



The political dimension of human corporeality: *The Crime of Father Amaro*, an anthropological analysis of the storyline¹

A dimensão política da corporeidade humana: *O Crime do Padre Amaro*, uma análise antropológica da história

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Abstract: This article presents an anthropological analysis of the storyline on the classic of literature by José Maria Eça de Queirós (1845-1900), *The Crime of Father Amaro* (1875), at the same time we review the imaginary of the Portuguese writer. Let us begin by briefly drafting our approach: corporeality, as far as political tool, represents a backbone in the exertion and practices of power, without obviating that modern authority may assume various forms, i.e.: generating knowledge about the body as well as promoting individual self-discipline. In other words, disciplinary and social domain practices can be exerted both coercively and auto regulative. The patriarchal system nests in the criticism of the Portuguese writer who interrogates social reality in his work, reflecting the hostility of a society and ecclesiastical institution in decline that fight for the disciplinary and particularly corporal dominance of women. A political anatomy where a new discourse on sexuality emerges. But whose objective is still to produce docile and useful bodies. Or, what is the same, useful to the extent of its docility. Hence, the foucauldian reading of this work. Women sexual experiences within the context described by Eça de Queirós appear mediated, at first, by a concrete socialization *ab initio*; by virtue of which a woman is instituted as a passive being; accordingly,

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daring to subvert the established order or contradicting the imposed social codes would result in discredit and, ultimately, in punishment.

Keyword: History; culture and narrative; fin-de-siècle XIX; corporeality; authority; women sexual experiences; technologies of power.

Resumo: Este artigo apresenta uma análise antropológica do enredo do clássico da literatura de José Maria Eça de Queirós (1845-1900), *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1875), ao mesmo tempo em que revisamos o imaginário do escritor português. A corporeidade, enquanto instrumento político, representa uma espinha dorsal no exercício e nas práticas do poder, sem esquecer que a autoridade moderna pode assumir várias formas, ou seja: gerar conhecimento sobre o corpo, bem como promover o indivíduo autodisciplina. As práticas disciplinares e de domínio social podem ser exercidas tanto de forma coerciva como auto-reguladora. O sistema patriarcal aninha-se na crítica do escritor português que interroga a realidade social na sua obra, refletindo a hostilidade de uma sociedade e instituição eclesiástica em declínio que luta pelo domínio disciplinar e particularmente corporal das mulheres. Uma anatomia política onde emerge um novo discurso sobre a sexualidade. Mas cujo objetivo ainda é produzir corpos dóceis e úteis. Ou, o que dá no mesmo, útil na medida da sua docilidade: daí a leitura foucaultiana desta obra. As experiências sexuais das mulheres no contexto descrito por Eça de Queirós aparecem mediadas, num primeiro momento, por uma socialização concreta *ab initio*; em virtude do qual a mulher é instituída como ser passivo; portanto, ousar subverter a ordem estabelecida ou contradizer os códigos sociais impostos resultaria em descrédito e, em última análise, em punição.

Palavras chave: História; cultura e narrativa; fim do século XIX; corporalidade; autoridade; experiências sexuais femininas; tecnologias de poder.

The author and his literary work: José Maria Eça de Queirós, 1845-1900

“A Eça de Queirós, português, y lo que es más, padre de portugueses, le duele Portugal. Cuando de éste se burla, oyese el

quejido. Todo su arte europeo, un arte tan exquisitamente europeo, no logra encubrir su ímpetu ibérico. Se le oye el sollozo bajo la carcajada” (Unamuno, 1947, p. 388).

The studies concerning the biography and the political framework that motivate the Queirosian work span a bohemian university period in Coimbra between 1861 to 1866 (Borges de Macedo, 1983, p. 195). In broad terms, these readings outline the profile of a simultaneously restless, intellectual, shy and withdrawn person: an individual whose ideals of freedom, combined with condescending humanity, endowed his personality as a writer and diplomat with temperance and moral rectitude. Portuguese born in Póvoa de Varzim, baptized in a small town near Vila do Conde,² yet nomad for much of his career. Eça de Queirós reflects himself in his legacy as a moderate nonconformist against the corseted nineteenth-century social reality; masterfully described, amid airs of uprooting and saudade, the further diplomatic responsibilities drove him away from his origins (first in The Caribbean, later in Europe). On the one hand, irony and satire became central themes that, upon reaching a state of maturity, dominated his modernist literary narratological dissections: defined through opposition to romanticism alongside authors of his generation, in the wake of a rising positivist scientism and the achievement of a “Truth” that cut through the backwardness and social prejudices sustaining the prevailing social order. On the other hand, the nineteenth-century Queirosian novel presents a fundamental source of knowledge and relevance to the world and our work. Most important of

² The writer, chronicler and diplomat was born in 1845, registered as the son of an “unknown mother”: a label designed to overshadow cases like this, in light of the mother’s maiden status and her lineage from a wealthy family. In accordance with Portuguese social customs and tradition, law records assigned the maternal surname first. In his early years, the young Eça grew up in his hometown and birthplace, Póvoa de Varzim (north of Oporto). A married couple of domestic workers raised him until 1849; but with the marriage of his parents and their formation of his extended family, Eça’s circumstances changed. After an intermediate coexistence with his paternal grandparents (1850), and then a continued school education as an intern, he joined his parents late in his early infancy (1855). Worth mentioning, likewise, are the works published by Burgos (1920, p. 30-46); Cabral, (1927); Pereira, (1945, p. 263-228); Simões, (1973); Mónica, (2001); Campos Matos (2017).

all, it conveys to the readers a stimulating understanding of the society at the time: a social reality brought closer to us by the author's detailed observation (Langa, 1987).

In respect to aesthetic function, Eça de Queirós has bequeathed an identitary heritage concerning a historical era characterized by an environment of decadence and regenerationism. In a time of turmoil and deep decline in imperial Portugal, the author's narrative developed by portraying characters conditioned by the political rise of past liberalism and the new European socialism. This period gave rise to two of the stories with the most thematic connection and greatest public success: *The Crime of Father Amaro* (1875) and *Cousin Bazilio* (1878). In a like manner of fictional documents under the positivist predicament, the novels adopted the canon of realism-naturalism: a literary movement in alignment with the Portuguese writer, but not without personal doubts respecting artistic ascription.³ Otherwise illustrating Portugal in the second half of the nineteenth century, the two works make up a distinguished source of information on the consolidation of the endemic backwardness, and the depiction of configurative aspects of feminine morality. For the purpose of the latter, the author's writing dissects the differentiating sanctioning codes of adulterous behaviour: a central issue of the realist-naturalist movement, one in favour of changing the fin-de-siècle social structure under the disposition of a civilizing ideal. Consequently, despite its dominance in the nineteenth century European cultural scene, romanticism would collapse.

The Portuguese writer was a manifest admirer and noble disciple of the unsuccessful poet Antero de Quental (1842-1891), acquainted with during his tenure as a law student—legal studies concluded under the weight of patrilineal family tradition. Succeeding an initial approach to the performing arts,⁴ and inspired by the human sciences, a fledgling Queirós distinguished himself as a writer from the moment of his

³ In regard to the differential conceptualization between naturalism and realism, the writer himself did not insist on splitting the projection of both movements. Certain related contributions are available to view in Simões, (1973); Reis, (1994).

⁴ An action encouraged by the literary contest that took place after "The Coimbra Question" (1865); wherein the socially active avant-garde Antero de Quental and the romantic poet António F. de Castilho took leading roles in its deliberations. For reference, read Figueiredo (1949, p. 61); Meireles (1983).

graduation (1866). Firstly, he published his first stories as *feuilletons* in the newspaper *Gazeta de Portugal*; afterwards made up by a diversity of chronicles, stories written in poetic prose, short essays of very heterogeneous and eclectic themes... all summarized together in the volume *Barbarous Texts* (Eça de Queirós, 1903). Secondly, not only did he join the editorial staff of the Lisbon newspaper, but also thrived as a writer by joining the literary and gossip *tertulia* group of the *Cenacle*: a congregation for political-literary purposes whose members gathered at the residence of liberal teacher, engineer and diplomat Jaime Batalha Reis (1847-1935). These intellectuals and writers spearheaded a series of actions, intended to contribute to the renewal of the nation in line with the initiatives promoted in other European countries. Under such circumstances, new impulses continued to disseminate their various chronicles with a transformative aim; due to writing their work in a tense atmosphere, the group brought the field of culture closer to that of politics.⁵ Meanwhile, they laid down both the literary canon of Romanticism and the theological-metaphysical canon; deemed both to be restrictive forms of access to knowledge, their resolution advocated instead the value of a positive science.

The young chronicler began his first press trade experience in 1867, following the proposal to establish an opposition newspaper in the capital of the Alentejo region—with the support of his family, already endowed with a history of a literary tradition. Throughout this solitary and titanic endeavor as sole director and editor in The District of Évora, Eça de Queirós previously had a project reserved among the works of political chronicles: a space dedicated to the literary *feuilleton* under the label of “modern readings”. Despite the activism encouraged by these chronicles in this tense political period, the constant rhetorical

⁵ In this way, the aspiring writer became associated with the cultural vanguard and heterogeneous elite of men and intellectuals, a group referred to as the Generation of ‘70. Their primary aim was to achieve a social breakdown in terms of socialism, republicanism and under the defence of Comtian ideas. Nonetheless, the ideological split of the group only reinforced the literary field instead of the coveted political territory. The progressive conditions of the social gatherings of the *Cenacle* inspired several actions in the environment of the Casino Conferences (1871). Except for Antero de Quental, their members eventually integrated into the state apparatus by occupying sinecure posts in the public service. On the topic, see Medina (1980; 1984); Ramos, (1992, p. 483-528); Reis, (1990).

confrontation with the opposing newspaper -*A Folha do Sul*- led him to abandon this undertaking. After seven hectic months, a return to Lisbon became necessary to continue his contributions to the *Gazeta*. A variety of early Queirosian essays belong to this period, characterized by prose that illustrates a meticulous and ironic observer: someone that approaches the reader to a realistic art, but without a moralizing aim.⁶ All the same, Queirós drew inspiration from Antero de Quental on his return from France through the latter's contact with Utopian socialism and Proudhon's principles of thought; since 1869, his writing emphasizes this influence under the fervent atmosphere of the *Cenacle*. Thereafter provided with the principles of the French philosopher, and bolstered as well by the naturalistic influence of Taine, the first Queirosian narrative settled its incisive anticlerical stance by adopting an anarchizing ideology: a critical theoretical foundation for the long-awaited social reform of those early years of youth. From the aesthetic perspective, Queirós devoted himself to his reformist labour, in view of the invention of a fantastic character with a satanic profile: the alter ego of the author, by the name *Carlos Fadrique Mendes*.⁷ By these means, the literary narrative became a promising weapon of political and social activism.

In his narrative itinerary, the nonconformist writer found himself confined in the Lisbon environment: the absence of his "master" Antero de Quental on a trip across America curbed the cultural pulse of the capital. Moving onwards, Eça de Queirós spurred under the enticing reverie of the literary myth of the voyages and scientific explorations of the time. His first journey began with an invitation to Suez—in time for the opening of the Canal—from his friend, the Count of Resende; then in 1869, his route continued through the Middle East (Lasso, 2012, p. 167-196). This Levantine experience brought about a series of

⁶ A key finding lies in these writings: the first appearance of thematic dimensions, such as nature, the female figure or the devil—particular subjects of Queirosian interest.

⁷ To find an exceptional appreciation of this satanic poet, we need to look within the author's original epistolary novel with Spanish translation, *Epistolario de Fradrique Mendes* (1907). The character made his debut in the novel co-written together with José Duarte Ramalho Ortigão, and successfully translated by Martín Gaite, 1974. Regarding this figure's introduction into the Queirosian work, see Pasero, (2000, p.33-42); Lasso, (2012, p. 167-196).

Orientalist minded articles: above other descriptions in this phase, the most prominent is the concept of race under the Darwinist influence.⁸

In the aftermath of his return, the writer began his duties as administrator of the Council of Leiria from 1870 to 1871; not before suffering great hindrances in repeated attempts to advance his career in jurisprudence—from which he remained at a distrustful distance. This beginning bureaucratic assignment made possible his first contact with the provincial town, which proved a vital inspiration for the plot of one of his main realistic works: *The Crime of Father Amaro* (1875). Therein lies an examination of the institutional ecclesiastical hypocrisy and the libidinous abuse of the priesthood on the general population, and women in particular. In a period of narrative expansion, the Portuguese author continued his novelistic production and saw his magnum opus realised; moreover, his work developed further with critical portraits about the evils that plagued the country.⁹ Thus, political activism persisted with the publication of journalistic feuilletons of social, cultural and political satire; writings compiled under an incendiary title, which he would attempt to publish through the creation of a new magazine: *A farpas*.

⁸ The return from this year-long itinerary gave rise to the publication of his aforementioned first novel, co-authored with his friend Ramalho Ortigão, *The Mystery of the Sintra Road* (1870). His journeys and experiences on the East surface in fragments of his novels, written during his time as British consul, and later summarized in a posthumous work in 1905: *Letters from England*. During this period, Queirós alludes to subjects such as the Arab issue: particularly in *The Relic* (1887), as well as *Epistolario* or *The Correspondence of Fradique Mendes* (1900).

⁹ This period stands out for his literary production, highlighting its second novel: *El primo Bazilio* (1878), whose central plot revolves around social hypocrisy and female adultery in the style of nineteenth-century narrative. However, in 1877 he wrote a novel postponed due to the daring of its themes: passion, sexuality and incest in relation to turn-of-the-century social decline: *The Tragedy of Flower Street* - postponed until 1980 -. At that time he wrote to his editor-in-chief, expressing his conviction that he had written his best piece in this novel (Barbieri, 2014, pp. 205-206). While writing his masterpiece, other efforts resulted in *The Mandarin* (1880) and *The Relic* (1887). Another realist novel followed: *Las Maias* (1888), a concurrent narrative of the decline of Portugal and the story of an aristocratic family. His extensive work -here selected in a few titles- concluded with his last book published during his lifetime: *The Illustrious House of Ramires* (1900).

Coupled with his active participation in meetings at the *Democratic Lisbonense the Casino Conferences* (1871), these texts would have conditioned literary art to the study of the social reality of a country divided between absolutists and liberals.

Likewise, the diplomatic career of the Portuguese writer makes up a relevant period for the study of his work. Besides his travels to the United States and Canada in the course of his diplomatic duties, Eça de Queirós served as Consul General of Portugal in Havana for one year and eleven months (Aguilera; Coca, 2004, p. 131-138; Eça de Queirós, 2004, p. 139-162). Indeed, utmost and meticulous rigour defined his assignments in this first destiny, which caused him to suspend his active literary work (as deduced from his intermediary actions). Though not entirely altruistic, and ill-set in a precarious consular post, his actions were in favour of the Eastern Chinese community—who expressed gratitude for their protection—as well as those hailing from Macau, shipped off to labour in Cuba's plantations in conditions of semi-slavery. Methodical actions, if we bear in mind the detailed technical reports prepared by Queirós on different aspects of trade and industry in each diplomatic assignment: initially in Havana (1872-1874), and then in Newcastle-on-Tyne (1874-1878); lastly in Bristol (1878-1888) and Paris (1888-1900).

All things considered, we now address the most remarkable of his writings in this diplomatic phase: *The Crime of Father Amaro* (1875). A project that first developed gradually until its incubation, then for a time abandoned during a stay in the Spanish West Indies, and finally continued and rewritten in an extended and perfected manner in his subsequent British assignment.¹⁰ After fruitless receptions in Spain, the translation carried out by José María Valle Inclán ultimately led to critical recognition.¹¹ In this same period, the Portuguese author devoted himself

¹⁰ Virtually rewritten by the author, who published a third edition of the novel in 1880.

¹¹ As translator, José María Valle Inclán introduced the first acclaimed entries of the Queirosian narrative in Spain. Because of her successful translations, Carmen Martín Gaité also became a recognised defender of Eça's work. Amongst other collaborators, we include Wenceslao Fernández Flórez, Julio Gómez de la Serna, or Jorge Gimeno. For noteworthy and related contributions, Elena Losada is of great interest. Carmen de Burgos (Colombine), involved in his magnum opus of Portuguese literature, provided other contributions to the contemporary Hispanic environment; she collaborated with Eça de Queirós in other projects, notwithstanding the biographical Prologue of *Letters from England*. By the same token, Emilia Pardo Bazán's literary and journalistic

with fervour to his essayistic and epistolary texts; as he encompassed diverse subjects through feuilletons, his writings summarized and entitled *The Correspondence of Fradique Mendes*. The book was registered in his posthumous works (1900), written in 1888 while writing his last works and compilation of chronicles: *The Illustrious House of Ramires* (1897); *A Cheerful Campaign* (1900); and *The City and the Mountains* (1901). Last novels pertaining to a final period in his longed for assignment, Paris where his poor health no longer gave him a respite to enter the new century.

The Crime of Father Amaro, an anthropological reading

During the 18th and 19th centuries, research on human sexuality had as main purpose the study of its origins and qualifying typologies. Disciplines like Medicine and Psychiatry played in this field a role similar to that of the religion. Concurrently, the Church promoted a religious and cultural system through the indoctrination of its rituals and ceremonies, enabling the implementation of hierarchy, order and obedience (Paiva, 2007, p. 52).

From that moment on, the pathological shapes that sex assumed were distinguished in order to define, control and administrate it, conforming a discourse that creates sexuality according to a *scientia sexualis* (Foucault, 1977, p. 65-92); yet it is not until the seventies of the last century that theories of sexuality undergo a “Copernican shift”. From an essentialist approach that unveiled an instinctive, impulsive voluptuousness, represented by the genital-phallogocentric dominance of the heterosexual model -as a natural reality transformed by the civilizing process-, new considerations arose on a sexuality regarded as a complex process of social construction. Consequently, a significant progress was made towards sexual socialization, patterned after the hypotheses conceived by Michel Foucault.¹²

composition reflects some of his impressions and relations with the Portuguese writer. As to the latter, see specialized contributions of Losada (1992, p. 17-22). On the literary and cultural relations between Spain and Portugal, see Marcos (2007).

¹² Sexuality from the perspective of the french philosopher is the conformation of a discourse. Therefore, the “history of sexuality” shall be a history of the discourses held on it. Foucault (1977).

Sexuality has been permanently reappropriated by certain bodies of power and, in special, by medical control as normalization measure that, in the name of positivist science -theoretically neutral and impartial-, emerged as a new secularized morality. Concerning the process of modernity, it is, in turn, identified with a love-upheld family model, according to a particular reason; such that all behaviors deviating from the required standard and “normalizing” morality become object of repudiation and medicalization. These expressions, in Foucauldian terms, are subject to social control in order to repress an indomitable nature that threatens to overflow and invade our culture. With the medicalization of sex, the essentialist tradition of this one is scientifically legitimated, remaining handled by experts; ergo, only they are capable to establish the limits between normal and pathological subjects. This article presents a Foucauldian reading on the classic of literature by José Maria Eça de Queirós (1845-1900), *The Crime of Father Amaro* (1875). Let us begin by briefly drafting our approach: corporeality, as far as political tool, represents a backbone in the exertion and practices of power, without obviating that modern authority may assume various forms, i.e.: generating knowledge about the body as well as promoting individual self-discipline. In other words, disciplinary and social domain practices can be exerted both coercively and autoregulatively. Hence the standpoint of this essay, which states the control of the body through pressures and external agents, masked under self-control formulas (Foucault, 1979, p. 104-105).

According to Foucauldian genealogical researches from the 17th-18th centuries onwards, the practices of the government have exercised power through a specific technology by virtue of which power/knowledge territories are built. Thereafter, when the French cogitator develops the conceptual tools of “anatomopolitics” and “biopolitics”, conceives the subject as a trainable body and population as a production machine. These political subjects would then be devised as bodies and population, while power would exert its force particularly against the body in order to ensure its normalization. Thus, the body becomes itself a product of power (Foucault, 1976, p. 141-142; 1992, p. 254).

Body discipline conforms one of the main dimensions that articulates the exercise of power. In *The Crime of Father Amaro* we

can appreciate the subjugation of bodies and souls to a normative regimentation, through the disciplinary management of acts, gestures and emotions, exerting social control over the entire institutional context. Discipline maintains an analytical relation with the body and, continuing on Foucault, we are in fact dealing with a microphysics of power, with a political anatomy of the body which aims at producing docile and useful bodies meaning insofar as they are docile, they are useful. Similarly, Eça de Queirós assigns to the sacred the maintenance of a social order that shall not be stained, even though he brings it into question through the *mise-en-scène* of certain social actors as a requisite for reaching the new ideals of “order and progress” that encircle the context and times of modernity through which the drama flows.

Anthropological analysis of the storyline

The Portuguese novel *The Crime of Father Amaro* by José Maria Eça de Queirós, one of the greatest nineteenth-century novelists, assumes naturalistic postulates to reproduce the devastating effects of celibacy on a recently ordained abhorrent priest. Father Amaro, carried away by desire while in the throes of passion, sinks into moral degradation concurrently with the fanaticism surrounding Leiria, a Portuguese provincial town where political, religious and economic powers interweave the lives of its people, submitted to old beliefs and subjugated by the Church omnipotence. We can correlate the work previously mentioned with *La Regenta* by Clarín (1885), *El Abate Mauret* by Zola (1875) or *El Decamerón* by Bocaccio (1353). These texts were once considered indecorous due to their plots concerning faith conflicts, morally unacceptable sinful behaviors, ecclesiastical hierarchic privileges and political intricacies interconnected with eroticism secretly hidden behind the lattice of the confessional. The author deepens into the fissures of the Portuguese ecclesiastical institution, in light of the advent of the rational liberalism emerged in the metropolis, in allusion to the dissociation between Church and State (Broullón, 2016, p. 128-137):

O cônego assim o ouvira. Então indignaram-se contra essa turba de mações, de republicanos, de socialistas, gente que quer a destruição de tudo o que é respeitável -o Clero, a instrução religiosa, a Família, o Exército e a riqueza... Ah! [...]. Eram necessárias as antigas repressões, a masmorra e

a força. Sobretudo inspirar aos homens a fé o respeito pelo sacerdote. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 466)

The novel describes a thriving political system that is undermining the model held by the exercise of surveillance and punishment; that is, it deepens into the practice of ecclesiastical tyranny over people. In this work, the Panopticon rises as a generalizable lifestyle model, a political technology and a machine for discerning the see/being seen dichotomy (Foucault, 1976; Bentham, 1989). As a consequence, power is automatized and disindividualized, since it is not necessary an effective exercise of surveillance, just the control site is enough.

Although the activity flow of this vigilance is discontinuous, its effects turn out to be continuous, inasmuch it induces in the protagonists a conscious, permanent inner state of constant close watch. From this perspective, Michel Foucault enumerated some of the characteristics of pastoral power clearly recognizable in the novel (Foucault, 1982, p. 208-226; 1988, p. 227-244; 1990, p. 45-94). First, the responsibility of the priest concerns not only the lives of Leiria citizens but also all of their acts; hence their sins are attributable, ultimately, to the priest-shepherd who shall lead his “sheep” through the path of mortification. Thus he knows their innermost depths of his flock:

E era isto que lamentava, esta diminuição social da Igreja, esta mutilação do poder eclesiástico, limitado ao espiritual, sem direito sobre o corpo, a vida e a riqueza dos homens... O que lhe faltava era a autoridade dos tempos em que a Igreja era a nação e o pároco dono temporal do rebanho. Que lhe importava, no seu caso, o direito místico de abrir ou fechar as portas do Céu? O que ele queria era o velho direito de abrir ou fechar as portas das masmorras! [...]. Desejaria ser um sacerdote da antiga Igreja, gozar das vantagens que dá a denúncia e dos terrores que inspira o carrasco, e ali naquela vila. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 132).

Through the behavior of the characters, the Portuguese narrator censures certain privileged father confessors, setting out the impact of such fanatic beliefs and superstitions on people. A ministry clung to an outdated past that mourns the collapse of institutions such as the army and the family, at the same time that reason, light and civilization in harmony with progress and science surreptitiously burst into the text.

Appealing to modern society, Eça de Queirós spins, from the particular to the universal, the web of the Church historical fight for social control, power and the diverse strategies used to manage its consolidation and permanence. However, the Enlightenment was not only the age of erudition but it was also the extension of disciplines in order to join the era of social control (Foucault, 1980, p. 128).

In the latter respect, the Panopticon is built upon one of the fundamental aspects of society, inasmuch as power is exerted over citizens through individual, constant surveillance, masked under a reward-punishment control formula; specially, through correction, i.e. attending to the discipline and transformation of people in accordance with a normalization.

On the other hand, the novel proposes a choice between two possible paths: to follow the gospel truth, like Jesus did, in spite of his last temptation, or to choose the security of materialism, power and glory instead. Both alternatives are portrayed in two main religious figures: abbot Ferrao and parish priest Amaro, respectively. Each character defends the principles by means of which the keys to human behavior are unveiled: particularly the conflict between Being and Having modes of existence. In the case of father Amaro, marked by orphanage and a subordinate destiny, his main temptations are ambition and security by means of which his future career and social climbing would be sealed.

Once their choices are made, as the author insinuates, the action develops revealing a imaginary of sin which refers us to a human being in a permanent state of contradiction. The Portuguese narrator calls into question the dominant order and outlines the possibility of other alternative behavioral patterns. Under these circumstances, Christianity found the way to usher in a kind of power in order to take control over people through sexuality, turning “flesh” into synonymous with sin; i.e., the configuration of a body permeated with desire and concupiscence. Concretely, it was this flesh physicality -the body- whereby pastoral control became established.

The plot in the novel of Eça de Queirós is shrouded in anticlericalism, within a social scenario that, indirectly and as full of fissures as the reality at that moment, enables to elucidate, challenging established morals, alternative manners to interact and behave in the lives of the characters. Secret and low voice are the shady codes of communication of the social, cultural, and political circumstances that

determine the development of the plot, principally by the restriction of women intervention, who serve the commandments of God and men, subjugated under the mechanism of fear.

Eça de Queirós delves into the apparatus of violence, coercion and consent, distinctive of a patriarchal system, founded upon the base of an unequal exchange of affection and love, yet universally represented and institutionalized. Therefore, it is imperative, in the context of the plot, to refer to the concept of patriarchy in the sense alluded by A. Jónasdóttir (Jónasdóttir, 1993, p. 322), to wit: a patriarchal system as the precedent framework that enables to inquire after the social reality, calling it constantly into question.¹

Similarly, the spiritual discipline previously exposed requires to calm down the soul of virtuous young ladies, in response to the inherent female hysteria referred, hence the moral intervention of catholic hegemony. The description of the action revealed under the gaze of Virgins, Christs and Saints, brings us closer to a religious imagery and figures locked up inside urns as a symbol of a captive church that, nevertheless, keeps an attentive eye on sinners, as portrayed in the case of Amelia, the young female protagonist.

The power struggle between Church and State for civil society is evidenced, and so are the ways of negotiating social control. Notwithstanding, the fervent religious feeling fostered in people together with the emphasis placed on worship, made manifest throughout the novel, allow us to approach the modes of expression of a particular culture and a popular piety that coordinates everyday reality in Leiria and determines the devoutness and conduct of its parishioners. The religious rituals practiced by some of the characters contain a vast polysemic symbolism, legitimizing obscurantism and psychological manipulation, and demanding surreptitiously the need to transcend barbarism on behalf of civilization.

In light of this superstitious context exemplified by the parish of Leiria, the tumultuous changes under which events evolve behavior and prescribed standards are defined according to an ideology that legitimizes the patriarchal, authoritarian power of a clerical elite, at the service of a hierarchy that implies the stagnation of social classes. The novel goes into detail about the roots of a Tridentine, conservative institution of white dominance -embodied in canons Dias, Natalio and Amaro- that the author emphasizes with irony and anthropological determination:

[...] A senhora não compreende o preceito. Beati pauperes, benditos os pobres, quer dizer que os pobres devem-se achar felizes na pobreza; [...] não quererem mais do que o bocado de pão que têm; não aspirarem a participar das riquezas dos outros, sob pena de não serem benditos. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 305)

Eça de Queirós also illustrates a Church incarnated in people, symbolized by abbot Ferrao, committed to the most disadvantaged sections of society such as the devotees in the most isolated rural parishes. However, the presence of this minority is limited in the text, since abbot Ferrao -like Jesus- confronts the ecclesiastical institution and the foundations of its power: “Não se tinham realmente compreendido. O bom Ferrão, tendo vivido tantos anos naquela paróquia de quinhentas almas, as quais caíam todas, de mães a filhas, no mesmo molde de devoção simples a Nosso Senhor”. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 386)

The author analyzes how the blood ties and patronage networks of the clergy increase and decrease by cause of the influence of political parties, within a pressing relationship involving economic-financial ambits that go beyond the possession of lands and properties. The ecclesiastical institution and the directives of the upper echelons have leaned towards the most reactionary regimes throughout history, becoming concurrently bastion of the oligarchy: “Todos têm direito à Graça do Senhor , disse o cônego gravemente, num sentimento de imparcialidade, admitindo a igualdade das classes logo que não se tratava de bens materiais e apenas dos confortos do Céu”. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 305)

Father Amaro himself is the one who transits with great ease from the divine town to the earthly town. Since the beginning of the writing the priest peregrinates from the love of god, in this spiritual sphere, to the full enjoyment of the carnal and, as a consequence, ends up manipulating religion; that is, he uses his ministry for his own benefit. An evidence of it is the demonstration of his hypocrisy and the continuous concessions he makes all through the plot, composed by Eça de Queirós for an era and a context demanding strong social changes. In the same manner, the ambitious parish priest handles people, getting rid of them as soon as they become an obstacle:

Desde esse dia, amaro gozou uma completa tranquilidade de alma. Até aí incomodava-o, por vezes, a ideia de que correspondera ingratamente à confiança, aos carinhos que lhe tinham

prodigalizado na Rua da Misericórdia. Mas a tácita aprovação do cônego viera tirar-lhe, como ele dizia, aquele espinho da consciência. Porque enfim, o chefe de família, ocavalheiro responsável, o cabeça -era o cônego. A S. Joaneira era apenas uma concubina... E Amaro mesmo às vezes agora, em tom de galhofa, tratava o Dias de “seu caro sogro”. (Eça de Queirós, 2012, p. 337)

The ecclesiastical institution revealed by the Portuguese writer is not a monolithic one, being its own contradictions reflected on it. In the same manner he describes the domain being exerted by the authority of the institution over social life and over the believers through the pulpit and the confessional. Christianity did not only build a religion of salvation, but it also established confession techniques that constitute a fundamental pillar in the history of western subjectivity. By cause of the Counter-reformation the extension of confession did not stop to grow, increasing the attention being paid to the action interposed by the body -the flesh-, that is, its presence arbitrated by thinking and desire. In this process we find a strengthening of the figure of the confessor who besides absolution, counts as well on the right to examine the life of the penitent and on a whole set of techniques to achieve it.

We can observe the exercise of a stronger influence over the characters we denominate “ladies-girls”, embodied principally in young Amelia and other representatives of the bourgeoisie such as the wife of the pharmacist or the spouse of Doctor Godinho. Regarding the socializing work of the Church, it is entrusted to the charge of the popular catholic action organizations and materialized in the writing of Eça de Queirós as the Servants of Our Lady of Mercy Association.

In rural areas, where the novel takes place, this catalytic role is performed by different female figures, personified in the court of female vassals who gather around at Mercy Street, as the inflexible sanctimonious Mrs Josefa, Mrs María da Assunção, the Gansoso sisters and illicit Sanjuanera, mother of the virtuous catechumen Amelia who, under the pretexts of indoctrinating helpless Totó, surrenders to the lust of the priest unleashing their repressed desires. Young Amelia, linked since childhood to certain moral-religious precepts and essentialized in a pious virgin, would be whom father Amaro covers with the mantle of Virgin Mary in their secret encounters.

In contrast, the same religious mandates evoke in Amelia different interpretations for the practice of love, whilst she turns out stuck in

a spider web that results in fatal death. She follows this way as soon as she decides to love God through Amaro. For the time being, the celibacy of the priest is tempted by the innocence of the young lady, unveiling ardent contradictory passions characteristic of human beings and, ultimately, revealing a sublimation of eroticism materialized in the figure of a fainthearted priest. The father gets closer to Amelia using a magical-religious ritual, mediated by the Song of Songs mystical allegory as a tool for seduction. Passion unleashed pretends to convert a space for love into a sanctuary, in spite of the heretical contents of the unique biblical text that puts into words the pleasures of the love union, under the mantle that provides them with protection and shelter reaching, through the human, the divine:

Foi assim que uma manhã lhe fez ver uma capa de Nossa Senhora, que havia dias chegara de presente de uma devota ria de Ourém. Amélia admitiu-a muito. Era de cetim azul, representando um firmamento, com estrelas bordadas, e um centro, de lavor rico, onde flamejava um coração de ouro cercado de rosas de ouro. Amaro desdobrara-a, fazendo cintilar junto da janela os bordados espessos [...]. Pôs-lha aos ombros, apertou-lhe sobre o peito o fecho de prate lavrada. E afastou-se para a contemplar toda envolvida no manto, assustada e imóvel, com um sorriso cáldo de gozo devoto [...].

Amaro babava-se para ela:

— Oh filhinha, és mais linda que Nossa Senhora!

— Oh Amaro, que horror, que pecado!...

— Tira-mo, tiramo! – gritava como se a seda a queimase.

(Eça Queirós, 2012, p. 325)

Concerning the rules of cohabitation within the social context of the epoch, christian monogamous marriage prevails; although this one is transgressed by the mother of Amelia and the old priest. Illicit Sanjuanera represents neither Virgin Mary nor Eve, opting for a third via that distances women from any pre-established archetype, exempt from guilt or sin, being more constructive in this case for her and for the treatment that women receive along the novel. The background where these rules are justified or sanctioned is determined by virtue of the exaltation of family values, reproduced not only biologically but also culturally.

In family we find a fundamental gear that functions as articulating hinge of the different disciplinary devices; hence the functional, utilitarian value of such institution whose ultimate goal is to guarantee or at least not to undermine the bases nor the immovable, stratified social order described by Eça de Queirós. From the familiar institution, the figure of the mother is sublimated by the ruling morality, identified in a creative but domineering maternity. That is to say, like the Virgin, she is able to procreate “conceived without”. This maternity is placed there where pleasure is masked under the purest love that divides Amelia when she discovers desire and eroticism, transgressing the rule and nearing religion and desire through the use of erotic-morbid elements.

As soon as Amelia gets pregnant by the priest, abortion becomes the solution to avoid stigmatization and exclusion from the social, moral established model. On the other hand, the young lady rejects the proposal of Amaro who longs to carry on with his ambitious way towards the upper spheres of ecclesiastical power. Even so, the possibilities of either giving the baby up for adoption or similar alternatives are dismissed. Consequently, Amelita is not presented as a victim but as descendent of Eve who, in defiance of serious risks, manipulates even the true love of her previous boyfriend in order to let herself be enraptured by the voracious game of the insatiable priest: “Casá-la já! Enquanto é tempo! *Pater est quem nuptiae demonstrant...* Quem é marido é que é pai”. (Eça Queirós, 2012, p. 345). Doubtlessly, secret is the best ally in the social life of Leiria, a town enclosed by a particular culture that turns around an ideal prototype of feminization with attempts to exalt certain aspects of divinity. In accordance, prevailing virtues are submission, obedience, prudence, docility, dedication, ignorance, patience, absence of self-project, etc. Eça de Queirós attributes this hierarchy of values to his female characters who, by means of socializing agents and institutions in charge of their protection, eventually attain social control.

Final considerations. Technologies of power and administration of punishment

The technologies of power are the different strategies that have served to use punishment, surveillance and the domestication of the body of individuals. Among these technologies are ordeal, examination, governmentality and pastoral power, which determine people’s behaviors

to certain relations of domination under which they are objectified, just as Queirós represents their female characters.

Sexuality within the environment described before is encrypted under a reading that presupposes a distinction made between the pure and the perverse by secret and privacy means. From this perspective, sexuality becomes a sacred dimension, a social taboo which everyone is aware of, suspicious of, and which everyone relates to, but which nobody shall reveal or practice in an ostentatious nor in a public manner as evidenced in father Amaro. In this novel, silence in terms of what it is said or reserved, is part of the power strategy. The sexuality staged by the characters, as far as sexed human beings, reveals a reality that tends to be hidden. A priori, its practice is confined to particular established social rules, to a “must”. And as a convention that determines what is tolerated, socially approved or forbidden, the characters opt for oblique manners to satisfy what is repressed: sexed love affairs that all the community is aware of but silences.

The author makes the characters fear what they desire, perceiving an innocuous act as dirty, although consistent with mystic precepts. A contradiction that expounds the division between body and soul, manifested in a Church responsible for taking care after souls and supervisor of the bodies of its parishioners, by means of the power practices exerted by the clergy. Discipline cannot exist without the valuable contribution provided by the surveillance technology and, within that political context is where the presence, absence and distribution of social beings are regulated. Thereupon, it is indispensable to monitor the conduct of every individual, appreciate it and penalize it with the aim of bringing under control and reusing the productive capacities of social subjects.

Sexual or carnal love as referred by Amelia -body and soul are the same essence, the priest justifies- is build upon irreconcilable opposites of dominion-oppression, passive-active, appropriation-loss, partial imposition-concession, concerning the sexual relation between both protagonists. The line of argument in the novel suggests an arduous meaning game under a stereotyped genre construction; a control exercise that, from a masculine perspective, constructs the discourse and plot. Throughout the action, discipline and surveillance work as a mean of multiple power, anonymous and automatic. For it to be effective, incisive

and absolute, a conversion into self-regulation of the disciplined bodies is necessary.

Masculine characters are portrayed as active individuals and Amelia- from a sexist and mainly infantile orientation- is represented as a passive subject, target for the lascivious, sensuous look of the priest. When the young clergyman dresses her up with the mantle of the Virgin we are faced with an heretic occurrence, making us wonder whether he is directly kissing the Virgin or we are dealing with an incestuous relationship between god making love to his mother. It does not look like an incursion into the divinity of Virgin Mary, even though this passage is transgressive, there are other interpretations which show a young priest for whom body and soul are one same essence, and who is tempted -like Jesus Christ? - by the admiration and lust he feels when he sees the young lady, even more beautiful than the Virgin.

Amaro, under the circumstances of his own orphanage biography, converts ambition into his destiny. Father Amaro devotes himself to that adulterous relation with power, brought to the limits of crime. Pleasure and body are revealed as both a means and an end, bursting into the protagonists after the «body *versus* soul» rule breakup. Desire, as invisible thread and true vehicle that carries every human being, makes the main characters feel uneasy becoming at times a chasing ghost, at times a threatening devil, being ultimately the light that guide them.

José María Eça de Queirós was a renown Portuguese writer, who falls within the naturalist tradition. Through his narrative and particularly through the work just reviewed, he fiercely criticized a torn ecclesiastical policy after the strengthen of the National States and the decadence of the Empires, while he looked over the normative parameters of the social life of his time. The community was scandalized by *The Crime of Father Amaro*, becoming a successful novel by means of which the Lusitanian intellectual deepens into the divided power of catholic potencies and the hypocrisy of priesthood. The Church representatives and part of the country elites, transfer the reader the nostalgia of a weakened hegemony as a result of the political changes and the new socioeconomic structure of Europe, in the rear of the pillars implemented by the industrial revolution.

Church priests together with female believers typify the central characters of the work. An estate that exerts its hindmost imperial authority under the long pontificate of the last sovereign of the Papal States: Pius IX or Pio Nono (1792-1878). The historical itinerary of

interferences carried out by the Church into political life, characterizes the papal domain of Pio Nono, due to a relentless crusade against liberalism and modernity. Thus, the cox of Saint Peter's boat will try to restrain changes through the pastoral exercise of catholic religiosity, especially popular. Among the most relevant landmarks of his pontificate we can underline the proscription of the prevailing scientism by the promulgation of the encyclical *Quanta cura*, which appendix is the famous *Syllabus errorum* (1864). In this one he levelled a condemnatory compendium against scientism, based on reason and progress, responsible for the errors of the world; concurrently he condemned a rationalism that postulated the independence between philosophy and theology, as well as the false doctrines poured over the connections of the Church with the State within the osmosis relation in which both estates had been immersed -not exempt from conflicts- for centuries. It is evident how hegemonic dominion and ecclesiastical privileges, by cause of the empowerment of the State, had been collapsing since the early 17th century (Paiva, 2007, p. 55).

Pius IX also convened the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) which decreed the papal infallibility dogma, causing the definitive rupture between the liberal States and the Papacy as a result of the historical intrusion of the Church into political life. Nevertheless, one of the occurrences performed by the roman curia during this period in relation to the thematic lines in the writing of Queirós is the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854), meaning that Mary was conceived by her mother, Saint Anne, without being stained by original sin. Consecrated to this doctrine is the relationship of Amaro with young Amelia in a permanent revisionism masterly represented by the author.

Once the position of the ecclesiastical potencies has been posed, we conclude our essay approaching the dimension acquired by the social representation of femininity, over whom most of the surveillance and punishment pressure is exerted. Considering the leitmotiv introduced in the writing, women sexual experiences within the context described by Eça de Queirós appear mediated, at first, by a concrete socialization *ab initio*; by virtue of which a woman is instituted as a passive being; accordingly, daring to subvert the established order or contradicting the imposed social codes would result in discredit and, ultimately, in punishment. We consider that prioritizing the familiar institution and marriage, in the culture and society previously exposed, deteriorates female personal development, preventing women from being their own

selves embedded in such a mirror game, in permanent pursuit of the ideal other. This dimension implies the legitimation and reproduction of a contemporary hegemonic model about considerations on sex and a false universalism of stable identities which still prevail in our own days.

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