only the space of the body, but also of the mind). Since "separation is the alpha and omega of the spectacle" (13), the "lonely crowds" that Debord talks about are a predictable consequence of this system. According to him, "from the automobile to the television, all of the goods selected by the spectacular system are also its weapons to the constant reinforcing of the isolation conditions of the 'lonely crowds'" (15). If the car and the TV were already considered isolating mechanisms,

the cellphones and computers enhance the feeling that we constantly live in "lonely crowds": the scene in which the majority of the audience will instantly relate to *Nosedive* is probably the one when a group of people reunited check their phones instead of talking to each other.

Superficiality, as another effect of this society, is one of the biggest critiques in the episode: in every meeting, either in person or virtually, there is apparent perfection. There is a scene, for instance, in which Lacie buys a coffee and a cookie, immediately posting a picture of it on her social media. When she eats it, however, it tastes awful, which reinforces that, in this society, things are made only to be seen. Another evidence that superficiality is a major issue in the episode is that there is also a concern about fitting or not fitting into the beauty standards (Lacie is constantly exercising in the episode) and, in addition to that, their judgment of other people is based on really shallow interactions.

Mass media and publicity also contribute to maintain the dystopic state by creating unattainable utopias. Curiously, these people's utopia is not only to be rich; it is to be approved by other people, even if it means to reject a "true" identity (which is another consequence of the impacts of alienation in the society of spectacle). Lacie fights to buy her own utopia, to buy a way of life apparently better than the one in which she is, but in fact, there isn't much difference. Even if she is not aware of that in the beginning, she lives in a dystopic society, and her personal utopia is simply the highest point of dystopia: to achieve a 4.5 rating.

Lacie's unbridled pursue of happiness is straightly connected to the next point: to reach utopias, a performance is necessary – and if existence is a performance, there must be a rehearsal: consequently, Lacie rehearses in front of the mirror laughs, gestures and her speech as a maid of honor. Her performance is the adoption of a social mask, and, by the end of the episode, she understands that to resist society is to drop the mask. Lacie only gives up on her performance when her friend says she cannot have a 2.6 in her wedding, what would mean not getting the necessary rating to buy the apartment; in other words, she would not be able to buy her personal utopia. In the wedding scene, the image of Lacie – muddy, drunk, with blurred makeup – opposes the performative perfection of the wedding. Her speech, rehearsed to be fake, but perfect, what people wanted to hear, becomes what tries to break the perfection of Naomi's marriage and life. By dropping her mask, she shows the fakeness of everybody else's social costume.

3. Critical or canonical dystopia: is there any way out?

To defend *Nosedive* as a critical dystopia, it is necessary first to identify the differences and similitudes between critical dystopias and canonical dystopias. According to Rafaela Baccolini and Tom Moylan, "*[Canonical]* dystopias maintain hope out of the story (…) for it is only if we consider dystopia as a warning that we as readers can hope to escape its pessimistic future. Conversely, the new critical dystopias allow both readers and protagonists to hope by resisting closure" (7). In other words, the difference between a canonical dystopia and a critical dystopia is that in the first one there is not any hope nor any way out, while in the latter there is hope both inside the story and on the viewer. We can read this episode of *Black Mirror* as a complete dystopia if we consider only the story itself; but if we consider the viewers and the reaction that *Black Mirror* necessarily requires from the viewers, we might go further and analyze it as a critical dystopia as well.

In *Nosedive* there are four characters who somehow expose the flaws of the system: Ches, Lacie's brother, Susan and, in the end, Lacie herself. Ches is one of Lacie's work colleagues and, after he and his boyfriend break up, all of their friends decide to be on his boyfriend side. Even though Ches is gentle and even if he apparently had not done anything wrong, his ratings continue to go down until the moment he is not allowed to enter in the building where he works. Lacie sees it and it is clear that she does not agree with his expulsion, but, simultaneously, since she is quite numb to everything around her, she does not think much about it. Ches, then, is an unconscious representation of how the rating system is full of problems, since it is extremely subjective and susceptible to personal intrigues.

Lacie's brother, on the other hand, is really conscious of the effects of that dystopian society in people in general and specially in his sister. He calls the apartment that Lacie want to rent "fake smile jail cells", and in an acid talk with his sister he says: "I miss the normal you. Before this obsession we had conversations, remember? (…) Comparing yourself to people who only pretend to be happy" (Brooker). He does not choose to live outside the rating system, though: his way to get positive evaluations is through online games.

Susan, however, takes a step further. The woman that Lacie meets on her way to Naomi's wedding has a 1.4 rating and lives, the best way she can, outside the rating system. She is sincere, she screams and she is not afraid of what people will think or talk about her – nor how they will rate her. Even if she looks, in the beginning, Lacie's exact opposite, Susan is in fact some sort of Lacie's double, because she sees her past self in Lacie and, at the same time, in the end Lacie somehow follows Susan's path. Susan explains that she was a 4, but she decided to change after her husband's death –

when he got sick, to be a 4 was not enough: "He was a 4.3. They gave his bed to a 4.4". Susan then realizes the absurd of that society and willingly refuses to cope with the system.

These characters try, consciously in the case of Susan and Lacie's brother and unconsciously in the case of Ches, to wake Lacie from her alienation state. Later on, after she realizes her own numbness and superficiality, she tries to wake up the viewer. After exposing her true self and the fakeness of their world in Naomi's wedding, Lacie is arrested and she finally feels free to speak what she does not like in other people, which also happens with the man in the cell in front of her. According to Baccolini and Moylan, "by rejecting the traditional subjugation of the individual at the end of the novel, the critical dystopia opens a space of contestation and opposition for those collective ex-centric subjects who (…) are not empowered by hegemonic rule" (7). Even though it might seem that *Nosedive* reinforces the "traditional subjugation of the individual at the end", since Lacie ends up in jail, the prison could be seen, in fact, as a heterotopic place, because there is an escape of the regular order there – in prison, the rating system does not work and they have freedom of speech. It is ironic, though, the fact that they are only free in prison: their bodies are imprisoned, but their minds are free.

It would be erroneous, however, to defend that *Nosedive* cannot be considered a critical dystopia claiming that there is not hope to live in that society outside the rating system. Those who would argue in favor of this would be considering only the fact that Lacie ends up in jail. As reported by Bacollini and Moylan, "although most dystopian texts offer a detailed and pessimistic presentation of the very worst of social alternatives, a few affiliate with a eutopian tendency as they maintain a horizon of hope (or at least invite readings that do)" (6). This "horizon of hope" within the story lies in characters as Susan and Lacie's brother, who show that it is possible to be critic about the society, whether you choose to live within or without the rating system. In addition to that, even if the episode ends with Lacie in jail, she is likely to get out eventually; and the fact that the episode ends with Lacie and the other man offending each other shows that their mindset is probably changed: they have dropped their social masks at last.

When Lacie does her speech exposing the issues of her relationship with Naomi, it symbolizes not only the fakeness of the friendship but also reveals what impels people to go on posting on social networks. Those people there at the wedding do not seem to be affected by her speech, but those who are watching *Black Mirror* are. And as soon as the speech or the episode ends and the viewer "comes back" to his own

life, nothing changes. In this sense, *Black Mirror* can be a criticism to its own viewers, who might watch the show and do nothing about it.

4. Final considerations: the impact of a critical dystopia on the audience

The obvious interpretation to every *Black Mirror* episode (with the exception of *San Junipero*, the only one with some sort of clear happy ending) is to face it as a canonical dystopia: without any prospect of hope outside it. One of the biggest reasons for the success of the series is precisely the shocking effect each episode has on the viewers, and we must have in mind that the apparent lack of hope is actually a mechanism to cause a bigger impact on the audience.

According to Fernandes and Lima, Guy Debord does not consider the spectator as an "autonomous being, active and capable to react and to diverge" from what s/he receives from the cultural industry (12-3, my translation). To him, the attitude the society of the spectacle requires from the audience is "passive acceptance" (10), and that is precisely what *Black Mirror* intends to change. When *Nosedive* ends with Lacie in jail, the viewer is left unquiet and disturbed by it, while if there was an obvious happy ending, with everything solved, it would not require anything from the spectator. *Black Mirror*, however, requires action from the audience, even if it is indignation. The last scene here can be seen as a provocation to the viewer as well as an attempt to take the viewer out of his/her alienated and conformed state and do something to change the society in which they live.

The reasons why it is necessary to shock and mobilize the audience in order to arouse their consciousness is because it could become – and, in some aspects, it is already – our society in a few years. If we observe the excerpt below, we might have a better glimpse of this possible future.

> In this world, anything from defaulting on a loan to criticising the ruling party, from running a red light to failing to care for your parents properly, could cause you to lose points. And in this world, your score becomes the ultimate truth of who you are – determining whether you can borrow money, get your children into the best schools or travel abroad; whether you get a room in a fancy hotel, a seat in a top restaurant – or even just get a date. (Denyer 2016)

Although the fragment above seems to be a synopsis of *Nosedive*, it could actually become China. According to the journalist Simon Denyer, the Chinese government has plans to establish a similar rating system by 2020. Of course there are more current "symptoms", which can relate better to the Western civilization, and

Nosedive was one of the most acclaimed episodes of the entire series probably because it is extremely close to our society. According to Fernandes and Lima (1), *Black Mirror* "dialogues with a dystopian future that mingles with the present, which causes an estrangement in the audience due to its hyperbolic language – not because it seems absurd, but because it is presented as a possible chapter of reality." The obsession with social media is a reflection of, among other aspects, our own obsession to live happy and perfect lives full time. The value each person has according to the success of their profiles – how many followers or "likes" someone has – is somehow a reality: the "digital influencer" is a new "profession", which consists basically of people earning money, products or services and, in exchange, they give visibility in their social media to the same products and services, showing them to their thousands or even millions of followers.

The biggest hope in *Nosedive*, however, lies not within the story, but outside. When Lacie and the man in prison say "fuck you" at the very end of the episode, they are not saying it only to each other; they are also saying it straight to the camera, and, consequently, to the viewer. They are deliberately teasing the viewer and waiting for an action in return. Likewise, this episode of *Black Mirror* teases the audience through a non-obviously happy ending since it has a bigger impact and effect on the viewer, showing that the hope to change this possibly dystopic society in a near future lies not on a fictional series, but on the real people who are watching it.

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Normas de Referência Bibliográfica

MLA Style Manual (2016)

I. Aspeto Gráfico

1. Papel A4, a um espaço e meio (1,5); corpo de letra 12, Times New Roman.

2. Notas - todas no final do texto, numeradas com algarismos, antes do item "Obras Citadas". No corpo do texto, o algarismo que remete para a nota deverá ser colocado depois do sinal de pontuação, exceto no caso de se tratar de travessões.

3. Referências bibliográficas - no corpo do texto, identificando, entre parênteses curvos, o nome do autor e o(s) número(s) da(s) página(s) em causa.

Ex: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (Shelley 794).

(ver secção II. REFERÊNCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS para mais ocorrências)

4. Citações

4.1. com menos de quatro linhas: integradas no corpo do texto, entre aspas (" ' ' "); a indicação da fonte (autor, página) deve ser colocada preferencialmente no final da frase, *antes* do sinal de pontuação.

Ex: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times", wrote Charles Dickens about the eighteenth century (35).

4.2. com mais de quatro linhas: separadas do texto, recolhidas 1,5 cm, na margem esquerda, em corpo 10, sem aspas. Manter o mesmo espaçamento entre as linhas (1,5). A indicação da fonte (autor, página) deve ser colocada preferencialmente no final da citação, *depois* do sinal de pontuação.

Ex: At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

> The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

5. Interpolações - identificadas por meio de parênteses retos: [ ].

6. Omissões - assinaladas por três pontos com um espaço entre cada um deles e um espaço depois do último: . . .

Ex: "Medical thinking . . . stressed air as the communicator of the disease".

Se a omissão se verificar no final da frase, usar quatro pontos, isto é, três pontos seguidos de ponto final: . . . .

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1. Citação parentética, no corpo do texto - identificando, entre parênteses curvos, o nome do autor e o(s) número(s) da(s) página(s) em causa.

1.1. Um só autor (sobrenome + página):

Ex: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (Shelley 794).

Se o nome do autor estiver mencionado na frase, indicar apenas a página. Ex: "Poets", said Shelley, "are the unacknowledged legislators of the World" (794).

1.2. Dois autores (sobrenomes + página): (Williams and Ford 45-7)

1.3. Dois ou três autores (todos os sobrenomes + página): (Demetz, Lyman, and Harris 30)

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(sobrenome do primeiro autor + *et al*. + pág.)

ou (todos os sobrenomes + pág.)

(Demetz et al. 30) ou (Demetz, Lyman, Harris, and Johnson 747)

1.4. Um ou mais livros do(s) mesmo(s) autor(es)

(sobrenome + título do livro + página)

Ex: Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been called a "comedy of grotesque" (Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* 85).

Depois de ter sido mencionado pelo menos uma vez na totalidade (regra que não se aplica a títulos muito longos), o título pode ser encurtado:

Ex: Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been called a "comedy of grotesque" (Frye, *Anatomy* 85).

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

Ex: In *As You Like It (AYL)*, Shakespeare . . .

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

No caso de o nome do autor ter sido já referido na frase, indicar apenas título e página:

According to Frye, the play is a "comedy of grotesque" (*Anatomy* 85).

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

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

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Wordsworth, 1993.

1.5. Mais do que um autor com o mesmo sobrenome

(inicial do nome + sobrenome + pág.)

(A. Patterson 184-85) e (L. Patterson 340)

Se a inicial for a mesma, usar o primeiro nome por extenso.

1.6. Citação indireta (qtd. in [quoted in] + sobrenome + pág.) (qtd. in Boswell 57)

1.7. Mais do que uma obra na mesma citação parentética

(Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 1-25; Murphy 39-52)

1.8. Obra com mais de um volume (sobrenome + número do volume + pág.) (Boswell 2: 450)

2. "Obras Citadas" - lista completa das obras referidas ao longo do texto, por ordem alfabética de apelido dos autores, de acordo com os seguintes modelos:

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Borroff, Marie. *Language and the Poet: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore*. U of Chicago P, 1979.

2.1.1. Dois ou mais livros do mesmo autor

Usar três hífens seguidos de ponto (---.) para substituir o nome do autor.

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Os títulos do autor devem aparecer organizados por ordem alfabética.

Borroff, Marie. *Language and the Poet: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore*. U of Chicago P, 1979.

---. "Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Robert Frost." *PMLA*, vol. 107, no.1, 1992, pp. 131-44.

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No caso de o nome do autor surgir combinado com outros, não usar hífens.

Scholes, Robert. *Protocols of Reading*. Yale UP, 1989.

Scholes, Robert, and Robert Kellog. *The Nature of Narrative*. Oxford, 1966.

2.1.2. Livro de vários autores

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed., U of Chicago P, 2003.

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Saraiva, António José, e Óscar Lopes. *História da Literatura Portuguesa*. 14ª ed., Porto Editora, 1987.

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Gilman, Sander, et al. *Hysteria beyond Freud*. U of California P, 1993.

2.1.3. Livros anónimos

The MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. 8th ed., The Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

2.2. Antologias ou colectâneas

Usar, depois do último nome do(s) autor(es), e antecedido por uma vírgula, *editor/editors, translator, compiler/compilers*. Em português, usar *editor/editores, tradutor, organizador*.

Peter Demetz et al., editors. *The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History*. Yale UP, 1968.

Kepner, Susan Fulop, editor and translator. *The Lioness in Bloom: Modern Thai Fiction about Women*. U of Berkeley P, 1996.

2.3. Edições críticas

Crane, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage: An Episode of the American Civil War*. Edited by Fredson Bowers, UP of Virginia, 1975.

3. Artigos em revistas

Chauí, Marilena. "Política cultural, cultura política." *Brasil*, no. 13, 1995, pp. 9-24.

Piper, Andrew. "Rethinking the Print Object: Goethe and the Book of Everything." *PMLA*, vol. 121, no.1, 2006, pp. 124-38.

3.1. Artigos em jornais

Coutinho, Isabel, "Os Pioneiros da Literatura 'Queer' em Portugal." *Público*, 24 Agosto 2007, p. 9.

Mckay, Peter A. "Stocks Feel the Dollar's Weight." *Wall Street Journal*, 4 December 2006, p. C1.

3.2. Artigos em coletâneas ou antologias

Greene, Thomas. "The Flexibility of the Self in Renaissance Literature." *The Disciplines of Criticism: Essays in Literary Theory, Interpretation, and History*, edited by Peter Demetz and William L. Vance, Yale UP, 1969, pp. 40-67.

3.3. Artigo anónimo

"The Decade of the Spy." *Newsweek*, 7 March 1994, pp. 26-27.

3.4. Um editorial

"It's Subpoena Time." Editorial. *New York Times*, 8 June 2007, late edition, p. A28.

3.5. Prefácios, introduções e posfácios

Borges, Jorge Luis. Preface. *Selected Poems, 1923-1967*, by Borges, edited by Norman Thomas Di Giovanni, Delta-Dell, 1973, pp. xv-xvi.

Drabble, Margaret. Introduction. *Middlemarch*, by George Elliot, Bantam, 1985, pp. vii-xvii.

4. Dissertações não publicadas

Kane, Sophia. "Acts of Coercion: Father-Daughter Relationships in British Women's Fiction, 1778-1814." Dissertation, University of New York, 2003.

5. Publicações de edição eletrónica

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

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- data de acesso (dia, mês, ano)

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

5.1. Revista eletrónica

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

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

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