

FAREWELL TO THE "ANGELUS"

RESUMO

Partindo da análise paradigmática dos dois textos, este estudo busca mostrar como e quando os dois autores se mantêm num mesmo plano, ou se separam, deixando claros o envolvimento e a nostalgia, em Drummond, opostamente ao afastamento e à ironia, em Eliot.

ABSTRACT

This study analyses the paradigmatic construction of the two texts and aims to show where and when the two authors remain on the same level or move apart, when one can clearly see the involvement and nostalgia, in Drummond, opposed to Eliot's detachment and irony.

As T.S. Eliot himself has put it in his essay "*Tradition and the Individual Talent*"<sup>1</sup>, literature is made up of works which are both and at the same time *atemporal and individual*. In this way the good writer is not the one who creates something thoroughly new, but he who *recreates art* out of what has been the theme of previous or foreign masterpieces; and his recreation is quite original, as its originality comes from different aspects not touched upon before. That is the individual within the traditional, the personal and present form within what belongs to all times and may thus be the token of one special time. That means situating the *here and now* in the gallery of those artists already sanctioned in the *far away and past*.

From this point of view I shall try to study Eliot's "*Prelude I*" in comparison with Carlos Drummond de Andrade's "*Anoitecer*".

Tradition is present in the theme of both poems: hollow and inactive twentieth century man, living in an industrialized, stifling, distressing world; urban life conditioning this man, as opposed to rural and/or past life, connotative of peace and human spirituality.

The "*individual*" quality of a work of art is to be seen through the author's stance, the way he becomes involved in or detached from what he presents as his creative technique. According to this position, I propose to analyse the above mentioned poems on three levels.

LEVEL A - The level of contemporary industrial society.

LEVEL B - The level of present rural society or, more likely, past rural life.

LEVEL C - The level of the author's stance.

One will notice that level A absorbs level B entirely in both authors; level C is also taken in by level A in Drummond only, whereas Eliot keeps it to itself within the paradigmatic structure of his poem.

Both "*Prelude I*" and "*Anoitecer*" begin with the idea of dusk, which is to be seen in Drummond by means of the opposition between levels A and B. As he starts off from the connoted feeling of twilight, which has existed in other times and in rural life — this connotation is metonymically suggested by "bell" ("*é a hora em que o sino toca*") —, followed by the opposition created through the horns and sirens, the poet offers us a clear vision of our modern world, when he makes use of the shifter "*aqui*"; in this world there is no place either for peace

or for a happy, willing return to home, as it used to be in the past and/or in the country ("*mas aqui não há sinos*").

Eliot creates the opposition not by means of levels A and B, but through inversion, using, also, a metonymic process ("steaks" substitute for people who eat them), as people become things and things become people. There is no human being voluntarily preparing his meals; there is only meal itself, present there, synaesthetically, as something man must have in order to go on living. It is quite obvious at this point in the poem, that human beings have been turned into robots. Dusk, in Eliot, stands for vegetative life from the very beginning, whereas in Drummond's work the idea of twilight is still predominantly nostalgic; this idea, I believe, still conveys intensely some feeling of loss, of inmost religious spirituality and meditation which are found in verse 1.

Level A becomes obvious, in Drummond, after the shifter. Man is not an authentic being, master of his own will; he is merely some meaningless creature, choked up with modern industrialized society. This society, metonymically represented by horns and sirens, isolates man inside the crowd ("*somente buzinas*"). Massification stifles him, makes him feel anguish. His emotions are conveyed to the reader by means of semantic prolongations and continuity ("*apitos, aflitos, pungentes, trágicos*"); one should notice the way the formal content of the noun is reinforced by the epithets, through some "*crescendo*" which starts at "*aflitos*", passes by "*pungentes*" - obviously more meaningful - and reaches "*trágicos*" - this last one containing very deep semantic intensity. Human anguish is present in the use of these epithets. Anguish is such that it suffocates man, as I have said before. This feeling is perfectly clear in the last verse of the first stanza. That is the moment when man stops being human owing to his isolation (absence of what there should be in common) which is suggested by "*escuro segredo*". Things are given life and asphyxiate him ("*uivando escuro segredo*"). The verb "*uivar*", used for animals, is in itself indicative of some entanglement of men and beasts. This howling uttered here by horns and sirens conveys all the tragic sense of one's being alive in a mechanized society. This is the only verb indicative of any utterance. Bitter irony, this utterance is that of things, not even of animals. And what they utter is the threat of their own destructive power: it brings forth the possibility of danger which seems to rebound in vacancy. This idea of some frightening sound echoing in the nothingness of man's life is produced by the alliteration of the low - e - after the nasal sound of the verb "*uivando*".

Identical sensation of asphyxia and anguish through isolation is to be found in Eliot. The word "passageways" suggests, metaphorically, some sort of narrowing down, closing in lack of liberty taking hold of the man who goes back home, like an animal, perhaps only to get fed. In an extended metaphor ("six o'clock") the poet shows slavery to routine symbolically marked by the clock which ambiguously defines ordinary duties/time. Here, too, there is no voluntary return to home, no search for peace or spirituality, no cozy fireside; there is only routine, aimlessness. Time acquires deep significance when the hour told by the bell resounds all by itself in the line:

"Six o'clock"

Time is the only master. This significance is reinforced by the rhythm, for the line is written in amphimacer, as opposed to the iambic rhythm which is constant in the first two lines. This reinforcement is extended to the visual layer, for this is exactly the shortest line in the poem. After the pause following the third line Eliot brings forth the symbol of 20<sup>th</sup> century anguish and emptiness ("the burnt-out ends of smoky days") and creates the image of man, the same man who tries to find in smoking the substance to fill in the hollowness in him; it is an escape from solitude and annihilation. Coming closely after the "staccato" sound of the clock, the image of smoke seems to be rarefied and takes on the representation of modern cities, smoky in their stifling pollution. Thus in the fourth verse of the poem the end of the day is made one with the end of the human being, who negates himself, maybe unconsciously, by merging into nothingness.

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> stanza of "Anoitecer" Drummond goes back to the opposition of levels A and B when, by making use of the same process seen in the first stanza, he declares that "é a hora em que o pássaro volta". The bird would be, ambiguously, the image of rural life, non-existent "here" and of the lost freedom-lost because "...de há muito não há pássaros", which may be seen as corresponding to the same lack of liberty expressed in Eliot's "passageways" and "six o'clock". The poet of *Fazendeiro do Ar* opposes the rural to the urban level, and once again he depersonalizes man, who becomes unconscious and a robot, part of mass society. The epithet "compactas" reinforces the idea of massification, conveyed by "multidões"; man cannot be an individual. Being a thing, a cog-wheel in the machine, he slides, worn out. The use of the simile creates, then, the image of industrialized society, through the grease ("espesso óleo") which

represents this society and by means of the verb "impregnate" denotative of saturation. The present world, industrial world, dominates over man entirely, in the same way as the hours do in Eliot.

This opposition between levels A and B, which shows rural life as being the absence one would like to change into presence, is quite obvious in Drummond and becomes subtler in the author of *Four Quartets*, in lines 5, 6, and 7, when he alludes to nature, through the synecdoque - the "gusty shower" that "wraps/The grimy scraps/of withered leaves". One should notice that the leaves are withered because man has lost his natural condition. - he can't feel nature any more; nor can he get any peace it might offer him. As some valuable element, nature is destroyed ("grimy scraps"). The leaves which in a rural context would certainly be connotative of relaxation, tranquil acceptance, life, in the poem are spread around human beings and are unable to call up any sensation at all. Whereas, very ironically, the newspapers which should be the strongest means of communication, easily capable of reaching man, are all scattered over "vacant lots". At this moment I believe Eliot has come to the bitter conclusion, common to any observer of the "century of communication": what machines put out - the newspapers, that reproduce the message thousands of times - echo in the emptiness, for what used to be human, ironically enough has already been destroyed by the same mass-media these papers represent, by the same machine which has created them.

One feels at this point that while Drummond emphasizes man's hollowness as a consequence not only of industrialization, but also of lack of life in a rural and/or past context, Eliot shows it as a result of mass-media and mechanization of our urban industrial context. The idea of mechanization reappears in the third stanza of "ANOITECER", still through the reification of man, who can only deal with destruction; this is the same kind of annihilation one can see in the fourth verse of "PRELUDE I". That is why man does not run, as any human being would do; he "swirls" ("roda"), just as a mere piece of machinery. He does not search for the peace of nature - he only wishes to go back to the void ("mergulho no poço mais ermo e quedo"). One notices in this line, once more, semantic prolongation with an intensified idea of destruction, when he says "pede paz - morte - mergulho/ no poço mais ermo e quedo".

Drummond's last stanza, as the final stage of the paradigmatic structure, becomes quite removed from Eliot's final lines. The

Brazilian poet insists on the opposition between levels A and B, when we are reminded of B as he brings back to our memory the peaceful lost moments of dusk. This recollection becomes more vivid through the layer of sound, by the repetition of the sibilant in "*Hora de delicadeza, gasalho, sombra, silêncio*". At the end of his poem the Anglo-Saxon poet returns to, or rather, remains on level A, when the lifeless image of the houses is formed by means of the synecdoche, ("*broken blinds and chimney-pots*"). I call it lifeless because there is no answer to the rain - it beats against them but there is no echo. Besides, one notices that this lack of humanity is emphasised in the adjective "*broken*", connotative of emptiness in the houses. Once again the layer of sound becomes conspicuous as there is an attempt at the reproduction of the beating of the rain drops, through the repetition of the explosive b ("*beat on broken blinds*").

The great distance between the two authors is clearly seen in lines 4, 5, 6 and 7 of "*ANOITECER*", and lines 11, 12 and 13 of "*PRELUDE I*". In the former, level C is emphasized, with total involvement of the author, who feels dejected and situates himself among (and as one of) the mechanized and unhappy 20<sup>th</sup> century men. And this situation brings forth the image of Prometheus who, in this poem, is tortured by the crows (his awareness of being annihilated). The author suffers as he is conscious of having been turned into part of the gear; he has got past and future to be pecked at, but there is no present, or rather, no life for him. His consciousness is such that it blows up through the caesura limiting the "*sim*" which assures one of his being involved and reinforces the refrain "*desta hora tenho medo*".

In Eliot, on the other hand, level C does not coincide with the other two. The author is merely the impassive witness of massification. He is not compelled by anguish, he is ironical. His is very subtle irony that can be noticed in the opposition between levels B ("*horse*") and A ("*lamps*"). The idea of lifelessness and emptiness remains. Sterility is all. Bitterly enough the only sign of movement comes from an animal, and its motion denotes impatience (one must consider that it is a "cab-horse", not a vehicle typical of contemporary urban life) - while, as a last attack on industrial society, on the robots, there rises, automatically, one product of that society: "*the lighting of the lamps*"; automatism is conveyed by the gerund which provides with motion the action it conveys. The layer of sound seems to stress the emptiness and the lack of expressiveness of the environment,

in the line before the last, as the alliteration of the nasal sound contrasts with the strong syllables evinced by the stressed open vowel in the last line. One has, then, an auditive suggestion of the sincronic movement of the illuminating of the lamps.

In order to end this exposition I would like to go back to the initial idea of the three levels, A, B and C, as follows:

Level A - identically presented in both authors: contemporary man is hollow, anguished; he has become part of the masses in urban, industrial life.

Level B - much more intensely presented in Drummond. This level is always felt as being present through the opposition which is to be clearly seen in lines five, six, seven and twelve.

Level C - in Drummond, total and depressing involvement of the author by the environment. Level A contains level C. In Eliot, the author is absolutely apart, situated as he is as mere observer. Here levels A and C are not intermingled, they do not even come together.

It should be noticed, still, that language reflects the very structure of the lines, in both poems: prolix and full of epithets in Drummond, who presents a series of ideas for the general development of the theme; concise in Eliot, who also builds up the lines more succinctly, in one stanza only.

It seems to me that a comparative reading of these poems illustrates quite satisfactorily T.S. Eliot's statement that thematic tradition is to be found, both individually and originally, in two different artists no matter how unlike their "milieu" or how far their native lands. Once a real poet passes by the world, he leaves behind a track of unique beauty that, nevertheless, can very often plunge into "*the radiance which was once so bright*"...(2)

PRELUDE I (3)

The winter evening settles down  
With smell of steaks in passageways.  
Six ó clock.  
The burnt out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.  
And then the lighting of the lamps.

C. DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE

ANOITECER (4)

É a hora em que o sino toca,  
mas aqui não há sinos;  
há somente buzinas,  
sirenes roucas, apitos  
aflitos, pungentes, trágicos,  
uivando escuro segrêdo;  
desta hora tenho medo.



É a hora em que o pássaro volta  
mas de há muito não há pássaros;  
só multidões compactas  
escorrendo exaustas  
como espesso óleo  
que impregna o lajedo;  
desta hora tenho medo.

É a hora do descanso,  
mas o descanso vem tarde,  
o corpo não pede sono,  
depois de tanto rodar;  
pede paz — morte — mergulho  
no poço mais êrmo e quêdo  
desta hora tenho medo.

Hora de delicadeza,  
gasalho, sombra, silêncio.  
Haverá disso no mundo?  
É antes a hora dos corvos,  
bicando em mim, meu passado,  
meu futuro, meu degrêdo;  
Desta hora, sim, tenho medo.

CARLOS DRUMMOND DE ANDRADE

## DUSK

This is the hour the bell rings  
but there are no bells:  
just horns, hoarse sirens, nervous  
shrill, tragic whistles I hear,  
howling dark secrets.  
This is the hour I fear.

It is the hour the bird comes to roost  
but for a long time there have been no birds  
just cranning crowds  
cozing exhausted like thick oil  
filling the flag-stones.  
This is the hour I fear.

This is the hour of rest  
but rest comes too late.  
The body demands no sleep  
after its ceaseless rounds,  
it demands peace, death, a plunge  
into the most deserted, the stillest well.  
This is the hour I fear.

The hour of gentleness,  
comfort, shadow, silence.  
Are such things possible?  
It is more likely the hour of crows  
pecking me, pecking my past,  
my future, my exile.  
This is, yes, the hour I fear.

Translated by Thomas L. Burns

#### NOTAS

1. ELIOT, T.S. "Tradition and the Individual Talent". In: *SELECTED PROSE*. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd, 1965. pp.21-30.
2. WORDSWORTH, William. From "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood". In: *WORDSWORTH'S POEMS*. vol. I, Philip Wayne ed., London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1965. pp. 240-246.
3. From *SELECTED POEMS*. London, Faber and Faber Ltd., 1947.p.22.
4. From *FAZENDEIRO DO AR & POESIA ATÉ AGORA*. Rio, Livraria José Olympio, 1955. p. 221.