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**THE MAINSTREAMING OF PORTUGUESE
CULTURE: A SYMPOSIUM**

**Persons, Poems, and Other Things Portuguese in
American Literature**

George Monteiro

While serving the uses of contemporary politicians, the commonplace observation that the Portuguese in America constitute a silent minority should not deflect us from recognizing those instances in which the Portuguese have achieved visibility and sometimes a voice. One should not set aside the historical importance, for instance, of the twenty-three Portuguese Sephardic Jews who were settled (against their will, to be sure) in New Amsterdam in the seventeenth century and whose descendants include the jurist Benjamin Cardozo, or that of Aaron Lopez, whose commercial successes in Newport in the eighteenth century rivaled those of the far more celebrated Brown family of Providence.

This paper was read in the "Portuguese" series, Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island, on June 25, 1998. It appeared, in an earlier version, in Portuguese Spinner. New Bedford, MA: Spinner Publications, Inc. (1998).

My subject here, however, is not the presence of Portuguese immigrants and their descendants in American history, but rather their presence in American literature. And it should be noted, first of all, that their presence in the literature is greater than is normally recognized. The Portuguese appear significantly in the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. Hawthorne, whose father was a sea-captain who made voyages to the Azores and whose uncle was lost at sea on his return from Fayal, introduces a mysterious Azorean woman in the story "Drowne's Wooden Image" (1844). She is a "young Portuguese lady" with a face characterized by its "brilliant depth of complexion" and she is destined to be the ship-carver's inspiration from life for his masthead carving. Melville, a whaleman himself (on the *Acushnet* out of Fairhaven) and an avid reader of the Portuguese epic poet Luis Vaz de Camões, introduces Azoreans into the crew of the Pequod in his great whaling novel *Moby-Dick* (1851) and meditates in Swiftean fashion on the Portuguese from Brava in the whaling crews out of Nantucket in "The 'Gees'" (1856). In *Innocents Abroad* (1869) Mark Twain levels his famous charge against those "poor, shiftless, lazy Azoreans" and later makes considerable sport (and deservedly so) at the expense of the pseudonymous Pedro Carolino in an introduction to a translation of his unintentionally hilarious *New Guide of the Conversation in Portuguese and English*, originally published in Portugal in 1855.

Carolino's inadvertent masterpiece deserves to be read cover-to-cover. But something of its flavor can be savored from the excerpts Mark Twain quotes (at random, he says) in his introduction to the James R. Osgood edition in 1883. He quotes from "Dialogue 16" - "For to see the town."

Anthony, go to accompany they
gentlemen, do they see the town.

We won't to see all that is it remarquable
here, forget nothing what can to merit your atten-
tion. Here we are near to cathedral; will you come
in there?

We will first to see him in outside, after
we shall go in there for to look the interior.

Admire this master piece gothic
architecture's.

The chasing of all they figures is aston-
ishing indeed.

The cupola and the nave are not less curi-
ous to see.

What is this palace how I see yonder?

It is the town hall.

And this tower here at this side?

It is the Observatory.

The bridge is very fine, it have ten archs,
and is constructed of free stone.

The streets are very layed out by line and
too paved.

What is the circuit of this town?

Two leagues.

There is it also hospitals here?

It not fail them.

What are then the edifices the worstest to
have seen?

It is the arsenhal, the spectacle's hall, the
Custom-house, and the Purse.

We are going too see the others monuments
such that the public pawnbroker's office, the plants
garden's the money office's, the library.

That it shall be for another day; we are
tired.

But Pedro Carolino is not tired, for he goes right on to "Dialogue
17" - "To inform on'self of a person." Mark Twain follows right
along:

How is that gentilman who you did
speak by and by?

Is a German.

I did think him Englishman.

He is of the Saxony side.

He speak the french very well.

Though he is German, he speak so much
well italyan, french, spanish and english, that
among the Italyans, they believe him Italian, he
speak the frenche as the Frenches themselves.
The Spanishesmen believe him Spanishing, and
the Englishes, Englishman.

It is difficult to enjoy well so much
several languages.

To this Mark Twain adds as an amen:

The last remark contains a general truth;
but it ceases to be a truth when one contracts it
and applies it to an individual - provided that that
individual is the author of this book, Senhor Pedro

Carolino. I am sure I should find it difficult “to enjoy well so much several languages” - or even a thousand of them - if he did the translating for me from the originals into his ostensible English.

Carolino’s book, in the Mark Twain edition, was rediscovered in the mid-twentieth century by the American poet Elizabeth Bishop while living in Brazil. She set out to prepare what seems to be a new edition. Her draft for that edition begins “On my desk I have a borrowed book (& now have had, for two years, since I cannot bear to part with it). It is small, about 6 by five inches, the sad color of dried mustard, and on the cover it says, in black fanciful late nineteenth century lettering: THE NEW GUIDE OF THE CONVERSATION IN PORTUGUESE AND ENGLISH “with preface by Mark Twain.” After quoting briefly Pedro Carolino’s observations on sound-making in English, Elizabeth Bishop writes: “After that, I can do no better than to quote most of Mark Twain’s introduction, beginning: ‘In this world of uncertainties there is, at any rate, one thing which may be pretty confidently set down as a certainty: and that is, that this celebrated little phrase-book will never die while the English language lasts.’” Bishop appears not to have finished her introduction and the edition never materialized.

Returning to the nineteenth-century, one runs into a Portuguese “man-cook” (“Joe’s the cook,” says Eunice, “all Portuguese cooks are Joe”), who makes a brief appearance in William Dean Howells’s novel *April Hopes* (1888). An Azorean family plays a more substantial role, providing the mystery and the solution to that mystery, in Thomas Wentworth Higginson’s story “The Haunted Window,” which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1867), collected in *Oldport Days* (1873), his collection of stories about Newport. Higginson, who with his invalid wife had

spent six months on the island of Fayal in the Azores in 1855-56, arriving in December and leaving in May, places his mystery story in the Newport he knew well, having summered there for a number of years, and coinciding with just about the time that Emma Lazarus and her family were summering in Newport. I do not know if we can take Higginson's story as constituting evidence that there existed in mid-nineteenth-century Newport any sort of Azorean population or whether he merely introduced Azoreans in a fanciful way into his tale for the sake of the mystery for Americans that the Azorean woman and her capote would pose.

As a group (or, more accurately, as part of a small mob) the Portuguese also appear briefly as blood-thirsty rabbit hunters in Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901). Here is Norris's description of the Portuguese involvement in this ritualized slaughter:

On signal, the killing began. Dogs that had been brought there for that purpose when let into the corral refused, as had been half-expected, to do the work. They snuffed curiously at the pile, then backed off, disturbed, perplexed. But the men and boys - Portuguese for the most part - were more eager. The Anglo-Saxon spectators around about drew back in disgust, but the hot, degenerated blood of Portuguese, Mexican, and mixed Spaniard boiled up in excitement at this wholesale slaughter.

Frank T. Bullen, an Englishman whose books depicted Americans, cast a villainous Portuguese as his captain in *A Whaleman's Wife* (1902), but Rudyard Kipling, another British writer who lived in New Hampshire for a time, celebrates Manuel, a "Portygee" on the *We're Here* out of Gloucester in the popular

novel *Captains Courageous* (1897). Jack London wrote well, if more sociologically than novelistically, about the Portuguese in California. In *The Valley of the Moon* (1913), he contrasts the Portuguese (and the Italians) to the native-born American farmers, who are always “moving.”

In the main, they're a lazy, vagabond, poor-white sort, who do nothing else but skin the soil and move, skin the soil and move. Now, take the Portuguese and Italians in our country. They are different. They arrive in the country without a penny, and work for others of their countrymen until they've learned the language and their way about. Now, they're not movers. What they are after is land of their own, which they will love and care for and conserve.

The Nobel-prize winning John Steinbeck sees the Portuguese around Salinas and Monterey a bit differently. His treatment of Big Joe Portagee and the promiscuous Rosa Martin (“that Portagee girl”) in *Tortilla Flat* (1935) seems much less congenial, if, admittedly, intended humorously, than one might have expected from the author sympathetic to migrant fruit-pickers and Okies duped by dreams of California.

Steinbeck's contemporary, the once much-honored (but now unjustly) neglected short story writer and novelist Wilbur Daniel Steele wrote appreciatively and insightfully about the Portuguese. Described as a “quasi-aristocratic, quasi-bohemian Anglo-Saxon from the Rockies,” Steele ventured widely, according to Martin Bucco, writing about “the Portuguese of Cape Cod, the Negroes of the Caribbean, and the Semites of Algeria.” Portuguese-American themes and characters appear in his first novel *Storm* (1914) and in such early stories as “White Horse Winter”

(which re-employs the narrator of *Storm*), "Down on Their Knees," "The Killer's Son," "A Devil of a Fellow," and "A Man's a Fool" - all from Steele's first collection, *Land's End and Other Stories* (1918). But it was in later stories such as "A Life," "The Thinker," "What Do You Mean - Americans?," "For Where is Your Fortune Now?" and "Footfalls" (1920) - all collected in *Tower of Sand* (1929) - that Steele wrote best about the Portuguese. His single best story about the Portuguese on Cape Cod and considered widely to be one of his best stories over all appeared in the *Pictorial Review* in 1920. It is "Footfalls," which tells the dramatic story of the paternal love of Boz Negro, the blind Portuguese cobbler, and his long wait for vengeance.

Less prominently, perhaps, but still significantly, the Portuguese have shown up elsewhere in twentieth-century American fiction. Erskine Caldwell, the author of *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*, refers to the Portuguese in the story "Country Full of Swedes" (1933). And in Doran Hurley's *The Old Parish* (1938), a collection of stories that focus on Irish-Americans, one encounters an accolade to the "gentle Portuguese who came to us [in Fall River] from the Azores" and, in particular, to one saintly Father Silva. A somewhat different view of the Portuguese, in their guise as exploited cranberry workers, is presented in Edward Garside's avowedly proletarian, first novel *Cranberry Red* (1938), which, it was said at the time, "portrays New England serfdom in a feudal empire" and which was reviewed favorably by the once well-known novelist James T. Farrell, the author of the Studs Lonigan trilogy about Chicago. On the other hand, the novelist Edward McSorley, another Irish-American, from Providence, offers in *The Young McDermott* (1949) an unparalleled portrait of the Portuguese in the Fox Point section of Providence during the early years of the twentieth century. McSorley's Portuguese are not fishermen, as they are in Kipling's *Captains Cou-*

rageous, or farmers, as they are in Norris's *The Octopus*, or berry pickers as they are in Garsides' *Red Cranberry*, or ne'r-do-wells as they are in Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*. Rather they are millworkers, and more, they are strikers and, in one case, scabs.

In *Look to the Mountain* (1942), a long historical novel about the pioneering life in the New Hampshire Grants from 1769 to 1777 colonial America, the once well-known but now entirely forgotten novelist LeGrand Cannon creates a memorable if finally unconvincing "Portygee" villain he calls Joe Felipe. Be that as it may, the historian Allan Nevins said of *Look to the Mountain*: "Seldom do we find a transcript from the American past executed with so much sincerity, clarity, and delicacy." In *The Haunted*, the last play in the *Mourning Becomes Electra* trilogy (1931), the Nobel Prize winning playwright Eugene O'Neill, who had lived and worked in Provincetown with the legendary Provincetown Players in the 1910s, includes among the townsmen of the play one Joe Silva, whom he describes: "Silva is a Portuguese fishing captain - a fat, boisterous man, with a hoarse bass voice. He has matted gray hair and a big grizzled mustache. He is sixty." When most of the principals of the Provincetown Players moved away for good, Mary Heaton Vorse stayed. Some of her magazine pieces in later years centered on the Portuguese. The Portuguese artisan is sketched favorably by William Carlos Williams in the Fifth Book of his epic poem *Paterson* (1958):

his own boss "in the new country" who is building a wall for me, moved by old world knowledge of what is "virtuous" . "that stuff they sell you in the stores nowadays, no good, break in your hands
 . that manufactured stuff, from the factory, break in your hands, no care what they turn out . . ."

A more neutral portrait of the Portuguese is implicit in John Casey's novel, *Spartina*, which won the National Book Award for 1989. He offers us a Captain Teixeira as a secondary character in this novel about a Rhode Island fisherman named Dick Pierce. In "The Summer People" (1969), a literary ballad, the late James Merrill offers a striking portrait of Stonington, Connecticut, in which figure Azorean immigrants. Of this poem, Merrill's friend and fellow poet Elizabeth Bishop wrote, in an as-yet unpublished letter:

I am ashamed of not having written to you sooner about your amazing ballad *The Summer People* It was nice of you to say I'd suggested the form to you but I can scarcely claim any originality there, and mine is more a pastiche anyway. [She is talking about her Rio de Janeiro poem "The Ballad of the Burglar of Babylon."] You have done the original thing with the form. I do see how much more fun it must have been to write the story that way than to write a novel (but then I can't imagine writing a novel at all), and it has turned out very surprising and so interesting that I didn't stop reading for a minute. Really, a great success, I think, *Awful*, too, and full of marvellous detail. I kept being surprised, and that is my favorite emotion in poetry these days because so very little of it has any surprises to it. I love the tarted-up church, the cat, the snow-storm descriptions - all the sophisticated details of the lives of those characters put into ballad form, a kind of superior parody that shows up the story better than prose could have done. (That isn't too clear, I'm

afraid, but maybe you'll understand what I mean. A Japanese houseboy in the meter of the border ballads, etc., is really pretty complicated and funny . . .) You have kept it up all the way through, too. - Also, I like your quotation from Mallarmé - I wonder if you got the same pleasure from writing it that I did from my old-fashioned one - the rhymes and short lines seemed to make description easier rather than harder, and very simple, almost cliché, phrases, come out like something brand new . . . Is Stonington like that, I wonder?

Although the Portuguese in America do not number among them as large a group of prominent writers as do, say, the Irish or the Italians, they do possess a handful of prominent names. Perhaps the least recognizably Portuguese of once prominent American writers is the nineteenth-century poet and playwright Emma Lazarus. In the direct line on her father's side of the Sephardic Jews who were landed in New Amsterdam in the 1600s, the precocious Emma enjoyed an early poetic success, one marked by praise from no less a figure than Ralph Waldo Emerson. Late in a short career - she was dead at the age of forty - she turned to a deep concern with her Jewish heritage and worry about the future of the Jewish people. The great wave of Jewish immigration to America that followed terrible pogroms in several European cities ultimately resulted in the single poem that has withstood the great oblivion that most of her work has suffered. "The New Colossus" was an occasional poem, written to mark the placing in the New York harbor of the Bartoldi statue now known as the Statue of Liberty. It is her famous lines that are engraved on the base of the statue. If the author of those lines is largely forgotten, "The New Colossus" (as Emma Lazarus called her) is still asso-

ciated with the words that everyone has heard and read: “‘Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!’ cries she/ With silent lips. ‘Give me your tired, your poor,/ Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,/ the wretched refuse of your teeming shore./ Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,/ I lift my lamp beside the golden door!’” Her lyrical poems and her passionate Zionist play and poems deserve full rediscovery.

Two other writers of Portuguese origin bear the name of John dos Passos, father and son whose antecedents are from the island of Madeira. The son, coeval in contemporary fame and certainly in output to F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and William Faulkner, but now almost totally eclipsed by their enduring fame (with the possible exception of Wolfe), is still known for works of fiction such as *Three Soldiers*, the first of the best American World War I novels, and *U.S.A.*, the covering title of a large-canvas fictional trilogy. The elder Dos Passos, who distinguished himself in the world of New York finance, deserves to be rediscovered as a writer for *The Anglo-Saxon Century* (1903), a work of politics and history which he subtitled - he hoped, prophetically - “The Unification of the English-Speaking People.” The younger Dos Passos, who for a long time had difficulty accepting his Portuguese heritage (he sometimes translated his name as “Johnnie Walker,” according to the American poet Elizabeth Bishop), did toward the end of his life make gestures of reconciliation, following up his non-fictional *Brazil on the Move* (1963) - which Elizabeth Bishop, then living in Brazil, thought “shoddy” and “superficial” - with *The Portugal Story* (1969), an unabashedly admiring and shamelessly “official” account of Portuguese history. It is not widely known that John Philip Sousa, the American March King known almost exclusively for his music, was the author of three novels. *The Fifth String* (1902), a charming novella about music, was followed by

two novels. *Pipetown Sandy* (1905) sugarcoats boyhood memories in a way that is only superficially reminiscent of better books in the same vein by Mark Twain and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and *The Transit of Venus* (1919) is an ambitious try that resulted in a rather conventional shipboard romance. There are no Portuguese characters in Sousa's fiction. But that is not surprising, since there is barely a mention of his Portuguese heritage in his autobiography *Marching Along* (1928).

More recently, Katherine Vaz, a Californian who is a descendant of Azoreans, has published *Saudade* (1994), a very successful novel - both commercially and critically - one that celebrates what might be called Azorean-ness. There is a certain suffusing wonderment in the poetic style that fits right in with the author's sense of discovering not only her people but, almost anthropologically, "the people" who can serve as the substance for her own brand of magic realism of place, language, and event. Oddly enough, her short stories, collected in *Fado & Other Stories*, the winner of the Drue Heinz Literature Prize for 1997 and published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in the same year, show more bite though many of them still work Azorean themes that play off against local color. Katherine Vaz teaches writing at the University of California at Davis.

Born in 1902, Alfred Lewis was a Portuguese immigrant from the Azores. Interestingly, in mid-life he took formal writing classes and succeeded in placing his short stories in prestigious little magazines. At least two of those stories, about American Hispanics, could just as easily have been about Portuguese immigrants. He also published one romanticized autobiographical novel, *Home is an Island*, with the Boston publisher Houghton Mifflin (1951). It looks back longingly at his youth on the island of St. Michael. He was the author as well of nearly two hundred poems, in Portuguese or English, that were collected in a volume

published in the Azores nine years after his death in 1977.

I consider some of the literature written in Portuguese by Portuguese immigrants or, in rare instances, by Americans of Portuguese descent to be a legitimate part of American literature. I shall mention some highlights. There are excellent stories by Portuguese-born José Rodrigues Miguéis, who spent most of the last forty-five years of his life in Manhattan. Among the best of those stories are, in English translation, "The Stowaway's Christmas," "The Inauguration," and "Cosme," along with *A Man Smiles at Death - With Half a Face* (1958), a compelling account of the author's stay in Bellevue Hospital. Of all the work published by the Portuguese-born Jorge de Sena after he emigrated to the United States from Portugal by way of Brazil, I would call attention to a major work by the highest standards *Over This Shore... Eight Meditations on the Coast of the Pacific* (1977), as it is called in translation. João Teixeira de Medeiros was born in Fall River in 1902 and lived there for more than seventy years of his long life. From 1910 to 1930, however, he lived in the Azores. He wrote hundreds upon hundreds of poems in the popular poetic form of the quadra. His remarkable first book, *Do Tempo e de Mim*, was published in 1982 when the poet was past eighty. A second book, *Ilha em Terra*, appeared in 1992, when he was in his nineties.

Portuguese immigrant characters are to be found in the stories, chronicles, and poems of José Brites, especially in collections such as *Imigramantes* (1984) and *Coisas e Loisas das Nossas Terras* (1996). Laura Bulger's *Vai-Vém* (1987), retitled *Paradise on Hold* in the English translation, offers a wealth of perspectives on the Portuguese in Canada. The most strikingly varied portrayals of the Portuguese immigrant in America, however, appear in *Ah! Mònim dum Corisco!* (1978), a suite of thematically related dramatic pieces, and in *(Sapa)teia Americana* (1983), a collection of short stories - both by Onésimo Teotónio

Almeida. I know of no work that offers a harder, deeper, often comic yet empathetic, look into the complex fate of being Portuguese in America than these stories.

Among the Portuguese-Americans currently writing poetry, I would like to single out a half-dozen for mention. First - and I take them up in no particular order - there is Art Cuelho, a Westerner by virtue of birth and inclination - California and Montana - and a Whitmanian "rough" by choice. A prolific writer, he has published, in recent years, a good deal of first-person expansive verse documenting his self-discoveries while searching out his Azorean ancestry. He also edits a journal entitled *The Azorean Express*, put out by Cuelho's own Seven Buffaloes Press.

Second, there is Olga Cabral, the daughter of Portuguese parents in the West Indies. Born in 1909, she moved as a child to Winnipeg, Canada, but has lived most of her life in New York City. She is the widow of the Yiddish poet Aaron Kurtz. She began publishing poetry in the magazines in the 1930s but her first volume of poetry, *Cities and Deserts*, did not appear until 1959 when it appeared under the aegis of Roving Eye, a press directed by Bob Brown of American expatriate fame. Next appeared *The Evaporated Man* in 1968, followed by *Tape Found in a Bottle* (1971), *The Darkness Found in My Pockets* (1976), *Occupied Country* (1976), *In the Empire of Ice* (1980), and *The Green Dream* (1990). Most recently, there has been *Voice/Over: Selected Poems* (1993), which offers a sample of the distinguished poetry she has been publishing in book form for forty years. The poet and publisher Walter Lowenfels said to her: "You are the first woman poet I know in this country who expresses a national spirit. This, as Whitman observed, is essential for great poetry. In addition to your public poetry (*arte público*) your most intimate and tragic revelations also speak for all of us." The distinguished writer Grace Paley says that hers is "impassioned, lyri-

cal work with history's fingerprints all over it." Here is a poem entitled simply "Woman Ironing":

I am ironing the dress in which I ran from the prom
I am ironing my favorite dresses of long ago
I am ironing the dresses I did not have
And the ones that I did have, stitched so finely of fog
I am ironing the dress of water in which I met you
I am ironing our table cloth of sun and our coverlet
Of moon

I am ironing the sky
I am folding the clouds like linen
I am ironing smoke

I am ironing sad foreheads and deep wrinkles of despair
I am ironing sackcloth
I am ironing bandages
I am ironing huge damp piles of worries
I am smoothing and patting and folding and hanging over
Chairs to air out and dry
I am ironing the tiniest things but for whom or for what
I cannot imagine
I am ironing my shadow which is ironing me.

Third is the to me mysterious Sam Pereira. The author of *The Marriage of the Portuguese* (1978), he is, I believe, a Californian. Among his other publications is *Brittle Water*, a second collection of poems, illustrated by Louise LaFond and published by The Penumbra Press - Abattoir Editions in 1987. I shall quote the title poem of his first collection:

The Marriage Of the Portuguese
Implies something beautiful.

A dark man clutching a tuna
Like it was his little girl.

It implies a marriage
At sea,
Life
as long as the water;

Nothing breaks it.
And when the woman dies first,
As she invariably does,
The scarved body is tossed
Off the coast of São Jorge.
It is about this body
That he thinks
As he splits the tuna in two
And breathes in deeply.

It is about the long-gone meat of his woman,
About the sea who turned thief,
The sea who stuck fingers

Into the corpse
Plucked the child and laughs now
At this fisherman who finds

Only fish.

Frank X. Gaspar, who also lives in and teaches in California (though he hails originally from Provincetown), is the fourth of my contemporary poets. He is a descendant of Azoreans and the author of two collections of poems so far. *The Holyoke* (1988)

won the Morse Poetry Prize and *Mass for the Grace of a Happy Death* (1994) won the Anhinga Prize for Poetry. This poetry is of high order by any contemporary standards. But it is Frank Gaspar's virtue as a premier Portuguese-American poet that I would single out here. He returns to his memories of Cape Cod over and over again with a reverence and awe that sacralizes, not the original experiences but the poetry-making that sets them down for posterity. "The Old Country" is a poem from his first collection *Holyoke*:

My mother would never sweep at night,
 would never let us sweep. The broom
 rustling, she said, would bring the dead up.
 There was a dance to make you shiver
 on the kitchen's rotten linoleum.

I saw her cry out once in rage and grief,
 pour lighter fluid from the can,
 a stream like piss, emptying
 her life on the floor. *I'll burn*
this God-damned house down. We never came
from the old country to live like this.

We meant not ourselves but the *os velhos*,
 that lean boat from Pico.
 My stepfather could not calm her
 and found his own rage, knowing somehow
 that he had been beaten. He kicked her shins
 and refused to weep as we did.

This was a house making its own ghosts.
 You learn someday to lie
 with your head pressed down,

to roll their old names in your hands,
the cool floor's grit on your cheek,

to call up their old country we only knew
in stories. The voices of the dead
are never what you expect, distant thunder
in the low hills, the dog's howl
at the far end of town, silence.

And this old country is any place
we have to leave. The voices
calling us back are dust.
I have traveled to the far edge
of a country now, fearing the dead.
They still want to speak with my mouth.

Number five is Thomas Braga, a native of Fall River, who, like Frank Gaspar, also writes Portuguese-American poems that are prayers of praise. The author of poems in Portuguese and French, as well as English, Braga has published widely, including collections entitled *Litotes* (1997), *Borderland* (1994), *Crickers' Feet* (1992), *Coffee In The Woodwinds* (1990), in addition to his quite remarkable first collection, *Portingales* (1981). It is from that first collection, *Portingales*, that I choose the poem entitled "Cranberries":

Rubies glistening on the Cape
Precious oceans of spray, canals
Canned in waterways of memories,
We squeeze you in and out
Boiled, mashed and puréed.

The misty bogs are maroon
 Manned by purple Pilgrims
 Little crimson hands all
 Tart with berries, histories
 And our palates are remorse.

Cakes and company you decorate
 With foreign grace, Thanksgiving.
 Your taste is native geography.
 Your wine is not sacramental
 But we drink your ritual, paste.

Colonials, we Portingales sip
 Cranberries in South Carver, Mass.
 With New England stones, our sails
 That we must guide to Self-Harbor
 Through fences, isles and capes.

The sixth and last poet I would call attention to is Nancy Vieira Couto. Born in New Bedford in 1942, she is the author of one book of poems, I believe. Awarded the 1989 Agnes Lynch Starrett Poetry Prize, her book *The Face in the Water* was published in the Pitt Poetry Series by the University of Pittsburgh Press in 1990. She is identified as having studied at Bridgewater State College and at Cornell University, where she received her M.F.A. in 1980, and as being on the staff of Cornell University Press.

Lizzie

A spinster with a mouth like a dam and a heart
 like a gyroscope is seen stirring
 the shreds of a drab blue dress of Bedford cord

into the kitchen stove. It is Sunday,

three days after the murders. At the trial
witnesses layer their stories like transparencies.
The dress was new, yes, but of a cheap fabric,
badly soiled with paint around the edges,

best got rid of. And so,
because there is no real evidence against her,
nothing (nothing except a spot of blood
on a white petticoat, in back, beneath the placket,

a - how to put it delicately? - souvenir
of her monthly illness), and because
she has been active in church organizations,
and because she is a woman, and a lady,

they acquit her. She stays in that city
where under every jumprope children mock her
to the music of "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay."
She doesn't say, what she is thinking,

but her heart keeps spinning, spinning. If she calls
herself Lizbeth now, it is only
that she always did like Lizbeth better.
She moves to a gabled mansion on a hill

and drives all over the city in a pony
cart. Her investments multiply like fishes.
She entertains some people from the theatre,
an event that shocks her neighbors.

One autumn when the maples turn oppressively red, she unlocks her smile for the paperboy who comes in for milk and cookies on his collection day and is not afraid, or does not know.

She draws a will, leaving money for the care of animals. And still later, when her heart, like a child's toy, is winding down and slowing on its axis,

she is suddenly very surprised to discover she cannot remember whether it really was paint or menstrual blood, or blood, or whether it matters.

This is a good place to stop, with the local and the universal, which is what all true poetry is always about.

Cinematic Portrayals of Portuguese-Americans

Geoffrey L. Gomes

Portuguese-Americans have been largely absent from the silver screen. Nevertheless, the few films that have featured them have generally presented them in leading roles or in major supporting roles rather than as minor characters and some of the biggest stars in Hollywood have played Portuguese-Americans, among them Spencer Tracy, Edward G. Robinson, Anthony Quinn, and Julia Roberts. Still, the list of films with identifiable Portuguese-American characters is short. The paucity of such roles derives from the relatively few literary sources—the novels, stories, and plays on which movies are based—that feature Portuguese-Americans. Some that do are classics, like Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* and John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat*. Others are much more obscure and unenduring works. Curiously, the silent-movie era seems to have been a veritable golden age in terms of cinematic portrayals of Portuguese-Americans.

The characterizations of Portuguese-Americans vary greatly, from Manuel in *Captains Courageous*, who becomes a positive role model for a rich and pampered boy, to the hopelessly besotted Big Joe Portagee in *Tortilla Flat*, who spends his days scrounging for cheap wine. Negative and stereotypical characterizations of members of ethnic minority groups have always been part of the popular culture and, not surprisingly, have been reflected in the entertainment media, including motion pictures.

This, of course, has drawn complaints from members of affected groups as well as from organizations purporting to represent them, and partly in response to protests Hollywood has become somewhat more sensitive to this issue. The criticisms continue, but it should be noted that it is equally a distortion of history and social reality to cast only nondescript Caucasians as villains and ne'er-do-wells, a tendency already exhibited by some filmmakers. The issue should not be whether members of an ethnic minority are depicted in a negative light in a particular film but whether they are always so depicted in such a way as to misrepresent reality. Regarding Portuguese-Americans, in general there has been a relatively healthy mix of positive and negative characterizations.

What follows does not purport to be a compendium of every movie in which Portuguese-American characters have appeared. Undoubtedly, there are others. It should be noted, also, that two films—*Martin Eden* and *Footfalls*—are included because the original literary sources on which they were based had Portuguese-American characters that were rewritten in the screenplays as non-Portuguese. Titles are presented chronologically, from the earliest to the most recent. Sources are noted in parentheses at the end of each entry.

Martin Eden (Bosworth Film Co., 1914; silent)

Cast: Lawrence Peyton, Viola Berry, Herbert Rawlinson, Rhea Haines, Ann Ivers, Ray Myers, Elmer Clifton, Hobart Bosworth; directed by Hobart Bosworth; screenplay by Hobart Bosworth; based on the novel by Jack London (pub. 1909). London's autobiographical novel of a socialist sailor turned writer was filmed on location in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. Pioneer filmmaker Hobart Bosworth served as producer, director, screenwriter, and appeared in a supporting role. The protagonist, Martin Eden (Peyton), having tired of life at sea, returns to Oakland and embarks on a literary career, enduring an unhappy love affair along the way. Eventually a success as a

writer, he becomes despondent and commits suicide by drowning himself at sea. While he is a struggling author, his sympathetic landlady in Oakland is Maria Silva (Ivers), a hardworking, careworn widow with many children for whom Eden buys a farm when he becomes successful and wealthy. In the novel, Silva is Portuguese but is transformed into an Italian in the movie. Remade as *The Adventures of Martin Eden* in 1942. (Sources: Hanson, Patricia King, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1911-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.)

The Paliser Case (Goldwyn Pictures, 1920; silent)

Cast: Pauline Frederick, Albert Roscoe, James Neil, Hazel Brennan, Kate Lester, Carrie Lee Ward, Warburton Gamble, Alec Francis; directed by William Parke; screenplay by Edfrid Bingham; based on the novel by Edgar Saltus (pub. 1919). A murder mystery set in New York City. Cassy Cara, played by Pauline Frederick, is the poor but honest daughter of Angelo Cara (Neil), a crippled, destitute Portuguese violinist. Cassy, an aspiring opera singer, is in love with an earnest young man named Keith Lennox (Roscoe), who unfortunately is engaged to be married to socialite Margaret Austen (Brennan). Margaret later breaks off the engagement in the mistaken belief that Lennox and Cassy are having an affair. In the meantime, however, Cassy agrees to marry a wealthy cad named Monty Paliser (Gamble), thus sacrificing her own happiness for the sake of her impecunious father. Belatedly, she learns that Paliser's intentions are less than honorable and that their wedding ceremony was bogus. (It was performed by Paliser's gardener, disguised as a minister.) Cassy immediately leaves Paliser and confides her humiliation to Lennox. Paliser is subsequently murdered—stabbed to death—and suspicion falls on Lennox. To protect him, Cassy confesses to the murder. Finally, both are cleared when Cassy's father con-

fesses to the crime and promptly dies of a heart attack, leaving Cassy in the arms of her true love. In the novel, Angelo Cara is described as a native of Lisbon who came to America at a young age. (Sources: Hanson, Patricia King, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1911-1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times, 1928-1994.)

Outside the Law (Universal Pictures, 1921; silent)

Cast: Priscilla Dean, Ralph Lewis, Lon Chaney (Sr.), Wheeler Oakman; directed by Tod Browning; screenplay by Lucien Hubbard and Tod Browning; based on a story by Tod Browning. In this crime story, set in San Francisco, Lon Chaney, the "man of a thousand faces," plays two roles: a gun-toting, knife-wielding criminal named "Black Mike" Sylva and Ah Wing, a Chinese cohort. "Silent" Madden (Lewis), a reformed criminal, is framed by Sylva and sent to prison. Disillusioned, Madden's daughter Molly (Dean) reverts to a life of crime and joins Sylva's gang. Following a big jewel heist, the gang members have a falling-out ending in Sylva's death at the hands of Ah Wing and Molly's arrest and imprisonment. Her release is arranged, however, when the stolen jewels are returned. The sobriquet "Black Mike" presumably referred to Sylva's swarthy complexion, although it may have been intended as a description of his villainous character. (Sources: Connelly, Robert. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-87; Munden, Kenneth, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1921-1930*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1971; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Footfalls (William Fox Studios, 1921; silent)

Cast: Tyrone Power (Sr.), Tom Douglas, Estelle Taylor,

Gladden James; directed by Charles J. Brabin; screenplay also by Charles J. Brabin; based on the story by Wilbur Daniel Steele. A melodramatic tale of murder and revenge with a surprise ending. In the original story, the protagonist is a native of São Miguel, Azores, with the improbable name of Boaz Negro. Boaz is a hardworking, blind cobbler in a New England coastal town who has the uncanny ability to identify individuals by their footsteps. A widower, his only fault is that he dotes on his shiftless and prodigal son Manuel. As often happens in screen adaptations of literary works, the names of the characters were changed. Steele's Portuguese immigrant cobbler was transformed into Hiram Scudder (Power), and his son became Tommy (Douglas). To earn extra money, Scudder takes in a lodger (James), an employee of the local bank. One night, there is a fire in the cobbler's house, and the body of a murder victim is discovered among the smoldering ruins. Burned beyond recognition, the body is identified as that of the lodger on the basis of a pocketbook. A large sum of money is subsequently found to be missing from the bank. The authorities and townspeople conclude that the lodger was murdered by Tommy, who has disappeared and presumably has absconded with the stolen funds. Some time passes. Then one day a stranger enters the cobbler's shop. Scudder immediately identifies the man's footsteps—footsteps he has been waiting to hear again. The cobbler pounces on the stranger, strangling him to death. At first, Scudder appears insane until his victim turns out to be the long-departed banker, who has returned to retrieve the stolen money left behind in the shop. Steele, a novelist and playwright as well as a writer of short stories, won the O. Henry Memorial Award for "Footfalls" in 1920. He lived for many years in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and wrote several stories about Portuguese-Americans on Cape Cod. (Sources: Bucco, Martin. *Wilbur Daniel Steele*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New

York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

My Son (First National, 1925; silent)

Cast: Alla Nazimova, Jack Pickford, Hobart Bosworth, Ian Keith, Mary Akin, Charles Murray, Constance Bennett, Dot Farley; directed by Edwin Carewe; screenplay by Finis Fox; based on the play by Martha M. Stanley. The story of a Portuguese-American boy in a New England coastal town who succumbs to the allure of a beautiful vacationing flapper (Bennett), to the chagrin of both his widowed mother, a storekeeper, and his hometown girlfriend. The boy steals a diamond necklace to finance his elopement with the flirtatious flapper and, when the theft is discovered, tries to run away. His flight is foiled by his mother, who arranges a two-year berth on a whaling ship to save him from arrest and in the hope that the experience will redeem him. Russian-born actress Alla Nazimova plays Ana Silva, the mother; Jack Pickford portrays her son, Tony. (In the play, the son's name is Brauglio.) Other Portuguese-American characters are Felipe Vargas (Keith), a fisherman with a romantic interest in the widow, and Rosa Pina (Akin), the local girlfriend who in the end sails away with Tony. Dramatist Stanley was a native of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and was undoubtedly familiar with the Portuguese-American inhabitants of the area. As a play, *My Son* was relatively successful, running for almost nine months (278 performances) in New York City in 1924-1925. (Sources: Connelly, Robert. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; Leiter, Samuel L., ed. *The Encyclopedia of the New York Stage, 1920-1930*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985; Mantle, Burns, ed. *The Best Plays of 1924-25*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1960; Munden, Kenneth, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1921-1930*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1971.)

The Yankee Clipper (DeMille Pictures, 1927; silent)

Cast: William Boyd, Elinor Fair, Junior Coghlan, John Miljan, Walter Long; directed by Rupert Julian; screenplay by Garrett Fort and Garnett Weston; based on a story by Denison Clift. Set in the mid 19th century, the story line involves a race from China to Boston between an American clipper ship and a British competitor. The American ship is commanded by Hal Winslow (Boyd), son of a prominent shipbuilder in Boston, the *Yankee Clipper's* home port. British visitors Jocelyn Huntington (Fair) and her fiance Richard (Miljan) are stranded aboard the American ship when it casts off unexpectedly. In the course of the voyage, Winslow and Jocelyn are attracted to each other, much to the chagrin of the lady's jealous fiance, who attempts to sabotage his rival by fomenting a mutiny among the crew. Besides Richard, another major villain is a crewman named Portuguese Joe (Long). A ringleader of the mutiny, Portuguese Joe also has designs on the fair Jocelyn. He intends to have his way with her at the earliest opportunity and is ready to murder anyone who stands in his way. In the end, both he and Richard are thwarted—fatally—and Winslow wins both the girl and the race. Although a major star in the silent film era, William Boyd is best remembered for his portrayal of Hopalong Cassidy in westerns of the 1930s-1940s. (Sources: Connelly, Robert. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; Munden, Kenneth, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1921-1930*. New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1971.)

Beware of Blondes (Columbia Pictures, 1928; silent)

Cast: Dorothy Revier, Matt Moore, Roy D'Arcy, Robert Edeson, Walter P. Lewis, Hazel Howell, Harry Semels; directed by George B. Seitz; screenplay by Harvey Thew and George C.

Hull. Set mostly on a steamship bound for Honolulu, apparently out of California. Light fare about an employee of a jewelry firm (Moore) transporting a precious emerald to Hawaii while beset along the way by jewel thieves (D'Arcy and Howell, whose character's sobriquet is Blonde Mary). Among the seemingly dangerous blondes is one who turns out to be a detective (Revier), with whom the bungling jeweler falls in love. Harry Semels plays Portuguese Joe, one of the suspicious characters on board. (Sources: Hanson, Patricia King, ed. *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States: Feature Films, 1921-1930*. New York: R. R. Bowker & Co., 1971; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Tiger Shark (First National-Warner Bros., 1932)

Cast: Edward G. Robinson, Zita Johann, Richard Arlen, Leila Bennett, Vince Barnett, J. Carrol Naish, William Ricciardi; directed by Howard Hawks; screenplay by Wells Root; based on the story "Tuna," by Houston Branch. Set in San Diego, California; Robinson, wearing a dark curly wig and sporting a mustachio, plays an audacious Portuguese tuna fisherman named Mike Mascarena, who styles himself the best fisherman in the Pacific Ocean. Homely and boastful, he is nevertheless a sympathetic figure, able to laugh at himself and loyal and generous to his friends. The story is a classic tale of love and jealousy. Mike marries a Portuguese-American girl named Quita Silva (Johann), who is drawn to Mike by his kindness and generosity following the death of her father, Manuel Silva (Ricciardi). Silva is a member of Mike's crew who falls victim to the ever present tiger sharks that hover menacingly around the tuna boats. Early in the film, Mike himself loses a hand to the sharks, which he replaces with a steel hook. Theirs is a happy marriage until Mike discovers that his wife and best friend, fellow fisherman Pipes Boley (Arlen),

are attracted to each other. At first, Boley's friendship for Mike prevails, and he stays away from Quita. Later, Boley is injured while fishing, and Mike takes him home where Quita nurses him back to health. In such close quarters, Quita and Boley inevitably succumb to their passion for each other. In a jealous rage, Mike determines to kill his rival and thus put an end to the romantic triangle. He tries to throw Boley to the sharks but instead falls into the water himself and is attacked by the predators that have tormented him throughout the film. Fatally wounded, Mike dies in Quita's arms while his friend looks on. Movie reviewers commented favorably on the accent Robinson adopted for the role, which served as a model for Spencer Tracy a few years later in *Captains Courageous*. In the film, Robinson occasionally uses a Portuguese word or expression. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

I Cover the Waterfront (United Artists, 1933)

Cast: Claudette Colbert, Ben Lyon, Ernest Torrence, Hobart Cavanaugh, George Humbert, Harry Beresford, Rosita Marstina; directed by James Cruze; screenplay by Wells Root and Jack Jevne; loosely based on the memoir by Max Miller (pub. 1932). Set in San Diego, California; Colbert plays the daughter of a malevolent fisherman named Eli Kirk (Torrence). Kirk has turned to the more profitable enterprise of smuggling illegal Chinese aliens into the United States. To avoid capture by the Coast Guard, Kirk cold-bloodedly throws a bound, gagged, and weighted Chinese overboard, aided reluctantly by a Portuguese henchman, a fellow fisherman named Tony Silva (Humbert). The subsequently contrite Silva presents a stark contrast to the unrepentant Kirk. Another Portuguese character in the film is Mrs.

Silva (Marstina). Lyon plays a reporter in search of an exposé. Initially intending to use the girl to gather information on her father's activities, he instead falls in love with her. Miller was a celebrated newspaper reporter who authored several books recounting his experiences. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Captains Courageous (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1937)

Cast: Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore, Melvyn Douglas, Charley Grapewin, Mickey Rooney, John Carradine; directed by Victor Fleming; screenplay by John Lee Mahin, Marc Connelly, and Dale Van Every; based on the novel by Rudyard Kipling (pub. 1897). Tracy plays Manuel, a crewman on a codfishing schooner out of Gloucester, Massachusetts, captained by the crusty Captain Disko (Barrymore). While fishing alone in his dory in the Grand Banks, Manuel rescues ten-year-old Harvey Cheyne (Bartholomew), the spoiled and snobbish son of a wealthy industrialist (Douglas) who has fallen overboard from a luxurious ocean liner bound for Europe. To the boy's chagrin, the schooner will not return to port until the end of the fishing season, and he is forced to work for his keep. Tracy won an Academy Award for Best Actor for his performance as the simple and honorable fisherman whose strength of character has a transforming effect on the boy. The film is a less than faithful adaptation of Kipling's work, a product of the Englishman's extended sojourn in New England in the 1890s. Hollywood filmmakers, it seems, cannot resist the temptation to improve on the classics. Indeed, the makers of *Captains Courageous* took considerable liberties. In the movie, Manuel's role in the boy's redemption is more prominent, and he is lost at sea during the voyage home, whereas Kipling allowed the ship's crew

to return safely. Tracy uses a Portuguese accent reportedly patterned on that used by Edward G. Robinson a few years before in *Tiger Shark*. In the film, he occasionally speaks Portuguese, although it is barely distinguishable as such. A made-for-television version of Kipling's classic was produced in 1977 (Norman Rosemont Productions; directed by Harvey Hart). A more faithful adaptation than the 1937 film; in it the part of Manuel, played by Ricardo Montalban, is less prominent, and the ending is left as Kipling wrote it. (Sources: Deschner, Donald. *The Films of Spencer Tracy*. New York: The Citadel Press, 1968; Magill, Frank N., ed. *Magill's Survey of Cinema: English Language Films*. 4 vols. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Salem Press, 1980; Marill, Alvin H. *Movies Made for Television*. Westport, Conn.: Arlington House Publishers, 1980; Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987.)

Prison Break (Universal Pictures, 1938)

Cast: Barton MacLane, Glenda Farrell, Paul Hurst, Ward Bond, Edward Pawley, Constance Moore, Victor Kilian; directed by Arthur Lubin; screenplay by Norton S. Parker and Dorothy Reid; based on the story "The Walls of San Quentin," by Norton S. Parker. A low-budget B picture. Set in California; veteran character actor MacLane, in one of his few leading roles, plays Joaquin Shannon, a half-Portuguese tuna fisherman wrongly imprisoned for the murder of his girlfriend's brother (Pawley). He subsequently thwarts a prison break, foiling the escape of hardened criminal Red Kincaid (Bond). Paroled as a reward, he sets out to uncover the real killer (Hurst), whom he eventually captures, violating the terms of his parole to do so by going out to sea beyond the 12-mile limit. Before Joaquin's difficulties with the criminal justice system begin, his proposed marriage to ever-faithful Jean Fenderson (Farrell) is opposed by her father (Kilian),

who objects to Joaquin's "Portagee" lineage. Constance Moore plays Joaquin's sister Maria. Burly and doughy-complexioned, MacLane usually played gangsters or cops. For this movie, he was made up with dark, curly hair to look more Mediterranean. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-87; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Daughters Courageous (Warner Bros., 1939)

Cast: John Garfield, Claude Rains, Fay Bainter, Donald Crisp, the Lane Sisters (Priscilla, Rosemary, and Lola), Gale Page, Jeffrey Lynn, Dick Foran, George Humbert; directed by Michael Curtiz; screenplay by Julius J. and Philip G. Epstein; based on the play "Fly Away Home," by Dorothy Bennett and Irving White. A sequel of sorts to *Four Daughters* (1938), in which the cast of the earlier movie was reassembled but in different roles. The setting is the seaside community of Carmel, California, and Jim Masters (Rains), a charming but irresponsible man who surrendered to wanderlust and abandoned his wife and four daughters many years before, has inconveniently returned home to find his ex-wife Nan (Bainter) about to marry dull but dependable Sam Sloane (Crisp). At the same time, one of his daughters (Priscilla Lane) is about to marry Gabriel Lopez (Garfield), a cynical local Portuguese-American fisherman with the same nomadic inclinations as the girls' father. Finally seeing each other for what they are, Jim and Gabriel both leave town before causing any more disruption to the lives of those they love. Manuel Lopez, Gabriel's father, is played by George Humbert. (Humbert portrayed another Portuguese fisherman in *I Cover the Waterfront* in 1933.) The screenwriters took a number of liberties with the original Broadway play, which had a relatively successful run of 202 performances in 1935. The play is set in Provincetown, Massachu-

setts, and James Masters is a solid and respectable citizen who is ultimately reconciled with his ex-wife. The children consist of two sons and two daughters. Gabriel, whose role is much less prominent, is described as “large—hulking—and looks powerful. Ordinarily he is lazy and good-natured but when aroused he is ominous.” In the play, his romantic interest is a Portuguese girl named Maria (absent in the movie), not Priscilla. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994; *Newsweek*, July 3, 1939.)

Tortilla Flat (Paramount Pictures, 1942)

Cast: Spencer Tracy, Hedy Lamarr, John Garfield, Frank Morgan, Akim Tamiroff, Sheldon Leonard, Allen Jenkins, Charles Judels; directed by Victor Fleming; screenplay by John Lee Mahin and Benjamin Glaser; based on the novel by John Steinbeck (pub. 1935). Set in Monterey, California; most of the principal characters are Mexican-American vagrants, depicted in a warm-hearted fashion as roguish, simple-minded, irresponsible, and devoid of anything that might be construed as a work ethic. Foremost among them is Pilon (Tracy). Friendships are strained when one of the group, Danny (Garfield), inherits two houses and allows his friends to live in one of them while he lives in the other. The responsibilities of ownership and his new status as a man of property come between Danny and his irresponsible, opportunistic friends. Danny courts the beautiful Dolores Ramirez (Lamarr), who works in one of the local canneries. Pilon also vies for her affections, which further strains his friendship with Danny. Later, however, he steps aside and helps his friend win her over. The movie is a relatively faithful adaptation of Steinbeck’s novel except for the ending. In the movie, Danny and Dolores wed; in the book there is no marriage and Danny actually dies. Both the

book and this equally offbeat film adaptation have a few Portuguese-American characters—more prominent in the book than in the movie. Principal among these is Big Joe Portagee (Jenkins), the town drunk. Another is a tailor named Machado (Judels). One reference work mistakenly refers to the character played by Lamarr as a Portuguese girl. However, the “Portagee girl,” as Steinbeck calls her in the novel, is only mentioned—disparagingly—and does not actually appear in the film. Big Joe Portagee is one of the least appealing Portuguese-American characters ever portrayed in the movies. His primary goal in life is to get drunk, and the procurement of cheap wine, without the inconvenience of paying for it, is his chief occupation. He is, in short, a bum. A Nobel laureate (1962), Steinbeck was a native of nearby Salinas, and several of his works are set in the vicinity. Despite the all-star cast and big-name director, *Tortilla Flat* was not a success at the box office. (Sources: Deschner, Donald. *The Films of Spencer Tracy*. New York: The Citadel Press, 1968; Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; Reyes, Luis, and Rubie, Peter. *Hispanics in Hollywood*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994.)

The Adventures of Martin Eden (Columbia Pictures, 1942)

Cast: Glenn Ford, Claire Trevor, Evelyn Keyes, Stuart Erwin, Dickie Moore, Ian MacDonald, Frank Conroy, Rafaela Ottiano; directed by Sidney Salkow; screenplay by W. L. River; based on the novel by Jack London (pub. 1909). A remake of the 1914 silent movie *Martin Eden* with a longer title and some changes in the story line. In this version, Eden (Ford), a seaman and struggling writer, crusades for the release of a shipmate (Erwin) wrongly imprisoned on a charge of mutiny by a brutal and heartless shipmaster (MacDonald). His Portuguese landlady’s name—Maria Silva in the novel—is slightly altered to Marie

Sylva (Ottiano). (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Mourning Becomes Electra (RKO Pictures, 1947)

Cast: Rosalind Russell, Michael Redgrave, Raymond Massey, Katina Paxinou, Leo Genn, Kirk Douglas, Nancy Coleman, Henry Hull, Sara Allgood, Tito Vuolo; directed by Dudley Nichols; screenplay by Dudley Nichols; based on the trilogy of plays by Eugene O'Neill (first performed in 1931). O'Neill's retelling of a classic Greek tragedy transfers the setting to Massachusetts immediately after the Civil War. The betrayal and murder of the paterfamilias of the Mannon clan (Massey), recently returned from the war, by his treacherous wife (Paxinou) and her lover (Genn) is avenged by the oedipal daughter (Russell) and her weakling brother (Redgrave). All in all, a rather gloomy film fraught with Freudianism that lost scads of money at the box office. A minor character in the movie is Joe Silva, a Portuguese fishing captain, played by Tito Vuolo, a character actor who appeared in films in the 1940s-1950s. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Tuna Clipper (Monogram Pictures, 1949)

Cast: Roddy McDowall, Elena Verdugo, Dickie Moore, Roland Winters, Rick Vallin, Peter Mamakos, Michael Vallon, Doris Kemper, Richard Avonde; directed by William Beaudine; screenplay by W. Scott Darling. Against his family's wishes, a young man with aspirations of becoming a lawyer (McDowall) takes a job on a tuna boat in order to earn money to pay off a friend's debt to gamblers. The family of the Portuguese tuna

fisherman with whom he finds employment includes Papa Pereira (Vallon), Manuel (Mamakos), Silvestre (Vallin), and Bianca (Verdugo), the protagonist's girlfriend. Little information is available on this B-picture. Even the setting is uncertain, though it is probably California. British-born McDowall was one of the few child actors of his generation to have a successful career in motion pictures as an adult. Verdugo is perhaps best remembered as a regular on the long-running television series *Marcus Welby* in the 1970s. (Source: Okuda, Ted. *The Monogram Checklist: The Films of Monogram Pictures Corporation, 1931-1952*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 1987.)

Mystery Street (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1950)

Cast: Ricardo Montalban, Sally Forest, Bruce Bennett, Elsa Lanchester, Marshall Thompson, James Harkley, Jan Sterling, Edmon Ryan, Ernesto Morelli; directed by John Sturges; screenplay by Sydney Boehm and Richard Brooks; based on an unpublished story by Leonard Spigelgass. Set in the Boston area and Cape Cod, Massachusetts; Montalban plays Lt. Peter Morales, a police detective investigating a murder. In the context of the film, Morales is Portuguese-American, despite the Spanish surname. The victim (Sterling) is killed by her married blue-blooded lover (Ryan), distraught by his paramour's unwanted pregnancy. At first, the police have nothing to go on but the skeletal remains of the victim. The wrong man (Thompson) is arrested, but Morales is not convinced of his guilt and continues the inquiry, leading ultimately to justice being done. During the course of the investigation, a contest develops between the upper-crust murderer, seeking to protect his social status and lifestyle, and his socially inferior nemesis. A minor character in the film is a Portuguese fisherman (Morelli). The film has a semi-documentary style, focusing on the development and analysis of forensic evidence at Harvard University, whose forensic medical

scientists are enlisted in the investigation. The story was originally titled "Murder at Harvard," but objections by the university led to a change in the film's title before production began. Born in Mexico, Montalban has invariably played Latin types throughout a long film career. More than a quarter of a century after the release of this film, he was again cast as a Portuguese-American in a made-for-television version of *Captains Courageous*. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Encyclopedia of Film*. 13 vols. New York: Times Books, 1984; Reyes, Luis, and Rubie, Peter. *Hispanics in Hollywood*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1994; Silver, Alain, and Ward, Elizabeth, eds. *Film Noir*. Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1979.)

The World in His Arms (Universal Pictures, 1952)

Cast: Gregory Peck, Ann Blyth, Anthony Quinn, John McIntire, Andrea King, Carl Esmond, Eugenie Leontovich, Hans Conreid, Syl Lamont; directed by Raoul Walsh; screenplay by Borden Chase and Horace McCoy; based on the novel by Rex Beach (pub. 1945). Set in San Francisco, California, and Sitka, Alaska, in 1850, this is an action-packed romantic adventure involving conflict between rugged American seal hunters (engaged in poaching) and the cunning and ruthless Czarist Russian aristocrats who rule Alaska. The film abounds in exciting sea footage and bruising brawls. Anthony Quinn is Portugee, a boastful and rascally seal hunter who joins forces with a competitor (Peck), a New Englander named Jonathan Clark, also known as "the Boston man," to mount an illegal seal-hunting expedition to Alaska. While in San Francisco, Clark falls in love with a visiting Russian countess (Blyth) seeking refuge from a forced marriage to a villainous Russian nobleman (Esmond). Her unwanted suitor suddenly appears and spirits her out of San Francisco, taking her

to Sitka where she will be compelled to marry him. Afterwards, viewers are treated to an immense fistfight between Clark and Portugee (in a saloon, of course), followed by an exhilarating race to Sitka, where they and their crews are promptly arrested and jailed. Soon, they make their escape, rescuing the countess just as the marriage is about to take place and blowing up a Russian gunboat in the process. For the role of the robust and exuberant Portugee, Quinn is made up to look like a curly-haired pirate, complete with earring. Born in Mexico (his paternal grandfather was Irish), Quinn has long been known for his portrayals of various foreign types, usually affecting the same accent for all of them. In this movie, he speaks Portuguese passably well on a couple of occasions. Minor characters playing Portugee's crew are also Portuguese, among them José (Lamont). (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

Stars and Stripes Forever (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1952)

Cast: Clifton Webb, Debra Paget, Robert Wagner, Ruth Hussey; directed by Henry Koster; screenplay by Lamar Trotti and Ernest Vajda; loosely based on John Philip Sousa's autobiography, *Marching Along* (pub. 1928). Set in the 1890s, the picture's real star is the music of the famous bandmaster and composer, portrayed by Clifton Webb. Sousa's best-known marches are featured, including "Semper Fidelis," "The Washington Post," "El Capitan," and, of course, "The Stars and Stripes Forever." The last is probably the most popular and frequently performed march ever composed and is certainly the one with which Sousa is most closely identified. Paget plays Lily, Sousa's daughter; his wife is played by Hussey. Wagner is a member of the band who romances Paget and still finds time to invent the sousaphone.

(In reality, Sousa himself designed the instrument.) The film makes no mention of Sousa's Portuguese ancestry (his father, Antonio, was born in Spain to Portuguese parents). Nevertheless, this is probably the only major production based on a real-life Portuguese-American. (Sources: Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

The White Dawn (Paramount Pictures, 1974)

Cast: Warren Oates, Timothy Bottoms, Lou Gossett; directed by Philip Kaufman; screenplay by James Houston and Tom Rickman; based on the novel by James Houston (pub. 1971). Set in the Canadian Arctic in the 1890s, this is a starkly realistic story of three stranded crewmen from a Yankee whaler who take refuge among the Eskimos. Unmindful of the culture and sensibilities of their hosts, in the end the libidinous trio are treacherously killed by their rescuers. Gossett plays Portagee, one of the marooned whalers. A black man, Portagee is presumably a Cape Verdean, though this is never made clear. In the book, he is described simply as a "big brown man." The casting of a black in the role may have been a decision of the film's producers rather than the writer's intention. In either case, Gossett gives a strong performance as the lusty and physically powerful Portagee. Filmed on location, the use of nonprofessional Eskimo actors adds to the realism. Houston, a Canadian ethnographer and one-time government official in the Northwest Territories, based his novel on an Eskimo saga, presumably derived from an actual episode in Eskimo history. (Sources: Bowden, Jane A., ed. *Contemporary Authors*. Series, vols. 65-68. Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1977; Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987; *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: The New York Times Co., 1928-1994.)

The Last Hard Men (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1976)

Cast: Charlton Heston, James Coburn, Barbara Hershey, Jorge Rivero, Michael Parks, Larry Wilcox, Morgan Paull; directed by Andrew V. McLaglen; screenplay by Guerdon Trueblood; based on the novel *Gun Down*, by Brian Garfield (pub. 1971). The year *The Last Hard Men* was released, Garfield's novel was republished under the same title as the movie. Set in Arizona in the early 1900s, this is a violent tale of a vengeful half-breed convict (Coburn) who leads a mass prison break, organizes several of the escapees into a gang, kidnaps the daughter (Hershey) of the lawman (Heston) who sent him to prison, and threatens to rape the young woman if his over-the-hill nemesis does not come out of retirement to give chase. Among the outlaw gang is a murderer with the unlikely name of Portugee Shiraz (Paull), a despicable villain who rapes the hostage. In the end, Portugee and the other outlaws receive their just deserts at the hands of their victim's outraged father. Portugee is a former slaughterhouse worker sent to prison for stabbing his wife and two children, one of whom died. In the book, he is described as "part Portuguese, part Negro", but in the movie he is played by a Caucasian actor. In any case, the portrayal of a Portuguese-American as a Western outlaw is unique. (Sources: Garfield, Brian. *Western Films: A Complete Guide*. New York: Rawson Associates, 1982; Hardy, Phil. *The Western*. London: Aurum Press, 1983; Nash, Jay Robert, and Ross, Stanley Ralph. *The Motion Picture Guide*. 10 vols. Chicago: Cinebooks, 1985-1987.)

Mystic Pizza (Samuel Goldwyn, 1988)

Cast: Julia Roberts, Annabeth Gish, Lili Taylor, Vincent Phillip D'Onofrio, William R. Moses, Adam Storke, Conchata Ferrell, Joanna Merlin, Arthur Walsh, Gene Amoroso, Sheila Ferrini, Jody Raymond; directed by Donald Petrie; screenplay by Amy Jones, Perry Howze, Randy Howze, and Alfred Uhry;

based on the story by Amy Jones. A seriocomic treatment of the lives and loves of three working-class Portuguese-American girls, all waitresses in a pizza parlor in Mystic, Connecticut. Julia Roberts (in one of her first starring roles) and Annabeth Gish play sisters Daisy and Kat Araujo; Lili Taylor plays their friend Jojo Barboza. The film revolves around three love stories: Kat's courtship by the scion of an upper-class Yankee family (Storke), Daisy's affair with a married yuppie (Moses), and Jojo's on-again, off-again betrothal to long-suffering Bill Montijo, a local Portuguese-American fisherman (D'Onofrio). Another element in the film is the tense relationship between the two sisters: sexy Daisy is cynical and flippant while college-bound Kat is hard-working and serious-minded. Several other Portuguese-American characters, the girls' parents and friends, appear in supporting roles. These include Mrs. Araujo (Merlin), Mr. Barboza (Amoroso), Mrs. Barboza (Ferrini), Manny (Walsh), and Teresa (Raymond). Foremost among the girls' Portuguese-American friends is their employer Leona Valsouano (Ferrell), known for her secret pizza sauce recipe made with "spices from the Algarve" (hardly typical Portuguese cuisine). A couple of scenes depict the cultural life of the local Portuguese community, notably, Jojo's wedding celebration (held at the pizzeria) featuring traditional Portuguese music and dancing. The film was shot on location in Connecticut and Rhode Island, states with large Portuguese communities. Probably no other American film has featured so many Portuguese-American characters in both leading and supporting roles. (Sources: *The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: Times Books Co., 1928-1994; Willis, John. *Screen World*, 1989. New York: Crown Publishers, 1989.)

Signs of Life (Avenue Pictures, 1989)

Cast: Beau Bridges, Vincent D'Onofrio, Arthur Kennedy, Kevin J. O'Connor, Will Patton, Kate Reid, Kathy Bates, Geor-

gia Engel, Paul Cunha, Wellington Santos, Alex Goulart, Jr., Manuel Januario, Odete Amarelo; directed by John David Coles; screenplay by Mark Malone. Set in a fishing village in Maine, a local boatbuilder (Kennedy), unable to keep pace with change in hard times, is forced to go out of business. The decision has a devastating effect on the lives of his employees (Bridges, D'Onofrio, and O'Connor) and their families. Also affected are various residents of the community, including several members of the Portuguese Castanho family, supporting characters in the film. Interestingly, most of the actors playing the Castanhos have Portuguese surnames (Cunha, Santos, Goulart, Januario, and Amarelo). This is certainly one of the few instances in which Portuguese-American characters are actually played by Portuguese-Americans. Although it was shown in movie theaters, this was essentially a made-for-television production. (*The New York Times Film Reviews*. 18 vols. New York: New York Times Co., 1928-1994; *Washington Post*, May 12, 1989; Willis, John. *Screen World*, 1990. New York: Crown Publishers, 1990.)

Picture Bride (Thousand Cranes Filmworks/Miramax, 1995)

Cast: Youki Kudoh, Akira Takayama, Tamlyn Tomita, Cary-Hiroyuki Tagawa, Toshiro Mifune, Yoko Sugi, James Grant Benton; directed by Kayo Hatta; based on a story by Kayo Hatta, Mari Hatta, and Diane Mei Lin Mark; screenplay by Kayo Hatta and Mari Hatta. Set in Hawaii circa 1918, this award-winning film focuses on the trials and tribulations of an orphaned teen-aged picture bride (Kudoh) from Japan who is quickly disillusioned following an arranged marriage to a middle-aged sugarcane worker (Takayama). Refusing to consummate the marriage, the young bride, who also goes to work in the cane fields, at first thinks only of saving enough money to return to Japan. Eventually, her relationship with her husband evolves into one of true affection. A subtheme in the movie is the interethnic conflict on

the plantation especially between the Japanese and Filipino workers. There is also tension between the hard-driving Portuguese foreman, Antone, played by James Grant Benton, and his haole (white) boss. Despite 20 years of experience on the plantation, Antone's prospects for advancement are limited because he is not a haole, and his resentment of this fact is apparent. He is usually seen galloping through the cane fields barking orders and sometimes threatening recalcitrant workers with a whip. Though usually a menacing figure on horseback, he is jocular on occasion but never displays what might be interpreted as empathy for those beneath him, having himself once occupied the same lowly status and having risen above it. (Sources: Ebert, Roger. Review in *Chicago-Sun Times*, May 19, 1995; Maslin, Janet. Review in *New York Times*, April 28, 1995).

Phenomenon (Touchstone Pictures, 1996)

Cast: John Travolta, Kyra Sedgwick, Forest Whitaker, Robert Duvall, David Gallagher, Ashley Buccille, Elisabeth Nunziato, Jeffrey DeMunn, Richard Kiley, Mark Valim, Tony A. Mattos; directed by Jon Turteltaub; screenplay by Gerald DiPego. Set in rural northern California; Travolta plays George Malley, a small-town mechanic who inexplicably begins to manifest preternatural powers, among them telekinesis and the ability to predict earthquakes. His intelligence quotient becomes astronomical, permitting him to master any number of subjects with amazing rapidity, including foreign languages, a talent he displays first with Spanish and then Portuguese. His extraordinary abilities attract the attention of scientists while simultaneously giving rise to apprehension among his friends, neighbors, and the U.S. government. Kyra Sedgwick is cast as Lace, George's reluctant love interest. Robert Duval plays Doc, a local physician who asks George to learn Portuguese (which he does in 20 minutes) so that he can serve as interpreter for a Portuguese patient (Mattos).

Portuguese is spoken in a few other scenes. Other minor Portuguese characters are Ella (Nunziato) and her son Alberto (Valim). In the end, George dies, the victim of a brain tumor that had somehow enhanced his intellectual powers. Travolta received coaching in Portuguese pronunciation and did a creditable job with his Portuguese lines. Valim and Mattos are Portuguese-Americans playing Portuguese-American characters, which may be a first for a major Hollywood production. (Sources: *Jornal Português*, January 18, 1996; Maslin, Janet. Review in *New York Times*, July 3, 1996; *Newsweek*, July 8, 1996.)

Checklist of Modern Portuguese Literature in English Translation - Books

George Monteiro

This checklist is a work in progress, and as such it calls for extension, correction, and periodic updating. By "modern" is meant mainly "twentieth-century."

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A dupla ironia de Garcia Monteiro

Carlos Jorge Pereira

Completa-se por estes dias um século sobre a primeira e, até agora, única edição das *Rimas de Ironia Alegre* a que, curiosamente, corresponde o acrónimo RIA. Trata-se de um livro raro e, mesmo entre os alfarrabistas mais especializados, difícil de encontrar. A isto poderia não ser estranho o facto de ter sido publicado em Boston, Massachusetts. As três dúzias de poemas e as 115 páginas que o constituem foram, aliás, compostas e impressas em casa do autor (186 Webster Street, East Boston) e pelo próprio autor, já então médico, Manuel Garcia Monteiro - que deu o trabalho por concluído a 8 de Setembro de 1896. Contava então trinta e sete anos de idade. Não se sabe é qual terá sido a tiragem das *Rimas* ou quantos exemplares terão chegado a Portugal.

E, no entanto, o livro também não parece fácil de encontrar nos Estados Unidos. Um inquérito feito em Maio/Junho de 1989 a partir da Universidade de Brown e dirigido a toda a imensa rede de bibliotecas aderentes ao Inter-Library Loan apurou que nenhuma delas tinha um único exemplar das *Rimas*. Só uma universidade registava uma entrada para Garcia Monteiro, e esta para um seu livrinho de juventude: *Versos* (Horta, 1884).

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Mas das *Rimas de Ironia Alegre*, que são a base da edição ora proposta d' *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro*, sobrevivem, pelo menos, três espécimes. Estão na Biblioteca Nacional, em Lisboa, disponíveis para a consulta livre e directa do público. Um dos três espécimes pertencia à “livraria” de Fialho de Almeida e traz a dedicatória d' “o seu admirador é velho amigo, – (assinatura) G. Monteiro - Boston, 23/IX/96”. Há nesta particular sobrevivência alguma justiça poética na medida em que Fialho terá sido o único nome grado da literatura portuguesa a referir Garcia Monteiro na imprensa da época - diga-se que com bastante apreço, num artigo do *Correio da Manhã* de 4 de Maio de 1885.

Tudo isto se passou, portanto, há uns cem anos. E desde então poucos progressos tem havido na divulgação da poesia de Garcia Monteiro; a generalidade das histórias da literatura portuguesa (incluindo a de António José Saraiva e Óscar Lopes, que será a mais consultada) nem sequer o menciona. Tanto mais são de ressaltar as excepções, como a referência que Luís de Sousa Rebelo lhe faz no *Dicionário de Literatura* dirigido por Jacinto de Prado Coelho, no artigo sobre sátira na literatura portuguesa, época moderna: “Uma poesia irónica, mais dada a explorar o anedótico, o trivial e o parodístico, sem excluir todavia a nota mordente, numa combinação hábil de metros populares com formas cultas, vai florescer em terra estrangeira nas *Rimas de Ironia Alegre* (Boston, 1896) do açoriano Garcia Monteiro (1859-1913)”.

Comecemos, então, pelo princípio. Manuel Garcia Monteiro de seu nome completo, filho de José Leal Monteiro e de Maria Joaquim da Piedade, nasceu a 29 de Junho de 1859 na Rua Serpa Pinto, nº 39, na Horta.¹ Era esta “já no fim do século XVIII lugar de criação literária (e de proliferação de ideias

desempoeiradas)”; durante a segunda metade do século XIX, vemo-la a funcionar como uma espécie de capital literária do arquipélago ou, para usar as palavras de Pedro da Silveira, “a única das três cidades açorianas onde as gerações de poetas e prosadores se suced[iam] umas às outras continuamente e desenvolvendo sempre actividade grupal.”²

Num certo sentido, tudo o indica, Garcia Monteiro estava neste ambiente como peixe na água. Pelos quinze anos, vemo-lo a estrear-se como poeta na imprensa local; aos dezoito, encontramos-lo já fundador dum semanário literário, *O Passatempo*; aos vinte, autor de *Sem Cerimónia*, comédia em um acto, levada ao palco no Teatro Faialense em 29.4.1880; aos vinte e um, ou seja, por volta de 1880-81, vemo-lo colaborador duma revista, *O Grémio Literário* (1880-83), apontada como “a melhor do seu tempo e até hoje uma das melhroes que houve nas Ilhas”.³

Mas, noutro sentido, Garcia Monteiro não se podia sentir feliz. Feito o liceu, queria prosseguir os estudos; as dificuldades da família não lho permitiam e emprega-se numa repartição pública. “As aspirações do bom português da actualidade resumem-se em dois artigos.” - comentava um popular folhetinista do tempo, Júlio César Machado - “1º ser empregado público, 2º depois de o ser, não fazer nada”.⁴ O espírito enérgico e empreendedor de Garcia Monteiro estava nos antípodas disto, mas o poeta observador e irónico que também nele existia fez da experiência... poemas, claro, satíricos. Juntando-os quinze anos depois nas *Rimas de ironia alegre*, “Talento burocrático”, “Rivais”, “O novo amanuense” sucedem-se ou entrelaçam-se como passos de uma mesma história ou quadros de uma mesma peça e retratam esse mundo como raras vezes se terá feito em poesia (ou até, podemos alargar o âmbito sem receio de

desmentido, em literatura) portuguesa. Por um trítptico comparável seria preciso esperar quase oitenta anos - até àquele que nos dá Alexandre O'Neil em "Guichê/ 1, 2 e 3" de *Entre a Cortina e a Vidraça* (Lisboa, 1972).

Entretanto, ainda em 1881, Garcia Monteiro tenta escapar-se à ilha que, neste outro sentido, se estava a tornar para ele uma prisão. Consegue o lugar de prefeito num colégio de Lisboa, com a ideia de conciliar o emprego com o prosseguimento de estudos na Politécnica. Mas, passados dois anos, o que seria o aspecto essencial do seu plano não se concretizou; para mais, faltou-lhe a saúde. Regressa à Horta e reganha energia. Logo a 9 de Setembro de 1823 sai o primeiro número do semanário *O Açoriano* - de que é fundador, proprietário, redactor principal, compositor, tipógrafo. E, no ano seguinte, mesmo antes de emigrar para a América, compõe e imprime a sua primeira colectânea de poesia - os já mencionados *Versos*.

Em redor da fase inicial d'*O Açoriano* congregam-se entre outros, Florêncio Terra e Rodrigo Guerra (que se viriam a revelar dos contistas açorianos mais importantes do seu tempo) e o continental Henrique das Neves (capitão do exército, então colocado no Faial). Ao último se deve uma secção intitulada "Notas Cómicas" cujo tipo de humor lembra, em prosa, o que se encontra na poesia mais característica de Garcia Monteiro; cheguei a pensar ser o "N". que assinava as "Notas" um pseudónimo encapotado de Garcia Monteiro, que não queria parecer demasiado omnipresente no seu próprio jornal. Mas cartas dele e de Henrique das Neves, publicadas n'*O Açoriano* nos anos imediatamente a seguir, confirmam Neves como o "N". das "Notas Cómicas", ao mesmo tempo que evidenciam o bom entendimento entre estes dois homens que tinham em comum uma certa visão sensível e irónica do mundo.⁵ Aliás, no campo das influências

ou, melhor dizendo, confluências literárias de Garcia Monteiro, devíamos mencionar, por exemplo, Nicolau Tolentino e Gonçalves Crespo - ambos concitados nas páginas d'*O Açoriano*, muito especialmente o parnasiano de que se transcreve "A Venda dos Bóis", poesia "d'uma singeleza naturalíssima e d'uma verdade nítida. É preciso possuir uma lama fina como a de Gonçalves Crespo", comenta *O Açoriano*, "para aproveitar a expressão tocante, fortemente dramática d' um quadro tão simples"⁶

Mas ainda mal tinham decorrido nove meses sobre o nascimento d'*O Açoriano*, já Garcia Monteiro deixava a cria nas mãos dos amigos. Numa segunda tentativa de realizar o seu sonho, ao cabo de quarenta dias na barca Verónica, ei-lo que chega a New Bedford, Estados Unidos - que, durante o século XIX, se tinham tornado, em vez do Brasil, o grande destino da emigração açoriana.⁷ Depois de bastas peripécias, trabalhos, privações e de uma doença que o terá levado às portas da morte, Garcia Monteiro estabiliza trabalhando como tipógrafo auxiliar do *Boston Herald*; obtém assim a flexibilidade de horário e o dinheiro indispensáveis para, ao mesmo tempo, ir conseguindo estudar e fazer o Curso de Medicina, que termina no verão de 1890 - meia dúzia de anos após ter chegado à América. De tudo isto se sabe em pormenor pela correspondência que foi enviando a Henrique das Neves e que este, vinte anos depois possivelmente já general reformado, edita no livro *Individualidades*, em capítulo dedicado a Garcia Montiero.⁸

Desde então e nos vinte e poucos anos que lhe restaram até à morte, em 7 de Fevereiro de 1913, o ser médico (em Boston e, a seguir, em Cambridge, Massachusetts) tornou-se central na vida de Garcia Monteiro - que, no entanto, nunca deixou de escrever. Continuou a colaborar na imprensa: luso-americana, açoriana, continental, brasileira (na *Gazeta de Notícias*, do Rio

de Janeiro poucos anos depois das “Cartas de Inglaterra” de Eça, saíam as “Cartas da América” de Garcia Monteiro)⁹ E *O Açoriano*, onde, agora de longe, continuava a publicar, reunia o que era na altura a colaboração literária mais significativa do arquipélago (no conto, além de Florência Terra e de Rodrigo Guerra, surge Nunes da Rosa; em poesia, Roberto de Mesquita), sendo também aí que o Simbolismo primeiro se faz notar nos Açores¹⁰ - assim perfazendo uma curiosa ponte entre a poesia parnasiana e solar do fundador d’ *O Açoriano* (cuja musa já “Deixou Soares de Passos/ e sente um sangue espanhol;/ tem uns esplêndidos braços/ e anda tostada do sol”) e os poemas simbolistas, ressumbrantes de brumas e penumbras, da geração seguinte (oiça-se Roberto de Mesquita, de *Almas Cativas*: “Dezembro, dia pluvioso. Vem/ Deste céu de burel um *spleen* mortal/ Onde as almas se atolam como alguém/ Que caísse num vasto lodaçal”).

Terá sido também Garcia Monteiro “o primeiro intelectual a avisar”, em 1903, com a autoridade de quem lá vivia há já quase vinte anos, que não interessava aos Açores desligarem-se “de Portugal para se integrarem nos Estados Unidos da América” ou “tornarem-se seu ‘protectorado’ (uma espécie de Libéria branca)”.¹¹ Garcia Monteiro terá sido, aliás, desde muito novo, um progressista, um republicano de ideias avançadas, um maçónico (de facto: fundador e venerável da organização maçónica da comunidade açoriana na costa atlântica dos Estados Unidos).¹² Coisas que, muito provavelmente, de uma forma ou de outra se relacionam com a informação de que “o dr. Monteiro era benquisto em Boston. Quando ali vagou o lugar de cônsul português, dez mil pessoas reunidas pediram esse cargo para ele. Não foi provido.”¹³

Ou seja, vários factores apontam para que interessará estudar o perfil de um homem publica e politicamente

interveniente, generoso colaborador jornalístico - tanto na juventude e na sociedade de origem como no meio luso-americano onde se fixou na maturidade) e onde a maioria era, como ele, de proveniência açoriana), não esquecendo todavia a sua passagem por Lisboa. Aí lhe publicaram o panfleto *O Marquês de Pombal*, tecnicamente o seu primeiro livro, também impresso, quase simultaneamente, no jornal *A Luta*;¹⁴ na verdade, o Marquês de Pombal, que assinou como *Álvaro Newton* (parece ter sido a única vez que usou um pseudónimo), constitui um exemplo flagrante da completa fusão entre o colaborador jornalístico e o propagandista político:

Vergonha! Ele salvou a nossa dignidade.
Estes despem o povo e choram-lhe as desditas....
Derramou a instrução, deu-nos a liberdade,
Estes dão-nos agora... impostos e jesuítas!

Ele ameaçou a Espanha e prometeu-lhe a guerra;
A Inglaterra teme essa vontade estranha;
E hoje vamos ficando escravos da Inglaterra
E trememos de medo ao encarar a Espanha!

Somos um povo fraco, inerte, decadente,
Que esqueceu o passado, as épocas de glória;
E vivemos assim de um modo indiferente.
Vamos apodrecendo e enlameando a História!

Ainda há pouco tempo o povo ergueu-se todo,
Nervoso de entusiasmo - e, à voz das tradições,
Suspendeu-se um momento esta nação do lodo,
Encheu-a de vigor a festa de Camões.

Ressoam aqui com nitidez os combates da época. A Velha Aliada, no auge do poderio, ganhava embalagem para trucidar,

via o Ultimato de 1890, os sonhos cor-de-rosa de um Portugal trôpego e enfraquecido. Na óptica dos republicanos - que, afinal, se limitavam a extrapolar da análise da Geração de 70 e, em particular, da *História de Portugal* de Oliveira Martins - eram os governos monárquicos, pró-clericais, herdeiros da Inquisição, os grandes responsáveis pelo dobrar da cerviz, pela “apagada e vil tristeza” em que Portugal caíra e se afundava. O tricentenário da morte de Camões, em 1880, forneceu aos republicanos a oportunidade de se manifestarem profusamente, ligando nome e glória do poeta à necessidade premente do renascer da pátria. Menos de dois anos depois e a partir das principais cidades do país, onde tinham crescente implantação, o primeiro centenário da morte do Marquês permitia-lhes retomar a campanha patriótico-republicana, desta vez também, e muito a propósito, anti-clerical. O jovem Garcia Monteiro/ Alvaro Newton e as 44 quadras do seu *O Marquês de Pombal* (de que as 4 acima citadas terão sido amostra suficiente) parecem, assim, um perfeito paradigma deste contexto. Simplesmente, como é costume em tais casos, onde ganha o propagandista perde a literatura.

E chegamos ao ponto crucial desta introdução a *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro*. Pelo que atrás se viu e entreviu, apresenta muitos motivos de interesse - mais sociológico ou mais literário, mas, em todo o caso, ainda por explorar e sistematizar - a figura do poeta, jornalista, republicano, maçã, médico, tipógrafo. Em alguns aspectos, aliás, impõe-se uma comparação óbvia com outro açoriano ilustre, Antero de Quental (1842-91); como nos contam António José Saraiva e Oscar Lopes, após a polémica do *Bom Senso e Bom Gosto*, que protagonizara, em 1865, Antero

regressa por um tempo ao solar açoriano e estremece com este sentimento, esta “coisa nova: a consciência de proprietário”,pouco depois,

em seguida a um breve tirocínio numa tipografia lisboeta, vai a Paris, para conhecer Proudhon, Michelet e, como ambos, passar pela experiência dura de operário tipográfico (1866-68). Malograse, porém, o esforço heróico da adaptação do filho-família micaelense a um trabalho e a um ambiente para que não estava intimamente preparado.¹⁵

Interessará, assim, estudar as aproximações e diferenças de Garcia Monteiro em relação à Geração de 70, que o precedeu de perto, ou, por exemplo, a inserção e influência de Garcia Monteiro na comunidade luso-americana da Nova Inglaterra entre fins do século XIX e princípios do século XX - mas boa parte do interesse desses estudos e a simples sobrevivência de Garcia Monteiro como autor dependem, natural e decisivamente, do valor, enquanto literatura, da obra que nos deixou. Apesar de esta se encontrar quase toda dispersa e de difícil acesso (alguma até inédita), basta o que se acha nos seus dois livros mais pessoais, os já referidos *Versos* e *Rimas de Ironia Alegre*, para que, não ignorando, por exemplo, a obra de um Faustino Xavier de Novais (1820-69), se deva considerar Garcia Monteiro, muito provavelmente, o mais completo poeta satírico entre, de um lado, Tolentino e Bocage e, do outro, um Alexandre O'Neill. Como os primeiros são ainda, praticamente, do século XVIII e o último já é, definitivamente, do século XX, chegamos à conclusão surpreendente de que Garcia Monteiro será o grande poeta satírico da literatura portuguesa do século XIX. Uma espécie de Eça de Queirós em verso, como se depreende do que diz um dos poucos estudiosos que lhe fez justiça, Eduíno de Jesus:

Encontramos, nas breves histórias em verso de Garcia Monteiro, uma galeria de personagens (políticos, curas, comendadores, poetas, amanu-

enses, esposas românticas) e situações (namoros serôdios, serões intelectuais, o Passeio Público onde um casquilha, vindo de Paris, faz a sua “crítica de poda”, etc.) de um ridículo verdadeiramente digno da ironia de Eça. A sátira de Garcia Monteiro, apesar de escrita em verso - e na mais rigorosa observância do cânone parnasiano, - está mais próxima de Eça, pelo processo literário e pelo saboroso inquérito a uma burguesia decadente e inútil, do que, por exemplo, de Bocage ou de Tolentino, um e outro mais caricaturistas. Garcia Monteiro é mais realista e ao mesmo tempo mais subtil.¹⁶

Já lá vão quase quarenta anos sobre estas palavras e bem um século sobre os versos que as motivaram. Garcia Monteiro continua a ser um ilustre desconhecido e continua a não se poder encontrar numa livraria um livro seu ou, mais concretamente, o livro dele, as *Rimas de Ironia Alegre*. Neste sentido, soa amargo o simpático acrónimo-convite - RIA - com que o autor as apresentou. Pois se é verdade tratar-se de um livro cheio de ironia crítica, quase sempre conseguida e alegre, o que o torna especialmente raro e valioso no contexto da literatura portuguesa, não é menos verdade que parece ter-se tornado vítima de uma triste e dupla ironia, esta decerto não intencional: passado um século, ainda não foi além da primeira e única edição, composta e impressa pelas mãos do autor, difícil de encontrar mesmo em alfarrabistas especializados.

Para acabar de vez com este ciclo vicioso, propõe-se uma edição d' *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro*. Título que se preferiu ao de *Rimas de Ironia Alegre* porque, por um lado, *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro* inclui apenas duas das três dúzias de composições de

Rimas (excluída, naturalmente, a dúzia que me pareceu menos significativa), por outro lado, inclui também seis poemas de *Versos* e um soneto, “Depois da Ceia”, que não figura em *Versos* nem nas *Rimas*.

Os trinta e um poemas - conforme acabei de discriminar (e tendo acrescentado, no índice, um [v.] aos seis oriundos de *Versos*) - que constituem *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro* dão, em meu entender, uma ideia, naturalmente, antológica mas, ainda assim, bastante substancial do mundo poético do autor - que, como já tivemos oportunidade de referir, é essencialmente satírico. No livrinho de juventude, *Versos*, constituído por uma vintena de composições, Garcia Monteiro ainda incluiu meia dúzia de poemas líricos - mas quando, em 1896, preparava a edição das *Rimas*, explica, numa “NOTA” final que serve de posfácio, só dispor de um “número relativamente diminuto” de “versos líricos”

e por isso excluí-os para lhes dar um lugar mais apropriado noutra obra. Às peças de crítica reuni outras que obedeciam ao mesmo ponto de vista. Algumas tiveram de ser eliminadas e outras sofreram profundas alterações pelo motivo de que os gracejos expansivos e um tanto burlescos da mocidade se haviam gradualmente transformado na calma e sóbria - ainda que alegre - ironia da virilidade. É fácil de ver que estas modificações foram feitas com o fim de dar ao livro uma inteira uniformidade de carácter (*Rimas de Ironia Alegre*, p. 114).

A “uniformidade de carácter” das *Rimas* é facto e, bem assim, a notável “unidade estilística” dos 36 poemas que as constituem, embora, como Eduíno de Jesus realçou, tenham sido

escritos ao longo de vinte anos. Não se encontrando explicitamente datados, é quase como se o estivessem pela indicação do local - Horta, Lisboa, ou Boston - que Garcia Monteiro faz seguir a cada poema e o situa, respectivamente: para o caso da Horta, de 1876 a 84; para Lisboa, cerca de 1882; para Boston, entre 1884 e 96.

(A menção de Boston, aliás, implica também uma explicação, pois, como o autor justificadamente diz no tal posfácio, todos os poemas das *Rimas*, embora muitos deles tenham sido escritos ou reescritos na América, têm como tema, personagens, meio e atmosfera - Portugal ou, mais especificamente, os Açores. O mesmo se aplica a *Versos* e a quantos poemas avulsos do autor, até agora, pude encontrar; muito provavelmente, a América fica mesmo, excluída por completo da poesia de Garcia Monteiro. O que não será motivo de espanto se nos lembrarmos da asserção geralmente aceite segundo a qual o mundo que marca o escritor é aquele onde passou os primeiros vinte anos de vida. Regra que se confirma, para citar só um caso bem conhecido, também ele luso-americano, em José Rodrigues Miguéis que, tendo passado a segunda metade dos seus quase oitenta anos no coração de Nova Iorque, continuava a “viver” em Lisboa - como o sugere a maior parte da obra que entretanto escreveu e, nomeadamente, “Saudades para D. Genciana” serão disso exemplo acabado.)¹⁷

Fechando o parêntesis, até porque o subtema da inserção de Garcia Monteiro na literatura luso-americana será tratado noutra comunicação,¹⁸ diria, para concluir, que, naturalmente, adoptei o sistema de localização/datação acima referido (com Horta, Lisboa ou Boston a indicarem, no fim de cada poema, o período a que o mesmo pertence) n’*O Livro de Garcia Monteiro* - que, em princípio, mantém e, idealmente, concentra a unidade

de carácter das *Rimas*, na medida em que procura juntar os melhores poemas satíricos (ou, no caso de o poema figurar em *Versos e Rimas*, a melhor versão satírica) de ambos os livros. Aparecem, no entanto, dois sonetos oriundos de *Versos* que, pouco ou nada tendo de satíricos, muito ou tudo têm de lírico-sentimentais. Paradoxalmente, pareceram-me não destoar: funcionando como breve contraponto, à maneira de cena ou tirada sentimental no tradicional teatro de revista à portuguesa, mais realçam, no fim de contas, o carácter satírico do conjunto. Cabe-me ainda esclarecer que, compreendendo embora o Teixeira de Pascoais para quem *abysmo* passara praticamente a cova de berlinde depois que lhe tiraram o y, me decidi a actualizar a grafia. E pronto, restam-me convidar o leitor a mergulhar, sem mais demora, n' *O Livro de Garcia Monteiro* - há mais de um século à espera de ser descoberto no País que foi (ou talvez ainda seja) o das Descobertas.

Notes

¹ Manuel Garcia Monteiro, *A Trança*, Centro de Estudos e Cultura da Câmara Municipal da Horta, 1989, p. 1.

² Pedro da Silveira, *Antologia de Poesia Açoriana (do século XVIII a 1975)*, Lisboa, Livraria Sá da Costa Editora, 1977, pp. 27-28.

³ Pedro da Silveira, p. 28

⁴ Citado em: Henrique das Neves, *Individualidades*, Lisboa, Parceria A.M. Pereira, 1910, p. 57.

⁵ Cartas reimpressas em: Manuel Garcia Monteiro, *A Trança*, pp. 21-31.

⁶ *O Açoriano*, ano 1, nº 28, 16.3.1884.

⁷ Urbano Bettencourt, *Emigração e Literatura: Alguns Fios da Meada*, Horta, Centro de Estudos e Cultura da Câmara Municipal da Horta e Gabinete de Emigração e Apoio às Comunidades Açorianas, 1989, p. 10: "de 1881 a 1890 emigraram legalmente do Distrito da Horta 10.419 pessoas, das quais 8.876 para os Estados Unidos e 1506 para o Brasil."

⁸ Henrique das Neves, pp. 57-81.

⁹ Pedro da Silveira, p. 168.

¹⁰ Idem, op. cit., p. 28.

¹¹ Idem, op. cit., pp. 11-12.

¹² Pedro da Silveira, p. 168.

¹³ Manuel Joaquim Dias, “Um poeta açoriano - Dr. Manuel Garcia Monteiro”, na revista *Os Açores*, ano 2, n. 9 (2ª série), Set.º 1928.

¹⁴ *A Luta*, ano 1, números 29 e 30, de 23 e 27.5.1882. Como panfleto, foi publicado pela direcção do Colégio Luso-Germânico, cerca de 8.5.82, data do 1º centenário da morte do Marquês de Pombal; o autor dedicou-o à Academia da cidade de Lisboa.

¹⁵ António José Saraiva e Oscar Lopes, *História da Literatura Portuguesa*, Porto, Porto Editora, 9ª edição corrigida e actualizada, 1976, pp. 918-919 (1955).

¹⁶ Eduíno de Jesus, “Garcia Monteiro - Poeta da Ironia Alegre”, *Correio da Horta*, ano 26, nº 7268, 11.10.1956.

¹⁷ Situação que justifica o subtítulo escolhido para o livro que recolhe as comunicações do único congresso até hoje realizado sobre a sua obra: *José Rodrigues Miguéis: Lisbon in Manhattan*, organizado por Onésimo Teotónio de Almeida, Providence, R.I., Gávea-Brown, 1984.

¹⁸ No âmbito do Colóquio Europa e América: Mitos e Confrontos, organizado pelo Centro de Estudos Americanos da Universidade Aberta e previsto para Janeiro de 1997, nas instalações da Acarte, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, em Lisboa.

Eat Something!

Marcus Vinicius de Freitas

A Primavera traz de volta os passarinhos, como é óbvio. O que não parece óbvio, mas constitui um dos mais intrigantes efeitos da estação, é que a Primavera trouxe igualmente de volta as cacatuas da Thayer Street. Aqueles que têm pelo menos trinta anos de idade devem se lembrar do policial Baretta e sua cacatua branca, uma espécie albina com cabeça arrepiada (a ave, não o policial). Baretta e seu papagaio friorento ainda são do tempo em que Kojak falava “neném” na tradução AIC-São Paulo de *baby*, tempo em que MacGareth arrasava corações em Hawai 5-0. Pois em Providence, Rhode Island, berço de uma das mais importantes universidades americanas, esse tempo parece não ter passado. Não somente porque os enlatados seguem incólumes nos canais a cabo e por satélite, mas igualmente porque a Primavera e o Verão deixam eriçadas todas as cacatuas.

Se você está pensando que na Thayer Street o que existe é um criatório de pássaros ou mesmo um zoológico, enganou-se. Em pleno coração da Brown University, com sua pompa e seu prestígio Ivy League, as cacatuas da moda são os *punks* de butique, que migram para a calçada mais suja em frente à *convenience store*, e ali ficam, ruminando, cuspiendo e pisando chicletes; balançando as correntes convenientemente desenhadas por estetas *grunge* (aliás, conveniência é tudo, para estes consumidores

inveterados); fazendo olhares de Actor's Studio para os passantes; fumando e tomando coca diet, fazendo louvações a Goddard dentro da sorveteria; balançando as dezenas de brincos pendurados corpo afora (nas orelhas, como seria de se esperar; mas também na boca, na língua, nas sobrancelhas, no nariz, nos mamilos); desenhando delicadas olheiras roxas, para sugerir noites insones, e ao mesmo tempo andando de *skate* ou *roller*; alisando o gel do cabelo-cacatua, pintado ora de verde, ora de roxo, ora descolorido até o limite do branco; e cultivando os rasgos dos jeans, tão laboriosamente preparados. *Dejá vu* como um Kojak. Anacrônicos como o Baretta.

Talvez eu esteja enganado e aquilo seja mesmo um zoológico. Com a diferença de que no zoológico real, mesmo com toda a domesticação da comida farta e do ambiente controlado, ainda há vida. Neste zoológico pós-tudo da Thayer Street, a fauna parece *on-line*: sem gritos, sem urros, sem trepadas, sem cheiro. Uma contracultura virtual, sem palavras de ordem, sem inimigos, sem música e sem letra; conveniente, bem nutrida e sob as ordens de mamãe. Quando passo por ali, sempre me lembro das cenas de pinguins tomando sol no Animal Channel: uma natureza *zapping*, entre um programa ao vivo de crise conjugal e mais um jogo de *baseball*. Menos do que um aquário, aquela fauna lembra mais um cd-rom sobre tubarões.

Em todo clichê há pelo menos a coerência dos gestos conhecidos: na mistura de *grunge*, *techno* e *rap* da South Street, em Philadelphia, há ao menos que se reconhecer a alegria genuína das tribos urbanas que demarcam seus espaços; entre os hippies de Burlington, Vermont, ainda existe um mínimo de crença na natureza, corroborada pelo verde das montanhas e pela beleza do Lake Champlain, e onde os brincos são apenas brincos, e os cabelos crescem segundo a lua; de dentro dos carros-caixas-acústicas de South Boston sai não somente o pum-pum-pá do *funk*, mas algo de orgulho racial e resistência política. Tudo clichê,

é claro.

Mas, em Providence, nem o clichê se segura. Aqui temos o clichê do clichê. E não há aí qualquer desconstrucionismo pós-moderno. Seria fácil construir uma teoria do esvaziamento de sentidos, pretensamente reconhecível na geléia amorfa das cacatuas da Thayer Street. Seria mesmo edificante elevar os jeans cuidadosamente sujos e rasgados à condição de marcos teóricos. Afinal, as teorias sempre servem para qualquer coisa. Mas seria falso e, sobretudo, pretensioso. Se na calçada do cinema Avon podem ser vistos os mesmos meninos e meninas, ora tocando *Blowin' in the Wind*, ora ouvindo *techno*, ora andando de *roller*, ora assistindo Goddard e Wim Wenders ao sabor de pipoca e coca diet, não é por desconstrucionismo, mas por consumismo ideológico. Esses garotos foram transformados apenas em macaquinhos de consumo.

Vejo em *The New York Times Magazine* um artigo de Michiko Kakutani assombrado com o vazio ideológico da *techno music*, expresso em idéias como o culto da “irresponsabilidade social” e o uso da tecnologia com intuito único de diversão, tal como propostas pelos fanzines digitais. O que Kakutani parece não perceber é que mesmo a irresponsabilidade social constitui um fim, quando proposta como modo de vida. Na Thayer Street, ao contrário, toda ideologia ou contra-ideologia virou apenas fator de consumo. Os postes estão coalhados de panfletos de um auto-intitulado Partido Comunista Americano, de propaganda da cultura gay, de manifestos em defesa de baleias e de florestas tropicais, além de dezenas de outras idéias de ocasião, mas nenhuma delas parece corresponder a qualquer realidade. Mesmo a correção política standardizada de Berkeley (Califórnia) corresponde a um mínimo de fundo. Mas na rua do *footing*, dentro da Brown University, não há qualquer fundo, por mais clichê que pudesse ser. Tudo é apenas deslocado e anacrônico. O sentimento de *emptiness* (o vazio, expresso nas caras e bocas que misturam

Beatrice Dalle e James Dean, e eventualmente Michel Foucault) constitui apenas a espera do próximo *big-mac*.

Há vários meses, a tv mostra um comercial de *fastfood* que capta com precisão a transformação das idéias em consumo. O filme começa, todo em preto e branco, com jovens em pose de anúncio de Calvin Klein, olhar perdido no horizonte (a cara da Marisa Monte cantando “para uma sopa, graus”), em meio a uma paisagem entre a ruína e o deserto, repetindo mentalmente a palavra *emptiness*. Imediatamente surge, em cor, um ator bem humorado, segurando um hambúrguer, o qual propõe (o ator, não o hambúrguer), como resposta ao vazio existencial das personagens, o seguinte: *eat something!* (coma alguma coisa!). A psicanálise bageense do anúncio faz saltar aos olhos o vazio desse vazio. O anúncio termina com os personagens seduzidos pelo sanduíche, e deixando pra lá o infinito.

O que se vê, no centro de uma das mais respeitadas universidades americanas, é o fato de que a garotada (não toda, mas uma parcela exemplar) virou mesmo refém do consumo, pois todo o seu esforço, seja contracultural ou sistemático, seja a favor ou contra, aparece também domesticado, pasteurizado. Não que sejam esses os alunos da Ivy League. Aliás, são adolescentes, ainda no *high school*, esses que vem sentar-se à beira do caminho no centro da universidade. Mesmo não sendo alunos do campus famoso (talvez só uma questão de tempo), a sua escolha de território parece dizer muito sobre a atitude de boa parte dos garotos americanos, e aí se incluem os universitários.

A menina parece estar apenas à espera da próxima viagem à Disney. E cabe notar que estou falando de uma universidade famosa pela riqueza cultural de seus currículos abertos; pelo incentivo que dá ao autodesenvolvimento de seus alunos, como forma de fazer crescer em cada um deles o sentido de responsabilidade individual e social; pela seriedade com que se insere no sistema educacional. Exatamente por aparecerem

nesse ambiente acadêmico, rico de possibilidades, é que as cacatuas são tão intrigantes.

Muitos apontam a *over education* (o excesso de estágios educacionais necessários à obtenção de uma profissão) como causa da apatia. Talvez seja mesmo uma chatice saber que é preciso enfrentar um *high school* sem sentido e mais quatro anos de *college*, que não trarão qualquer benefício prático, e depois mais cinco ou seis de pós-graduação, para só aí conseguir uma profissão especializada. Talvez o antídoto seja o ato de ficar sentado, à espera de que o tempo passe.

No *Seinfeld*, a mais famosa comédia da tevê americana, a personagem George Costanza, um solteirão desempregado que mora com os pais, exemplifica a *over education*: pressionado pelo pai a pegar um emprego qualquer, George responde: “eu fiz universidade, eu não posso ter qualquer emprego!” O pobre diabo é um que ainda não sabe que apenas o *college* (o curso de graduação) não vai levá-lo muito longe. Que dirão os meninos do *high school*, alunos do terrível ensino público americano. Talvez, mais intuitivas do que o George, as cacatuas da Thayer Street sejam sábias em seus penachos. Mas isso é apenas mais uma teoria, o que não explicaria o supra-sumo: porque é que alguns estudantes orientais, sejam japoneses, chineses ou coreanos, são os que mais frequentemente copiam esse modo de ser daqueles jovens americanos? Uma cacatua japonesa de cabelo verde constitui mesmo uma espécie surpreendente. Bem, mas é Verão...

Português Amargo

Barbosa Tavares

Sabereis que um emigrante não deverá bendizer o destino. Em seu genético canteiro deserdado, orfão da pátria, viúvo da sorte, vai um homem mundo fora na aventura de côdea menos dorida. A outra, a não menor e invisível oculta dor da saudade, cravou-se-lhe na alma e será sua indefectível companheira, até ao dia em que haverá(?) de regressar ao canteiro da aldeia ou vilória onde vagueiam as capitais memórias do imorredouro tempo de infância.

Ao certo, ninguém sabe porque pactua um homem tão irmãmente com a terra de onde brotou para o mundo. Dizem alguns, ser da língua, outros do modo de ser de um povo, outros ainda, do sol, as romarias, dos cafés, dos adros das igrejas, do rosto dos velhos, das tabernas, do cheiro a tomilho, da rama de pinheiro, do alecrim, da maresia, finalmente, e porventura, a mais certa: porque os olhos se afeiçoaram ao mundo primeiro na alma esculpido.

Sei, no cerne do espirito, que Portugal me faz uma falta danada, costume até dizer entre gracejo e dor – mais dor que gracejo – que tenho na alma uma brecha do tamanho de Portugal. Também ouvi dizer a senhor muitíssimo letrado, peregrinante pelo mundo, que isto de emigrar é como perder um membro: cicatriza a chaga, mas a ausência, estará para sempre presente.

Um expatriado nunca imaginaria que, trocar promessas de farto pé de meia, pelo espinho da saudade, seria dilacerante

negócio.

Alma inominada – não se diz ter sido a terra e os personagens de infância que filiaram o ser? De si apartado, vai um emigrante em busca de aventura tornada pão, e a vida, consuma-se num silente gemer de saudade, nesta apátrida exclusão tecida.

Um país, são fragâncias de mar, rosmaninho, alecrim, foguetes, fontes, vermelhos-telha, vielas, sonância de uma língua que dedidilha as cordas da alma, solenes cantigas de um povo, rostos – sobretudo rostos – que povoaram a infância e nela permanecem especados e são os inamovíveis marcos do tempo em que, sem o sabermos, sabe-sabêmo-lo agora, eramos felizes na inocência.

A maior condenação de um emigrante é viver de si próprio ausente, porque, tatuada de recordações, a alma anseia retornar aos locais onde repousa o arquivo das memórias-chave num tempo em que os olhos de tudo se enamoravam.

Um homem, deseparado do seu passado é um ser irremediavelmente solitário, navegante sem história, nem referências viventes, a braços com um mundo estranho diluindo fonemas mal arremedados, porque a história de uma vida construiu-se na própria história de um país, acompanhada das ruelas, dos peculiares olfactos, da ressonância da língua, que é tão melódica como a alegria refulgida na alma, com que aprendi os primeiros ditongos e, embevecido, desensenhava com aparo e tinta as primeiras letras.

Ora, sabemos de fonte pura, que os angustiados não se quotitizam em clubes, para minguar seus padecimentos pátrios, porque a angústia quer-se só, e os magoados detestam convívio.

É de um ser dorido, sem a glória do triunfo no seu país, emudecido no silêncio apátrida, semeado pelas arestas do mundo emigrado que vos falo.

Li algures, não sei onde, sei que por verídica se me alojou

na alma esta sentença: “quem da pátria se aparta de si se aparta”.

Um homem não faz o mundo, mas conserva intacta e fiel no bojo da alma, a terra onde nele foi talhado para a vida.

Firmadas as cruciais memórias do outro lado do mar, de si ausente, finam-se os dias e o destino incumprido de português lá vai coabitando com fonemas arremedados. A vida cumpre-se em sobrevivência. É assim: sabemos que estamos vivos mas não vivemos.

Poucos actos se assemelham em tristeza à solidão do emigrante. Um homem leva um país no cerne da alma, mil memórias à terra grudada no canteirinho genesíaco. Para contrapor à penúria espiritual da sua exclusão pátria: mesa recheada e duas patacas para a incerteza da inglória velhice.

Tempos houve, em que os dias emigrados não detinham resquícios de memória, de forma que me afligia com o consumir das horas sem outras reminescências, para além de testemunhar apavorado a roda do tempo.

Arquivei da vida a fisiologia dos dias. Se algumas vezes me lamurio deste pão de exílio, digerido com avantajadas fatias de saudade, logo me retruquem que não blasfeme, tenho o paozinho sobre a mesa, que mais pretendo eu?

Fiquei a saber um dia, que ao emigrante não lhe é consentido edificar sonhos, prolongados além dos alicerces do pão.

Que a fartura de côdea com miolo nunca emigraram meu caro. Um país nunca exporta a sua burguesia. Por mais engulhos que te cause vai digerindo de mansinho. Com os ouvidos limpidos e desempoeirados, escuta: emigrar é, fatalmente uma aventura em trapos tecida.

Dizia-me um dos raros sábios, por este portugualinho emigrandado, que por aqui outra espiritualidade se não conhece que não seja a materialização do espírito que consiste em acumular, acumular para justificar esta ausência de nós, ou seja

suprir o espirito no enlevo da matéria. Vive-se por aqui hipotecado ao futuro, porque o presente circunscreve-se em torno do sonho do regresso.

Regozijaria ao ver redimida esta materialização absoluta. Alguns curas que por aqui demandaram em busca da alma do cifrão, possessos da valia centuplicante do dólar, iniciaram o processo de santificação da vil pataca. De uma madre Teresa, de um filantropo ou mecenas por aqui arribado, para minorar os padecimentos desta gente a esbracejar, perdida numa lingua crivada de arestas e hábitos libertinos que anatematizam os sacrossantos valores da aldeola ou vilória, onde se talhou a mente, não há sequer indícios. Muita da poesia por aqui existente bebe a sua despudorada lirica dos tentáculos do cifrão. Ou muito me engano, ou grande parte dos destronados da pátria perdeu a nobre virtude da compaixão e não se vislumbram os mínimos vestígios de solidariedade.

Sobreviva sem padecer, aconselhava-me um dos desventurados pátrios, e será um herói. Esqueça-se de si, pense simplesmente no futuro dos seus filhos, que o futuro deles seja canadiano ou francês pouco importa, importa que sejam homens que não tenham de ficar eternamente divididos como eu e o meu amigo.

Rendi-me, mas logo a alma me ficou anuviada, quando pensei que o meu elo de portugalidade era ali mesmo truncado. É assim uma morte dupla, esta de sabermos que as nossas raízes não se perpetuam na fidelidade da terra que as talhou.

Quando procurava no tempo uma explicação para trinta anos de vida esvaída no calvário emigratório, os dias eram de aflição, onde colocara eu esta grossa fatia da vida?

Sabia que existira, mas não conservava memória do tempo, para além da família, portugueses e canadianos, que vão tentando reconciliar, nem sempre pacificamente, os valores lusitanos com as algumas incongruências canadianas.

Duplamente negado no silêncio amargo dum viver arremedado, sou este ser desventrado do espírito das coisas e pessoas que moldaram o meu olhar para o mundo.

Estrangeirado lá, no meu querido portugalório, estangeiro aqui, assim vou interpretando a (sobre)vivência destes dias sem história, nesta heróica exclusão em que marginalmente vivo.

Por um naco de pão menos torturado (será?) a amargura de ser infiel ao próprio viver, ao designio da minha portugalidade.

Emigrar. Tempo parado no exacto dia em que demandei o promissor reino da pataca. Fonemas mal arremedados, gente que não compreende o alecrim, nem o cheiro a jarro, nem os foguetes, nem as colchas, debroadas a esmero, pendentes das janelas que vibram de santificação em dia de festa.

Quando a ressurreição consistia no regresso, ainda havia uns fios de crença, agora que o pão me condenou perpetuamente a alimentar-me de estranhas espigas, por dívida para com os meus filhos, reconheço que nunca tive o beneplácito dos deuses.

Sou este ser deambulante pelo mundo, recheado de sonhos de pão farto e regresso, sem outra esperança que não sejam os próprios braços, mais a solidão emigratória de nunca pertencer. Não me venham pois falar de sorte que vos esconjuro. Ai, António, que é feito da tua fé?

Oh, ruelas tortuosas e empedradas na minha história. Oh, rostos que povoaram o mundo da infância, como vos sinto a sufocante lonjura. Emigrar. Consciência dorida de não ser parte. Exclusão dolorosa do próprio viver. Uma lingua, uma cultura, mil jeitos de ser, permanecerão tatuados na alma emigrada. Para sempre.

Por uma côdea, um exílio dourado que nenhum sonho, por mais aurifera, redimirá.

Na alma um passado cerceado. O presente é um acto de sobrevivência. Com mais farturinha, é certo. Ora uma côdea a nortear toda uma vida... Oh, tamanha desventura subjugada a um

destino no pão alheio traçado.

Sou homem de vida (enleada) nas teias da saudade. Nunca a malfadada côdea deste exilado viver, deveria ter o inefável custo desta vivência.

Emigrante, vivente, de mim estranho, aguardando reencontro com o pé de meia a prometer velhice farta. Portugalidade incumprida. Ninguém mais carente de sonho, da ilusão, de esperança para sobreviver que eu senhor de duas pátrias, sem mundo.

Transpor fronteiras, galgar oceanos, pelo sonho que redunda em exclusão.

Navego no bolo de alheia terra, tendo por bússola o sempre adiado regresso. Renunciei à autenticidade de um viver português que me fora destinado. Um destino pátrio não se finta, incólume, porque é condição humana ser-se fiel e à língua e à terra que moldaram o ser para o mundo. No dia em que emigrei, deixei de celebrar a vida, aprisionei-me nas malhas, pelos meus filhos tecidas, na prometida terra da abundância.

Agora, eles são canadianos puros. Enquanto eu viver, manterlhes-ei, a memória gastronómica da pátria, com rojões, sopa de feijão, morcela e torresmos. Eu, com fidelidade absoluta, olho-me, sinto-me e penso-me irremediável e dolorosamente português.

Português amargo, para o resto de meus dias.

POESIA/POETRY

Two Poems

Millicent C. Borges

The Last Borges

Like God and his Eve,
you never passed on
your secrets; I struggled to learn.

Never sure which accent to
migrate towards; which window pane
to breathe on for the best cursive fog.
I shunned the loud Portuguese fights.

The visiting relatives, named for saints,
Over and over, in the driveway
at night, drunken Uncle John or Paul,
or Robert crashed his truck
into the side of our house:

While you went to night school
two nights a week – for twenty years
and ate linguisa sandwiches,
I watched and listened.

I would catch you: sitting at
Rudy, the barber's, chair
I would sneak up behind and hear foreign words...

At school, I pronounced our name
as you taught me to, as an Englishman would:
flat and plain, riming it with
a word for "pretty."

After a while it seemed
that someone else
had heard a grandmother's
lullabies at night:
a verse that sounded like
a baby's cries for milk,
wanting the nipple: Ma Ma yo Quedo.

As you grow older, papa,
I long for a language that joins us,
beyond our last name and wavy hair.

But, the only Portuguese words
You ever gave me do not stand for love.

Portuguese Baroque

For privacy
the heat,
shuts the door
and closes the window blinds.

Back wall shadows
from the wicker fan overhead
oscillate like church candles,
everything innocent constricts
in the heat:
sand in the Sahara,
tea in the desert,
even the tepid refrigerator
ice burns a red rash on my chest.

The men change;
the arguments endure:
The dishes I can control,
Anais Nin stories, winter
ski jackets.
The heat
drenches, but does not cool
down an anxious body.

How did we know what was not absolute
was doomed to remain,
sifted through a sordid cheese cloth.

Death rattles a denial in our chests.

Despite ice and an occasional wind,
the gray column of heat inhabits
and meanders through the apartment
as if chewing tough meat,
or walking through pool water,
even sex is a chore.

The vulgar act of smoking
is a parable for endurance.
The pull on the cigarette
constricts my lungs and my heart.
Still, I do it.

Three Poems

Susan Castillo

Air

When I left, I told you
I'll be thinking of you
every single minute

you, pragmatic skeptic
said every single one?
not really
maybe you were right

after all
when I breathe
I don't always think consciously
about the process

in out
in out
huff puff
kind of silly, really
just physiology
slimy muscles back and forth

and yet it's always there

Somehow I've never held
with gasps of melodrama

but still
you are my air

El Amante Negro

Spanish cynics sometimes say
 better the prosaic things you know
 than wonders undiscovered

an appropriate philosophy
 for paunchy bank clerks
 hiding behind walls
 of paper truth

but not for me.

I face the unknown
 head held high
 sword at the ready

lean forward
 swirl my cape
 now tinged a darker red
 across the rippling darkness of your flanks

vente, toro, si te atreves
 come closer if you dare
 Black Bull of Death
 and let me feel your fetid breath
 gust warm against my throat

I turn my back in scorn
 strut away
 feel dark wind from your horns
 sweep past my spine

the sun beats down
upon my face

through layers of refracting glass
I hear the *pasadobles*, the *oles*
like a diver hears the tide
beat on a distant shore.
Haughty, I shrug.
The crowd knows nothing.

desire fulfilled
expires there in the sand
the art is when you
make it last in elegance

the secret's not within the sword
the final spasmic coupling
as steel rends heart

but rather in the proud disdain
when in a fleeting golden instant
one casts eternity aside
it's the gesture and the pride
that really last
as they soak into the sand.

Southern Ladies

To Zelda

A Southern Lady never sweats or perspires
even when the heat rises in shimmering waves from the
earth
grabs you by the throat
perhaps she glows just a little behind fans and shutters
always in half-shadow

A Southern Lady never telephones a Gentleman
she sits and waits waits waits
you know what they say about watched pots
still, it would never do
to be thought fast

A Southern Lady never slumps or bends
always ramrod straight
product of afternoons spent with books
not reading them, silly
walking about for hours
with stacks on her head

A Southern Lady never raises her voice
if she wants to call someone
she rises and goes into the next room
never yells heaven forfend

A Southern Lady never contradicts a gentleman
nods and smiles or looks away from everything

however inane
however cruel
boys will by boys

A Southern Lady never shows grief or anger
no untidy tears or scenes
no unseemly displays
what would the servants think

As you may have gathered
being a Southern Lady
is a real drag

Perhaps that's why
South of the Mason-Dixon line
loony bins are full of
Southern Ladies in straitjackets
howling drooling gibbering
always in ladylike fashion,
needless to say.

Three Poems

Art Coelho

Witching Memories

There's something kicking the face of charm
 as my childhood walks over the headgate
 where a lost voice won't let me back in.
 No new light comes to these irrigated furrows.
 And my father's sweat fading fast
 like sundown's wake on his shovel blade.

Where did he once stand on this Wheatville farm –
 did his footfalls crown these same barley checks?
 Sure, we remember beyond the waves of chaff,
 where the canal water flowing held its favor high
 and the sweet daily dust dare not laugh the farewell.

There's something spent like a kiss from topsoil;
 like two Okies picking cotton down a double-row.
 I gather all of longing's gifts from harvested fields—
 all those memories I can witch for now
 like Pa once witched for his water wells.

The land used to talk to me in strange riddles,
 seeding full moon mysteries from multiple veils;
 rain promising rings to wed within the tule loam.
*Say, I recall your youth down this earth of levee,
 it's as common as ditchbank killdees singing to me.*

Oh them old stripdown grain trucks are all scrap iron.
Ain't nothin' but dead grasshoppers in their rusty ton bins.
Hey fate, this is no way to treat a farmer's son coming home;
where's the silver blades of our windmill stirring valley air
again?

Without Magic In Either Hand

(For those who DON'T PAY
And for those who cash in
respect with an uppercut)

Ain't I like some kind of wild
poet-boxer with a Sunday punch...
I spar daily with truth for my spiritual lunch.
My back is often against the poem's ropes,
my open jaw slinging a wet line of raw saliva
across the ring where metaphors are hammered uppercuts.
What do you think that contender blood
spattered all over the taut canvas at my laced-up shoes
is worth, bubbling red, gushing from my brow—
a mean gash that'd make Socrates hold both his balls;
and over my scarred only good eye that's trying desperately
to hardscrabble more of my energy's sap through the jeers
of the crowd who want more than just a good show—
they want me knocked unconscious and flat on my back.

I suppose you think truth is payment enough,
that the backwash of glory finds its own reward,
that wearing this hair-shirt of courage
is gonna bring me endless diamond-nostriled babes,
but even a fool knows that all the pyramid wisdom,
all the downhome-ditchbank-sunflower lyrics in the world
can't buy one measley solitary slice of stale bread,
or a shot glass of the cheapest Tokay wine.

And sometimes I bob-and-weave from the painfully visible,
 masquerading a gut blow so it don't show on my face,
 subtracting all the hard human grimaces of my backers,
 of how easily my soul's gym sweat is bought
 for a song on the promoter's act of flesh and bone.
 Even elephants get peanuts for just standing in the zoo.
 You can take your honorarium to the literary baboons
 who created it to soft soap our nightly singing all alone.
 That's the way I have to play it when a stanza demands from
 me
 another pulverizing right-hook to the kidneys of those on the
 throne.

You don't see me giving any rabbit punches to sorrow.
 I'm saving my epic for the 15th round,
 the round where you may see me standing proud
 arm-in-arm with the Madison Square Garden media boys
 grinning
 at my dream of a fat check while my opponent backs me up in
 his corner,
 hoping against hope that a big payday would spin me around
 and
 around in the spotlight of fame beyond these backstreet clowns.

I'm good in the clutches,
 'cause Mercy is never
 a good reason
 to give Survival a break
 in this dog-eat-dog
 kill-poetry-with-a-slick-world;
 no, I ain't givin' up even though
 I got one front tooth missing,

an ankle I can't put my weight on,
and a knee that's mushy as a preacher's promise.

And my spiral notebook full to the brim
with heavyweight-of-the-world poems
that only Marciano could understand
without flinching, taking it like a man,
the long count, the prophet-puncher dues,
the cauliflower ears now
taking a terrible pounding
without magic in either hand,
the tits-up punchy blues again—
about the only thing I now command.

My Corvo, Jewel Of The Moment

It's worth the rough waves
and the braving of the channel—
our row of seats tipping over,
leaving us like beetles on our backs.

From the sea we finally arrive,
old black rock houses
giving Corvo to the sun.
An ancient one says hello
like a familiar welcome home;
centuries of isolation in her smile.

The tractor pulls us
to the foggy crator crest;
we suffer the cold and realize
nostalgia will bud only with
time's distance away from
this damp spot on high.

Pride alone announces
your blood to grip
some morsel of your past.
I've shook hands with
a tiny island, a vision
as much as geography:
a land of lava solitude
where armed invaders

tried to sack houses
down a maze of narrow streets
the people built for this purpose.

My Corvo, what poet
has taken you like your
windmills in full sail;
has given the wonder
of lives down tiny trails
where the cows come home,
and the waves of the ocean
playing with a whale in its lap.

I weave my notes of music
to the faces on the dock waving,
they're glad for us strangers—
for only the chosen few reach
the lonely crevices of their village,
waving and remembering and wishing
to pocket the jewel of a moment,
crowned white seagulls above dipping
and blessing a fragment of a dream.

A Night On The Town

D. Kastinovich

For a short time after his death, Guilherme Gomes continued to practice his bad habits. He was unusually morose, as well, for the realization that he had not reached paradise came as a huge disappointment. Instead of heaven, he remained in the village of Santa Luzia, on the island of Pico, where he had lived the entire fifty-eight years of his life. Not only did his surroundings not change now that his life was over, but he also discovered that a hangover was just as unwelcome a thing, whether one was alive or dead.

When he finally stumbled into the house, drunk as usual, but also feeling somewhat the worse for being dead, tripping over everything, his wife, Rosa, scolded him as if nothing had changed.

“You lousy good-for-nothing,” she shouted, as he sneaked inside. “Why don’t you come home sober for once?”

He waved her away with his hand. “Please, not now. I’ve had a rough day.”

The next day was the same. He was gone in the morning and only crawled home in the afternoon after the bars had closed.

“Brute! Drunk again? Why did I marry such a man?”

“Why are you shouting?” he said, trying to dodge her words which came at him with such unexpected force. Though

he was dead, he found her words, her voice, all had a very unpleasant effect upon him. It was yet one more disappointment.

“Just look at you,” Rosa said, shaking her head.

“I’m not drunk.”

“Not drunk. What do you think? Am I blind? I have eyes. Where are you going?”

“To work. I go to make money.”

“Hah! The only work you do is lifting a bottle to your mouth. You are completely useless.”

“Quiet. Stop. Does the whole world have to hear?”

“Why not? Let them know how I have suffered. The whole world should know what you are!”

“What I am? And you? You could drive a saint to drink.”

“And you talk too much for a dead man!”

Guilherme roamed the house, trying to get away from his scolding wife, who wasn’t about to let up on him simply because he was dead.

“Your poor mother suffered, and now I, too, must suffer. She warned me before I married you. There is no end to the suffering your family has brought into the world.”

And off he went, running, in death, from the sharp-tongued woman, just as he had often run when alive.

Much later Rosa decided that her husband must have bumped into some old friend who informed Guilherme that since he was dead he should return to the cemetery, that that was his proper place and that there he could avoid scenes with his wife. Rosa doubted he could have come to such a conclusion on his own, because if her husband was anything, he was a creature of habit. Regardless, he later returned to the house in an uproar, completely indignant.

“I’m leaving!” he told Rosa. “I refuse to be hounded and tormented.”

“Fine, you simpleton. Go on and leave. No one else could

put up with you. You will see.”

So Guilherme at last ended up doing the sensible thing and going to his grave.

Meanwhile, Rosa struggled as she always had to take care of the children, to scratch enough food out of the patch of soil behind the house, to sew, to tend the animals, cook and go to church.

It was difficult and the only blessing was that it had always been difficult, and she had never had a glimpse, not even for a moment, of anything else.

It was lonely, too, however, and after some months, though she wouldn't admit it, not even to herself, she decided that it was proper and necessary for her to pay a visit to the cemetery.

Rosa climbed up the hill for the first time since the funeral and sat down on a stone beside the dry and cracked mound of earth which was Guilherme's grave.

“Don't think just because I've come to visit you that I've come to sweet-talk you. If you had to go and die, at least you could have taken care of your family first. Little Maria Alice is sick again. Your son Vasco is as stupid as his grandfather, and doesn't know nothing.”

During Rosa's outburst, Guilherme remained glum and silent, listening to the stream of words with the stoic patience only the dead could truly understand.

“Yes, we're in fine shape. Our chickens are laying fewer eggs, and the cows--I won't even tell you about the cows. It's a shame! It is only because you are a Gomes that my life is not fit for a dog. If I had any concern for the world I would have drowned your children and wiped out the family name, and this curse, once and for all instead of prolonging this agony. Maybe then I wouldn't be living a life of such misfortune.”

She returned to the cemetery repeatedly to pour out her complaints, her problems, to pour out her sorrows and anger to

a husband who found, much to his dismay, that he could no longer run away. At the same time, however, Rosa always made sure to tend to the gravesite. She swept away dirt and leaves; she wiped the stone cross tenderly; she even brought flowers to place on the stone. And Guilherme smiled as best he could, for it had been many long years since Rosa had shown him such tenderness.

One day she came to his grave and while she was tidying up, wiping away the dirt and pulling out some weeds, she saw a bone. She bent down to examine it and discovered there was a whole pile of bones that had broken out of the ground.

“So, you couldn’t stay put, huh? I should have known. Don’t tell me, you’re on your way to some bar. Is that it? Well, we will just see about that.”

She didn’t know if that, indeed, was where he was heading, or if he had simply been pushed out because of overcrowding. Land was precious on the island. Generally there were far more rocks than soil. Because of this, people were frequently buried atop their ancestors.

Rosa left to find a large basket. She went back to the cemetery and carefully placed each bone in the basket. She returned home with her husband and then with the utmost exactitude set all the bones in an order which more or less resembled her husband upon the simple bed she made up for him on the floor. Most of the bones, if not precisely in the correct arrangement, at least were fairly close.

“There, now you can see for yourself what goes on around here, and I don’t have to break my back climbing the hill every time I come to visit you.”

She tried to ignore the shame and disgust she felt seeing him in such a debilitated condition. He looked even more frail and pathetic than when he was alive.

“If I didn’t know you so well, I’d think maybe I got the wrong husband by mistake. You look terrible!”

She brought him an old broken mirror.

“Take a look at yourself!”

It was true. Nobody could deny that Guilherme looked terrible.

The poor man, stretched out helplessly, suffered the daily deluge of insults, drowning in the ceaseless flood of her fury. He wished he could live again, if only to leave the island, swim if he had to, and find some remote corner of the world where he would never again have to endure the sound of his wife’s harsh voice.

He cursed the shifting in the earth that had caused his bones to break free.

“Why couldn’t I have been pushed down, deeper into the ground instead of into her arms?” he silently asked.

Rosa paraded her daughter past her husband.

“Look. Look at this poor child, sick with everything imaginable. Tell me who will have her?”

Guilherme tried to turn over, but remained stuck facing the interminable barrage.

“Here’s your son. Another one of fine Gomes stock. He’ll grow up to be a drunk just like his father and his grandfather. Thank God you’re dead and can’t knock me up again.”

It was at this time that Guilherme was aware of a different thirst than any he had ever known. A profound and tireless thirst gnawed at his existence like the most unbearable longing. A thirst which not even death could kill.

If only I could drink, he reflected, at least a sip or so of wine, perhaps I could endure this.

But of course he was in no condition to drink now, trapped as he was in the world of the living and no longer in the ground, the very ground which appeared to have leached out his last bit of strength. He wasn’t even able to drink the moisture of the earth through his parched bones, as he might have if he were still in his grave.

He dreamed of his friends dropping by the bars, drinking and joking among themselves, so far removed from their homes and their problems, while he was imprisoned with this woman who refused to leave him in peace.

What is the point of dying, he wanted to know, if one only continues to suffer?

During a rare moment of stillness in the house, he noticed a strange sound which reminded him of coins falling, of water rushing down a stream, and birds chirping. Then he heard voices speaking. It was his daughter and several of her friends, come to poke fun at him: this poor man, naked and helpless for all the world to see. Rosa could at least have had the respect to cover him up.

The girls finished with their fun and scampered away, once again leaving him alone and sulking.

But in a short time half the town decided to pay a visit to Guilherme's home. Everybody wanted to take a peek at the remains of "that no-good husband of Rosa's." They crowded into the room, laughing and poking at his bones. One or two even spilled some wine on him, for which he cursed their carelessness. But his parched bones relished it nonetheless.

Rosa even allowed that buffoon, Francisco, who ran the market, to bring his dog into the house. The dog began licking one of Guilherme's leg bones and nearly ran off with it before somebody finally had the decency to chase the dog away.

All greatly amused themselves at his expense and were of course oblivious of the terrible insults Guilherme ruthlessly unleashed upon each and every one of them.

Finally they left. Rosa seemed to be in a good humor. She walked from room to room, whistling and singing, picking up after her neighbors.

Guilherme wished he had something particularly vile to say to her, but he was silent in his rage.

He was awakened later that night by a warm breath smelling of *aguardente*. He was being carried.

“Shh!” he heard, as several people were clumsily removing him from the house. There were three or four, he thought, all evidently drunk.

Outside they whispered to one another, and Guilherme recognized his friends.

“Let’s take him to Pedro’s first.” It was his friend, Manuel.

“That was always his favorite hangout.” He recognized José’s voice.

“Come on, let’s hurry while the night’s still young.” Roberto, of course! The whole gang was there, ready to drink the night away. And they had gone out of their way to include their old friend, Guilherme, for one more night on the town.

He felt like weeping, but just then Roberto tripped and dropped the handful of bones he was carrying. He kneeled, scrambling to pick them up, and no one except for Guilherme noticed that one or two were left behind in the dirt.

They reached Pedro’s cafe and sat around one of the tables. They ordered drinks and laughed.

“What will Rosa do when she wakes up?” Manuel said.

“She’ll know. If there’s a drink to be found, Guilherme will stop at nothing!” José said laughing and pounding the table. “She could drive a man away even after he’s dead!”

“What are you devils up to now?” Pedro asked.

“Here,” Roberto said. “Look who we brought along.”

Pedro stared down at the pile of bones which the others had piled up on one of the chairs.

“It’s Guilherme.”

“Now I’ve seen everything,” Pedro said. “You’re crazy.”

They ordered more drinks, and every once in a while Manuel took Guilherme’s drink and poured a little into the dead man’s grinning skull.

“Still drinks like a fish, doesn’t he?” Manuel said.

Guilherme floated in a sea of happiness as he silently blessed his dear friends each time they poured a drink onto his bones. But it really wasn’t the drink so much that set his old heart aglow, as the sweet companionship of friends who not only understood but appreciated him as well, which was what he had so longed for.

After several drinks they stumbled out into the night and made for Victor’s place. A few of Pedro’s customers went along with them, and when they got to Victor’s Guilherme was distressed to find that some more of his bones had been lost along the way.

His friends recounted the tragi-comical stories of Guilherme’s life: how he outdrank everybody, drinking faster and holding more than anyone else; how he sponged food off friends and neighbors whenever Rosa kicked him out of the house, sometimes for weeks at a time--a tale that brought tears to all the listeners’ eyes; they enumerated the many times Rosa had made public Guilherme’s frequent sins and the shame he caused her to suffer; how she always said she was through with him and wouldn’t take him back, and how time after time, once her anger wore off, there Guilherme was back home again.--”Even after he’s dead, she still takes him back!” Roberto said to a thunderous applause--they also told of how if there were somebody worse off even than he, he would fetch that person a bottle, and hand over his last scrap of food; how he never had a cruel thing to say about anyone. Even when drunk he was always everyone’s friend and no one’s enemy, unlike Luis Carvalho, who every time he drank picked a fight with somebody—all this brought cheers and calls of what a saint Guilherme had been.

They didn’t stay too long at Victor’s before one of the men decided they should go elsewhere; after all, this was a night for celebration, a night to surpass all others, a night which would

be talked about for years and years. A night to re-establish Guilherme Gomes as the master of serious drinkers once and for all!

Through it all, Guilherme felt transported through the old familiar roads, past the houses of his friends and relatives, past all the places and people he had known his whole life. He heard the songs of his buddies, saw his wedding, the births of his children, the voice of Father Fagundes offering communion, and during the night he felt an integral part of everything around him, as if all the moments of his life were occurring simultaneously.

They left followed by even more who'd joined the throng. They staggered from place to place, carrying Guilherme's drenched bones each time, pouring drink after drink down their friend's open mouth; and then, stumbling and crawling to the next place, dropping the ever-lighter stack of bones, picking up as many as they could find, and continuing.

Guilherme didn't know if it was the drink or the fact that there was less and less of him, but he quickly felt the effects of the rowdy night. Everything seemed more and more distant; sights blurred and sounds grew muffled and thin, until they became a pleasant hum in the air.

Still, Guilherme felt he was where he belonged: he was with good friends, in the village where he had been born; he was at home, and he thought that he had never been happier in all his life. His friends were celebrating him as a hero, as if he had somehow become greater with his death. Guilherme wondered if they could see, as he now clearly saw, how the aura of death transformed everything, much in the same way that the drink had always done, making him feel, in a way, greater, grander, part of something far larger than himself. If it were possible he would have beamed with a wide happy smile right then.

His friends grabbed whoever was around to join them. While some decided to start over and headed back to Pedro's

Cafe, as the night passed, others had trailed off to go home and sleep it off. Some found themselves holding a bone without remembering exactly why or how they had come into possession of it, and so tossed it in someone's yard, or simply along the side of the road.

Soon however there were only Manuel, José and Roberto, along with a scrawny dog which had followed them around for the last few hours. The dog was busily gnawing on a bone.

"What a night," Manuel said, slurring his words.

"I never drank so much before," said José.

"We should go home and rest."

The others agreed. The skies had lightened. It was close to dawn.

"Where is Guilherme?" Manuel asked.

They looked around, but Guilherme was gone. They quickly searched the ground and their pockets. Nothing. Roberto pulled out a slender bone from his coat pocket.

"That's it? All that remains of our friend?"

"What will Rosa do?" José said. "Everyone knows that woman's a powder keg."

They quickly returned to Guilherme's house, placed the single bone on the ground, and then made like the wind for their own beds.

The next morning the news spread across the town, whispered ear to ear, poking inside all the open doors and windows.

Manuel, José and Roberto were back at Pedro's, silently nursing the effects of the long night, and heard the story of how, in the middle of the night, Guilherme Gomes had run away, how even in death he was completely irresponsible and how Rosa awakened in the morning to find several of the bones he had left behind in the yard in his obvious rush to clear out of town.

The three men looked up at the grinning skull perched upon a high shelf behind the bar. Pedro had found it while clean-

ing early in the morning. They raised their glasses for one more salute to their old friend, who appeared much happier here in his new resting place.

RECENSÕES CRÍTICAS/REVIEWS

Urbino de San-Payo, **A América Segundo S. Lucas**. Cacilhas: Peregrinação, 1988, 115pp.

A América segundo S. Lucas foi um dos últimos livros lançados pela agora desaparecida Fundação Cultural dos Emigrantes. Urbino de San-Payo, o seu autor, viu-se empurrado por juvenis circunstâncias para um seminário, depois para uma existência burocrática em Lisboa e finalmente para a emigração, primeiro em Inglaterra e em seguida nos Estados Unidos. Vivendo há mais de vinte anos em Los Angeles, tem dividido os seus dias entre um emprego que não lhe agrada e uma literatura que muito lhe agrada e que ele com artística segurança domina, continuando na diáspora a actividade literária a que em Lisboa dera início.

Este livro, o último de Urbino de San-Payo, enfoca o microcosmos lusitano da parte norte da grande Los Angeles. Aí, especialmente nas plutocráticas zonas de Beverly Hills e Bel Air, fixou-se um núcleo de portugueses que se dedicam ao serviço doméstico. Trabalham normalmente por casais. Ela faz as compras, cozinha e ajuda um pouco na limpeza. Ele serve à mesa e quando necessário actua como motorista. O trabalho é absorvente mas remunerador. Habitando em casas ricas, quase sem despesas, estes emigrantes podem na maioria dos casos aforrar o suficiente para adquirir eles mesmos uma quase luxuosa residência de fim-de-semana e mesmo por vezes propriedades de rendimento. O convívio com os empregados fê-los entrar num novo estilo de vida e penetrar em novas áreas de conhecimento. O seu contacto social com o mundo americano fora de portas é contudo limitadíssimo. O resultado é um encapsulamento que

conduz a uma limitação de interesses e a uma inevitável fricção. É este o ambiente que Urbino de San-Payo muito bem conhece e soube habilmente escapelizar.

A primeira parte da obra consiste numa colecção de imaginadas cartas de um emigrante clandestino, Heitor, à sua mulher, Filomena, que ficou em Portugal com os filhos. Heitor queixa-se das suas condições de vida, das dificuldades que teve ao passar do Canadá para os Estados Unidos escondido no porta-bagagens de um carro, da barreira da língua, dos problemas de adaptação a uma nova cultura e a um novo trabalho no serviço doméstico. Teve todavia a fortuna de encontrar um bom mentor, S. Lucas. S. Lucas não é, como se poderia deduzir de um engenhoso título, o histórico evangelista mas sim outro emigrante, Simão Lucas, também ocupado em servir gente de dinheiro. S. Lucas é quem interpreta esta misteriosa América a Heitor, que depois com toda a reverência reproduz as suas opiniões nas cartas para Filomena. Heitor é pois assim como uma espécie de Zé Fernandes na sua função de pintar o retrato de um Jacinto proletário que também via desvendando toda uma civilização que repudia. S. Lucas revela aliás os mesmos assomos reformistas que o Príncipe da Grã-Ventura teve quando se deu conta de que havia injustiça no mundo. Heitor, zefernandicamente, vai protestando mas sempre suportando iniquidades. Não é só o retrato de S. Lucas que Heitor pinta. S. Lucas é afinal o prisma pelo qual Heitor começa a enxergar a nova ambiência. Depois, à medida que se compenetra dos tremendos labirintos do mundo emigrante e do outro mais amplo que o rodeia, vai transmitindo a Filomena as perplexidades com que se debate. A sua atitude denota necessariamente certa ambiguidade. Olha para os compatriotas e nota a estreiteza de vistas, a rede de animosidades e invejas, o novorriquismo das mulheres, embora admirando a sua capacidade de trabalho e de aforro. Escandaliza-se um pouco com os padrões de vida do meio exterior, reage machisticamente à disseminação da homossexualidade, insinua uma leve nota reprovadora ante as facilidades de vida dos jovens, comenta com estranheza o que vai pelo mundo. A sua óptica é pois uma justa prototipização da imagem do emigrante neste grupo integrado.

Urbino de San-Payo consegue de facto com as figuras de Heitor e S. Lucas dar um penetrante retrato-robot do emigrante português por

estas paragens. Contracenando com o mais idealista, mais politicamente esclarecido S. Lucas, Heitor na sua simpleza e materialismo estabelece uma situação Quixote-Sancho. O seu sanchismo – e Urbino de San-Payo dá-o com mestria – é característico do emigrante luso em terras americanas. Ideologicamente imobilista, conformista, agarrado à tradição, roído pelo saudosismo, comprazendo-se com a sua confortável “gaiola dourada”, Heitor mostra-se alheado num indiferente *laissez-faire* às inquietações lá de fora para que S. Lucas lhe tenta chamar a atenção.

É com excepcional perceptividade que Urbino de San-Payo analisa este pequeno círculo de portugueses perdidos num oceano de americanidade. Fá-lo numa linguagem popularizante, a que não faltam contudo toques poéticos, e através destas cartas na aparência singelas mantém uma atraente fluência do discurso, um fácil e seguro andamento. Um dos seus melhores achados é a (amarga?) sobreposição da voz narrativa de Heitor à de S. Lucas. É bem plausível que a dicotomia represente algo de autobiográfico. Afogado num mundo de trivialidade, Urbino de San-Payo sente na vida real como esse mundo limita os seus anseios intelectuais e artísticos. A ênfase no sublinhar da mediocridade e do materialismo é sem dúvida uma forma de protesto, desconsolada mas fortemente expressiva.

Em guisa de epílogo Heitor envia a Filomena “uns nacos da História da América em verso”. São quadras em redondilha maior com rima cruzada, em que passa revista aos pontos altos da história americana desde 1970, ano da sua chegada, assim como a facetas significativas da emigração lusa no Novo Mundo. O excessivo uso de “portinglesismos” nesta poesia e a linguagem demasiado coloquializante criam um certo efeito anticlimático em relação à intensidade emotiva da primeira parte. Trata-se apenas de um pequeno senão que não chega a destoar muito fortemente da magnífica qualidade da prosa anterior.

Eduardo Mayone Dias

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