

## The Anglo-American Gothic Shadow in Contemporary Portuguese Art and Literature

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In times of uncertainty, great doubts about the future and disquieting revelations about a past whose threat seems to hover frighteningly over a deeply pessimistic present, a group of creators has surfaced in Portugal's artistic and literary landscape. This ensemble of authors captures the anxieties, obsessions, fears and melancholic feelings so keenly central to Portuguese sensitivity and simultaneously integrate Anglo-American Gothic creativity, which casts a shadow of light over their work that better discloses their uniqueness. The Gothic has been used as a genre and mode that is very adequate to our contemporary existence, and it refuses to die. As David Punter reminds us in "Shape and Shadow: on poetry and the uncanny", the Gothic is defined as "a repetition (...) of that which one did not know could be repeated". (194) Fred Botting also expanded this idea in his essay "In Gothic Darkly" where he considered the Gothic "a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present". (5)

From the disturbing atmospheres of Ana Teresa Pereira's fictional universe, so joyfully 'haunted' by the creations of Henry James, Truman Capote, Iris Murdoch and Alfred Hitchcock, to Gonçalo M. Tavares' "Black Books" wherein characters are faced with a state of existential despair and express dark, frenzied visions about the human condition, like those of Melville's Ahab or Bartleby; taking into account

artists like Nuno Cera, who was formerly the artist-in-residence in Berlin and New York where he deepened his artistic vision and transformed his relationship with Portugal, putting its scale into perspective by penetrating the desolation and decadence of the architectonic atmospheres of great city centers; we will finally reach the strongest display of this 'darkness visible' in the poetic and musical Gothic of Moonspell's lead singer, Fernando Ribeiro, who began a dialogue with the tragic poetry of José Luís Peixoto in *Antídoto* (2003). We will also mention David Soares, a writer who has been directly associated with Fantasy and is celebrated for his translations of works by Alan Moore, Jack Dann and Philip K. Dick. Furthermore, Soares is known to be an attentive reader of authors like Alexander Theroux, Edward Carey and Flann O'Brien and established contact with John Douglas' thought process, the agent who was one of the minds behind FBI's profiling program and whose work was crucial to the development of the psychopath painter in *O Evangelho do Enforcado* (2010). Common to all these artists is a dark vision of their creative imagination, a current tendency in some of the most original artworks nowadays, as Francesca Gavin noticed when she concluded, "There is a thread of dark imagery or ideas that runs through much contemporary art". (7) A similar point of view was defended by Gilda Williams, in her introduction to *Documents of Contemporary Art*, who observed, "'Gothic' in contemporary art is necessarily a partial term which serves mostly to identify a peculiar, dark sensitivity shared by the artist and the observer who has chosen to respond to the work in this manner". (13)

The influence of several gothic themes and concepts on this group of Portuguese writers will inevitably be associated with the psychoanalyst concepts of "shadow" created by Carl Gustav Jung, and with what Sigmund Freud called "the return of the repressed" to reveal the importance of giving expression to the dark side of human existence in most of the works here studied. The word "shadow" was used by C. G. Jung to refer to unconscious contents that represent hidden and negative aspects of the human personality as very real, present and common to all humanity. Jung's intention to reveal this reality is recurrent in many works by gothic writers who would certainly agree

with what he observed in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, "As far as we can discern, the sole purpose of human existence is to kindle a light in the darkness of mere being". (11) According to psychoanalytic vocabulary, this 'shadow' would be an archetype that corresponds to a negative personal nature which in turn is equivalent to the irrational and demonic side of the human personality.

This Jungian concept of 'shadow', which refers to unconscious contents that are the dark side of our personality, can also be associated with the Freudian *id* which identifies the same unconscious reality that quite often comes to the surface of conscience unexpectedly originating the return of the repressed. According to Freud, the latter is responsible for many psychological disturbances and for the presence of the uncanny. A term explained by Freud in his essay "Das Unheimliche" (1919), as a critical concept it has often been applied to gothic narratives where the strange and unfamiliar are part of a familiar world that represses them. One of the most common trends in Gothic is that terror can emerge in a vulgar and common medium, since, as Botting observes in *Gothic*, "Fiction in the middle of the century tended to realize terror and horror, fascinated by their irruption in the shadows of the everyday world". (125) This aspect has a direct bearing on the possibility of making what is familiar and normal strange and unfamiliar, as Freud explained in his above-mentioned essay. Thus, the real can become a nightmare, which will be all the more terrible the closer it is to what is common and familiar.

According to Jung, the 'shadow' (the *id*, or shadow archetype) is the unconscious or the unknown dark side of the personality not easily identifiable by the ego. Different from the Freudian definition of 'shadow', however, the Jungian 'shadow' can be both positive and negative and include everything the conscience cannot perceive. The 'shadow' is mainly negative because it is not pleasant to accept the existence of certain dark aspects of one's personality. "Everyone carries a shadow," Jung wrote in "Psychology of the Religion", and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. (131) Yet, there is something positive that may also remain hidden in one's shadow. In this essay the concept preserves

its main duality, as it is used to convey both a negative and a positive meaning. The first refers to the representation of the dark side of human existence in many contemporary works, and the second is linked to a cultural inheritance of Anglo-American origin transmitted by a collective unconscious that creates a kind of contamination, from which it is impossible to escape because of the power of attractiveness it exerts on many writers and artists who desire to go deep into many unknown and dark aspects of human life. As Jung concluded in *The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, “the shadow personifies everything that the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself” (284) and represents “a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well”. (21) The expression “Gothic shadow”, used in this essay, also indicates that every creative influence hides unconscious and unknown aspects that are sometimes challenging to rationalize and so keep being hidden and can only be revealed in the form of fictional and artistic creations, as they are sometimes difficult to perceive and describe entirely. As Jung said in *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, “a creative person has little power over his own life. He is not free. He is captive and driven by his daimon”. (357)

In *Escritos sobre Génio e Loucura* (2006), Fernando Pessoa had already sensed the influence of what he called a “morbid shadow,” when he noticed “a sombra mórbida que veio e continua sobre nós, começando a sentir-se em Poe, cuja própria degenerescência era génio”. (436) Interested in the darkest aspects of human personality and influenced by English authors, Pessoa was an avid reader and translated several of Poe’s works, sharing with the latter an irresistible attraction to perverseness which, among others, led to the development of the work *Um Jantar Muito Original* (1902) where the theme of cannibalism allows the author to gruesomely explore some of the most heinous aspects of human existence. This shadow is also cast over Mário de Sá-Carneiro who filled his poetic universe with revenants and decaying settings where death is constantly present. Sá-Carneiro articulates what Poe called the “terror of the soul” through a ‘dark’ fiction that includes “A Grande Sombra”, a short story featured in *Céu*

*em Fogo* (1915). Jorge de Sena, another twentieth-century Portuguese author, is a central figure in the Anglo-American literary heritage who was especially focused on by Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa who considered *O Físico Prodigioso* (1966) an innovative text. Inspired in old medieval legends and following Herculano's line of thought, in de Sena's text, "os requintes de horror e perversidade ultrapassam todos os tratamentos dos pactos satânicos e tornam este conto talvez o caso mais fascinante da exploração do horror na literatura portuguesa contemporânea, porventura mesmo de toda a literatura portuguesa". (Sousa, *O Horror* 82) The fact is that Portuguese authors tend to produce works that are typically obscure and melancholic, featuring tragic meditations on life which produces a literature of disquiet that is so well represented in Fernando Pessoa's *O Livro do Desassossego*.

Much of what can be called "Gothic" also intends to disquiet certain minds still influenced by conventional ways of thought. As Jerrold E. Hoggie noticed, "'Gothic' has long been a term used to project modern concerns into a deliberately vague, even fictionalized past. (...) Like the ghosts of counterfeits it employs, then, the Gothic is inherently connected to an exploitation of the emptied out past to symbolize and disguise present concerns, including prejudices". (*Gothic Fiction* 16) Likewise, Gilda Williams reminds us, in *Documents in Contemporary Art*, that "like the original literature, Gothic contemporary art is principally Anglo-Saxon, with a sprinkling of excellent examples from continental Europe as well". (13) Springing from the seventeenth century English Gothic, much contemporary gothic art and literature is mainly of Anglo-Saxon origin which means it is almost inevitable to refer to this culture if we intend to perceive a number of important gothic marks in the work of some contemporary Portuguese writers. This is especially true if these writers have always been interested in dealing with gothic themes like death, enclosure, existential despair, suffering, fear, evil, violence or decadence. The Gothic aesthetics, with its peculiar beauty concepts and sublimity, possesses an incredible ability to adapt to different styles, historical periods and cultures. This happens because the Gothic can be considered not only a genre restricted to a specific period of time or culture but also a transversal mode of

expression to different styles and times, possessing a very important interdisciplinary tendency. The influence of the Gothic in Portuguese contemporary literature and art will certainly allow us to consider the Anglo-Portuguese intertextuality showing how some Portuguese writers have been haunted by this particular aesthetic vision. In "Gothic Origins: The Haunting of the Text", David Punter refers to the haunting power held by gothic texts because he believes terror is haunted, shadowed by textuality, and concludes that the gothic tradition is itself a form of haunting, "what haunts Gothic, we might provisionally say, and more especially in contemporary contexts, is Gothic: a ghost haunted by another ghost". (14) David Punter also mentions a knowledge which is compounded of previous hauntings that crowd in upon the present surrounding it like a gallery of grotesques with the imagery of persecution, obsession and violence. As defined by this critic, every writing haunted by the Gothic is contaminated by an original infection, which has to do with the Freudian concept of "the return of the repressed", that "other" or unfathomable shadow with impenetrable and mysterious meanings that is always haunting textuality creating its ambiguity and ambivalence, making it simultaneously clear and unclear. In this process, an obscure clarity is born which leads Punter to consider that every kind of discourse is haunted by a fatal obscurity. Defending this point of view, Punter concludes that this process of textualization is a process of contamination. (44) While contaminated and haunted by this Anglo-American gothic shadow, the Portuguese writers and artists mentioned in this essay inherited this dark current of creative imagination which is very much centered on giving expression to the most somber aspects of human existence.

The dark and strange side of the human psyche as well as concepts like perversion, criminality, monstrosity, transgression, violence and destruction have gained great influence over many contemporary artists and writers. In Portugal the interest for these themes is not only a recent tendency but also comes from the past. In what concerns Dark or Horror Literature in Portugal (eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries), as Maria Leonor Machado de Sousa mentions, "a tendência para o 'negro' seguiu, entre nós, principalmente a corrente 'social'

de Sue". (*A Literatura Negra* 168) Notwithstanding, we must be aware that in Portugal horror fiction has not yet established itself, since we do not have a culture wherein horror, fantasy and science fiction are able to create an archetype or tradition that will last, one that may be comparable to *Frankenstein* or *Dracula*, for instance. Machado de Sousa too has concluded that we cannot find in Portuguese literary works of horror markedly dark authors, though she has highlighted some writers in whose works it is possible to perceive a constant influence in terms of goals, genres or processes. In a chapter entitled "Prolongamentos do Interesse Literário pelo Horror no Século XX", (*O Horror* 79) the scholar draws attention to Fernando Pessoa, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, Jorge de Sena, Domingos Monteiro, José Régio and Branquinho da Fonseca, among others.

In an anthology about Portuguese Fantasy, edited by Eugénio Lisboa and Helder Macedo, translated into English by Margaret Jull Costa, we can find authors like Manuel Pinheiro Chagas, Álvaro do Carvalho, Eça de Queiroz, Fialho da Almeida, Manuel Teixeira-Gomes, António Patrício, Mário de Sá-Carneiro, José de Almada Negreiros, José Régio, Domingos Monteiro, Mário-Henrique Leiria and David Mourão-Ferreira. An anthology of short stories influenced by the fictional universe of H. P. Lovecraft was also edited with the title *A Sombra sobre Lisboa* (2006) and includes works by authors like Luís Filipe Silva, António de Macedo, Fernando Ribeiro, and many others. In a separate set of texts entitled *Contos de Terror do Homem Peixe* (2007), published by Chimpanzé Intelectual, in addition to several other contemporary Portuguese authors, writers such as João Barreiros, David Soares, Rui Zink, Fernando Ribeiro and António de Macedo are featured. *MOTELx – Histórias de Terror* (2015) is a volume that puts together some famous Portuguese writers of the new generation, such as Afonso Cruz, Inês Fonseca Santos, and Adolfo Luxúria Canibal. It was presented in Lisbon at the MOTELx – Horror Film International Festival (9th edition), and it consists of seven horror stories with different literary approaches to the genre. A more recent anthology of Brazilian and Portuguese authors was organized by Ricardo Lourenço, *A Dança dos Ossos – Antologia do Conto Luso-Brasileiro*.

Portuguese horror cinema has also a very direct anglophone influence as it is the case of Filipe Melo, a writer and musician, who directed the first Portuguese zombie film, *I'll see you in my Dreams* (2004). With Cinemateca Portuguesa's help, and after a decade of research, the volume *MOTELX's Lost Room – The Films of Portuguese Horror (1911-2006)*, coordinated by João Monteiro and Filipa Rosário, was recently published bringing together critical and academic texts about several Portuguese films associated with the horror genre and the domains of 'gothic', 'slasher', 'supernatural', and 'folk horror'. The examples found here are part of a scarce fantastic literary tradition, which is not enough to form a canon but is sufficient to distinguish very characteristic Portuguese features, giving rise to a *corpus*, as the introduction clarifies. This work aims at assessing the production of Portuguese cinema until 2007, the year *MOTELX* festival was founded. That is why the book's research ends with *Coisa Ruim* (2006), directed by Tiago Guedes and Frederico Serra, and opens with *Os Crimes de Diogo Alves* (1911), by João Tavares. This work covers, among others, the films *Três Dias sem Deus* (1946) by Bárbara Virginia, *O Crime de Aldeia Velha* (1964) by Manuel Guimarães, *A Maldição de Marialva* (1990) by António de Macedo, *O Construtor de Anjos* (1978) by the painter Noronha da Costa, *Rasganço* (2001) by Raquel Freire, and *Aparelho Voador a Baixa Altitude* (2002) by Solveig Nordlund. In this very "dark room" it is also possible to find new readings of films such as *Os Canibais* (1988) and *O Convento* (1995) by Manoel de Oliveira, and *O Fascínio* (2003) by José Fonseca e Costa. It will undoubtedly be a very stimulating exercise to think about which subgenres of horror the cinematic works by authors such as Manoel de Oliveira or Fonseca e Costa fall into. According to the coordinators, this is something that immediately forces the audience to have a new perception of these films, imbuing them with timeless aspects that will certainly allow even more new readings.

The issue raised by all these anthologies lies in how hard it is to incorporate authors with such diverse styles in the Gothic mode when, generally speaking, most of them would defy being associated with and labelled as "Gothic." Regarding this concern, in an



anthology entitled *American Gothic Tales* (1996), Joyce Carol Oates was able to solve this problem of categorization, selecting authors by employing a broader theoretical framework that allowed her to include names like Raymond Carver, E.L. Doctorow, Don DeLillo and Charles Johnson in the volume. Doing so allowed Oates to overcome each writer's idiosyncrasies, finding in all of them a comprehensive comment on America according to their varied perspectives. Oates validated her method by arguing that, besides H. P. Lovecraft as well as other notable exceptions like August Derleth, Shirley Jackson, Peter Straub, Stephen King and Anne Rice, many of the authors in the volume are not specifically "Gothic". She further clarified her process of inclusion aimed at suggesting that "the richness and magnitude of the gothic-grotesque vision and the inadequacy of genre labels if by 'genre' is meant mere formula". (8) The same method may also guide the references here made to some contemporary Portuguese authors whose works have hardly ever allowed us to remain unmoved by their grotesque-Gothic imagination, born out of the clash with absurd existential anxieties in a world undergoing a sweeping process of disintegration of character and values. To convey the complexity of their vision, these Portuguese writers face previous narrative forms, which aimed to transgress social and moral norms to allow universal concepts of truth to be reached, with great skepticism. Therefore, moving closer to the Gothic genre allows them to question the concept that humankind lives in a rational, coherent world, which in turn will lead them to adapt subversion and transgression processes to attain the unrepresentable and, sometimes, transform their work into processes of literary and artistic self-referentiality. Exploring new and transgressive ways of representation, these authors demonstrate they are true inheritors of the Gothic tradition. As Andrew Smith notes about Clive Barker in the work *Gothic Literature*, "horror tradition also explores a set of complex ideas about the nature of representation". (141)

Is the Gothic's transgressive predisposition, which holds such power to shake established thought structures, what interests some Portuguese writers, such as David Soares? In an interview given by the author, Soares argued the genre is defined by its disruptive effect

where nothing can exist without inevitable tragic consequences that become shock waves that may endure in a time when nothing else lasts – an idea that validates the relevance of Gothic literature today. As Jerrold E. Hoggle well observed, “Gothic can activate its revolutionary and boundary-changing impulses, and lead us to dissolve some of the rigidities and their otherings of people by which we live and from which much of the Gothic takes its shape”. (19) In his works, David Soares reveals he is an heir of that poetic enlightened shadow as proven by the title of the novel *Luz Miserável* (2010) that includes some provoking, diabolical short stories filled with gruesome extravaganzas located in claustrophobic and exotic settings like the ones found in “A Sombra de Ningué.” Indeed, if we follow David Soares on another vertiginous journey to the dark side of imagination, we can attest his Pessoa-like interest in occultism, alchemical language, witchcraft and secret cults in *A Conspiração dos Antepassados* (2007) where it is stated that “cada alma é um demónio” (“each soul is a devil”). (26) Such proclamations express the author’s craving to come face to face with the horrible data of human existence and, above all, to put into words evil’s presence in the many eras and aspects of human life. Soares thus follows an American Gothic tradition that springs from Edgar Allan Poe and with which he identifies through the use of some suspense techniques and certain themes associated with the Fantastic genre. In the tales in *A Luz Miserável*, we find many enclosed places, much like in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Premature Burial* or *The Cask of Amontillado*. The children’s book *O Homem Corvo* can also remind us of the famous poem *The Raven* not only because of its title but also due to the sad loneliness of its main character. In most of his narratives, as in Poe’s fiction, Soares creates a universe where light and darkness are always intertwined by the power of his gothic imagination.

*A Conspiração dos Antepassados* seeks to be innovative in how it represents the evil, mysteriously perpetrated by a terrible historical conspiracy wherein D. Sebastião’s myth is interwoven with the relationship between Fernando Pessoa and the English magician Alister Crowley. By intersecting different writing styles, Soares makes the

reader feel perplexed about who is writing, as the narrative voice might simultaneously be Crowley's, Soares' or Pessoa's. Soares knows it is important to communicate with the invisible world without losing sight of the visible one. As a result, magic is necessarily addressed in Soares' works in a practically scientific manner. In addition, the author's supernatural themes are nearly always credibly presented, a fact that not only evokes Poe's rationally meticulous technique but also Ann Radcliffe's novels. Soares' Gothic-grotesque imagination can be attested through two mysterious character whose rivalry sets into motion the events in *Lisboa Triunfante* (2008), an epic novel where the author delves into the darker, most labyrinthic aspects of Lisbon's history. The interpenetration of human and animal nature is achieved through the use of a symbolic language capable of narrating a story about a match between two proto-primordial figures of fabulous nature, a fox and a lizard, creatures that, as the following quote shows, mirror significant perverse human traits, "mudando de expressão, a Raposa estreitou os olhos e esticou a bocarra num sorriso finíssimo; quando sorria daquela maneira, a cabeça da Raposa parecia afunilar-se até a boca tocar nas orelhas. (...) Como era possível a bicha amanhar aquelas feições tão perversas: tão... 'humanas'?...". (Soares, *Lisboa Triunfante* 128)

In addition, what seems to be truly relevant in Soares' works is actually revealed by one of his main characters: "they dare to imagine". Therefore, on this point the Anglo-American tradition may also become for national writers a significant reference with works by authors like Isaac Bashevis, John Cheever, Sylvia Plath, William Goyen, E. L. Doctorow and Paul Bowles standing as powerful stimuli to the Gothic imagination. In these authors' texts, much like in Soares' own works, the surreal is indispensable for the real to merge with the unreal and the historic with the fantastic. As noted by Joyce Carol Oates, "the surreal, raised to the level of poetry, is the very essence of 'gothic': that which displays the range, depth, audacity and fantastical extravagance of the human imagination". (9)

Likewise, it is possible to recognize the influence of this Anglo-American shadow in Ana Teresa Pereira's unsettling fictional universe, a sway acknowledged by the author herself when she admitted there is

a Gothic undertone to her work. Influenced by English Romanticism, the Pre-Raphaelite universe, and the writing of Henry James, Iris Murdoch and Cornell Woolrich, Pereira's fiction is known for creating sinister environments and disquieting atmospheres that show signs and traces of the Gothic. Even her most well-known works have gothic titles such as: *A Casa das Sombras*, *As Velas da Noite*, *A Porta Secreta*, *O Ponto de Vista dos Demónios*, *A Dança dos Fantasmas* and *Cidade Fantasma*.

Having started by writing detective fiction, Pereira has been creating ambiguous narratives that can also be associated with the Fantastic genre, where we find feelings of strangeness in characters who live outside reality, which is determined by their tragic emotions. In spite of being very reticent about any kind of categorization, Pereira created a very specific and original fictional universe that almost seems to be an autonomous genre in itself. However, the Fantastic can be considered a literary mode of expression (from which the Gothic emerges) that produces different kinds of fiction in different historical periods. As Rosemary Jackson observed in *Fantasy – The Literature of Subversion* (1981), fantasy “has to do with inverting elements of this world, re-combining its constitutive features in new relations to produce something strange, unfamiliar and apparently ‘new’, absolutely ‘other’ and different”. (8) Pereira's fiction can be seen as a very good example of all this. Divided between the real and the unreal, her characters' option is to live in a dreamlike state that creates in the readers doubts about the nature of their actions, so the latter are never sure if they really happened or if they are a mere product of their imagination. The short story “Se Eu Morrer Antes de Acordar” or the end of *A Linguagem dos Pássaros* are examples of this uncertainty created by the ambiguities in the behaviour of certain characters who seem to live either in their world of dreams or in reality, in spite of always preferring the first in order to follow their most essential desires to find the true meaning behind their existence. This preference for living in a world of imagination can be explained because “fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a lack resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as

absence and loss". (Jackson 3) A very famous example of these ambiguous narratives is "The Turn of the Screw" by Henry James, an author with whom Ana Teresa Pereira identifies herself very deeply. The end of this narrative does not allow us to determine whether ghosts haunt the old estate, or whether we are being confronted by the hallucinations of a hysterical governess, a recurring situation in Pereira's fictions, representing also a mark of the Fantastic, according to Tzevetan Todorov. The latter defines it as being "a hesitation common to the reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from 'reality' as it exists in the common opinion". (41) A very important reason why these texts create this ambiguity is due to the psychological disorders of the central characters who, in the case of James' tale, are victimized by the hostile atmosphere which surrounds them. In Pereira's fiction, on the other hand, they are influenced by old fears and other psychological complexities. In her above-mentioned study of the Fantastic, Rosemary Jackson noticed that, while expressing existential anxieties, fantasy deals with unconscious material and themes of self and other, of 'I' and 'not I', which makes some reference to psychoanalysis necessary. (61) In both James and Pereira's tales, the dark shadow of the past haunts the living revealing their double personalities and producing uncanny and strange realities, which are related to the Freudian concept of "Das Unheimliche" that can in part explain much of the mysterious meanings of these narratives. Pereira's tale, *A Outra* (2010) exemplifies all this process well through a very explicit intertext that directly evokes James' tale, proving once again the decisive and striking influence that Anglophone Literature has on her work. Another example of this intertextuality, which underlines the importance of dreams and the return of the past in Pereira's fiction, is the tale "O Fim de Lizzie" (2008), which has a very similar beginning to *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier – "A noite passada sonhei que tinha voltado à casa do avô" (Pereira 27) ("Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again"). (Maurier 6)

A *film noir* lover, Ana Teresa Pereira creates characters that seem to belong to another dimension like, for example, in the film *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) when William Holden is wandering down

the avenue that leads to the mansion, he is actually walking into a different world. Interestingly, the same happens in Pereira's books where sometimes there is nothing else besides an old house with a lake (or a swimming pool), two identical houses in front of one another, a library with a burning fireplace and two or four characters. Obsessively filled with references to art, literature and cinema, the author's works often resort to the same spaces, themes and characters in a metaphysical vortex of doom where the demon of death circles the angel of love, condemning the latter to live with it forever. What is more, there are numerous houses that resemble castles as well as wintery landscapes, poisonous plants and ethereal beings held hostage by their vampire demonic doubles like Azazel in *A Linguagem dos Pássaros* (2001), a fallen angel, but also a demon of nature, "Azazel (...) conhecia todas as línguas, (...) gostava de música, (...) gostava de cantar e dançar. Um anjo negro, um pássaro negro, o ser que melhor que ninguém conhecia a linguagem dos pássaros, a linguagem do mundo". (86) Paradoxical to the very end, Pereira's characters become "black swans" able to carry the reader to another dimension, another plane of consciousness, that the author always knew how to find in Iris Murdoch's works, time and again acknowledging this great influence on her.

Just like Borges, Ana Teresa Pereira says she was born in an English library, which explains her labyrinthine, unusual narratives of endless intertextualities. It would be interesting to notice, in these explicit intertexts, the obsessive, constant and unusual associations that Pereira's works establish with Anglo-American Literature and other forms of Art (Cinema, Painting and Music), creating a very original poetic system that defies classification of genre due to the interconnections between dreams and reality, subjectivity and objectivity, or the fantastic and the realistic. The associations to the Anglophone Culture act as an escape to a different dimension being a part of her imaginative world where even the fictional places have English names.

In *Rosas Mortas* (1998), for instance, the influence of the British tradition returns via the shadow projected by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's art, which haunts Pereira's text like an echo from the lovers' past in

their present lives and memories of days bygone assert themselves with the same poetic strength of Rossetti's verse "I have been here before" in the poem "Sudden Light" (1863). Each novel or short story is like an enclosed world, a painting, so the theme of enclosure, so dear to Gothic fiction, is evoked at the end of the novel as the author resorts to the English tradition again. The latter is clearly represented through the image of a woman, locked away in a tower of a castle, who can only see the world through its reflection in a mirror, an imagery that matches the figure of the "The Lady of Shalott" (1832) by Alfred Tennyson. Regarding the presence of a Gothic-grotesque vision, we find it at the beginning of *Rosas Mortas*, conveyed via a character, an artist who in an attempt to overcome her loneliness admits that, "É a primeira vez que nasço como mulher. Há ainda em mim um rasto de bicho, um rasto de nevoeiro". (67)

To Ana Teresa Pereira writing is not essential; instead, it is a particular outlook that needed a long time and experience to take shape. This perspective was developed by the author in a set of essays entitled *O Ponto de Vista dos Demónios* (2002) where she coexists with her ghosts as well as memories of books and movies through which we can easily anticipate the genesis of particular moods and characters. Actors like Anthony Hopkins, Rita Hayworth, Michelle Pfeifer; directors like Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford, John Huston, and Polanski as well as writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, John Dickson Carr and William Irish are some of the ghosts that inhabit and stimulate her imagination in order to create an alternative and very emotional fictional universe where the author like her characters seem to live. What is more, knowing how the author acts in the creative universe of her acknowledged English predecessors, who, like Henry James in "The Art of Fiction" (1884), have passed onto Pereira the wisdom of their shadows, allows us to keep up with the inner workings of her writing. From the shadows of these authors, Pereira concludes that, "se a mente é imaginativa (...) pode transformar os mais pequenos sinais em revelações, presente o invisível a partir do visível, e descobre a ligação entre as coisas". (*Ponto de Vista dos Demónios* 100)

Very often compared to Franz Kafka, Gonçalo M. Tavares is another heir to that very unique black shadow that projects itself onto a set of books he purposely called “black” and through which he casts his dark gaze on the human condition. Possessing a Gothic-grotesque outlook, conveyed by means of a surreal and dramatic writing style that transcends all established formulae and patterns, Tavares adds strong doses of corrosive humour and oppressive atmospheres to his disturbing novels, where he ponders upon madness, suffering and fear. Evil is another important subject matter especially developed in *Uma Menina Está Perdida no Seu Século à Procura do Pai* (2014), where the memory of the Holocaust is evoked by the evil experiments led by Hitler’s doctors and the journeys of refugees who escaped to several countries in Europe. In this novel the anonymity of life in a city allows several nameless hotels to exist where, instead of a number, each room has the name of a Nazi concentration camp: Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau and Mauthausen-Gusen. They are all labyrinth-hotels where the characters lose themselves as if they were in traditional gothic castles. In “O Reino” and also in some volumes of “O Bairro”, Tavares follows the tradition of the fantastic novel in order to create a society (a kingdom) that functions according to a strange moral that is revealed to be deeply amoral.

In addition to evoking Büchner’s play *Woyzeck* (1879), José Saramago and António Lobo Antunes’ influence, in Tavares’ works we can find a likeness to the narrative technique employed by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf or Michael Cunningham, Banville’s black humour and especially Lewis Carroll’s nonsense and English surrealism. In *Jerusalém* (2005), for example, the story takes place in the early hours of May 29th while its kaleidoscopic narrative subverts the plot’s linearity, trimming it down to an apparently disperse set of fragments. Horror has a special place in the narrative, since the main character is a doctor and a researcher who develops a utopic project aiming to complete a historical survey of horror, since he considers that, “a história do horror é a substância determinante da História”. (53) Compiling facts about several forms of violence



committed in concentration camps, genocidal acts and massacres, Theodore Busbeck sets himself to find meaning in universal evil through a graph that is meant to allow him to “perceber se o horror está a diminuir ao longo dos séculos ou a aumentar”. (50) He, therefore, tries to find a predictable formula to help isolate the causes of evil in the world in order to eradicate them, just like the potion made by Dr. Jekyll was aimed at radically splitting good from evil in human personality. As a result, Busbeck resembles a mad scientist who obsessively tries to understand the madness and evil in human history in order to better control them and make them more predictable. The outcome of this great epic appeal, however, is exactly the opposite. Given that nothing of such a complex nature can be predictable, the truth, it is concluded, can only be reached from its opposite, which lays bare the chaotic state of the world and our inability to control it.

In Tavares’ other black books, readers are faced with a similar critique to the excesses of rationalism, a theme Gothic fiction is fond of. Such is the case of *Aprender a Rezar na Era da Técnica* (2007) where we are presented with the scary effects of a civilization stripped of its spirituality and based on mechanic concepts of competency and efficiency, grotesquely represented as a parody that satirizes a surgeon who aspires to climb up the political power ladder. Once again, Tavares introduces a character who is blindly involved in theoretical formulas emptied of any kindness which, consequently, turn him into a mere puppet for the system. The character ends up as little more than an object, a grotesque, decadent image that reflects the oddness and inadequacy of his purposes, which are common in many other characters of totalitarian instincts whose German-sounding names locate them in nameless, undefined cities in northern Europe. As a result, the readers feel loss, insecure and powerless, an effect that puts them at risk of getting lost so that, at last, they can find themselves in the dark labyrinths of the narrative. In *Antídoto* (2003), which was born out of a partnership between José Luís Peixoto and *Moonspell*, we find the following,

O mundo pára. E lembro-me de ti como uma faca, uma faca profunda, a lâmina infinita de uma faca espetada infinitamente em mim. Não passou muito tempo desde que a manhã nasceu. Passou muito tempo desde que me deixaste sozinho entre as sombras que se confundiam com a noite. (12)

It is, therefore, an antidote to the soul's evil and the poison of existence that must be taken throughout ten short stories of dark mood and obscure endings complemented by ten songs by the best-known Portuguese heavy metal band, Moonspell. In *Uma Casa na Escuridão* (2002), Peixoto recovers the haunted house theme so overwhelmingly present in Gothic Anglo-American fiction, such as "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) by Edgar Allen Poe or *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) by Shirley Jackson as well as in a number of previous works like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) where the expression "sins of the fathers"<sup>1</sup> was first used to speak of the curse of the ancestors, which Peixoto also seeks to exorcise in his poetic dark novel. In addition, in *Uma Casa na Escuridão*, Faulkner's dark heritage is felt in the anachronical capture of a decadent present caused by the collapse of family relationships and a consequent loss of identity, as love seems to be subjected to an eternal blood curse. Besides intersecting the absurd with the likely, combining love with horror, pain, cruelty and violence, Peixoto shows he masters the processes of Gothic sublimity, which allow him to build an allegory about the act of writing that is also a cry against barbarity and the end of civilization. Furthermore, the narrator is a writer struggling with shadows forever imprinted in his memory and cast in ambivalent feelings of despair and hope,

As nossas sombras caminhavam entre sombras. (...) Chegámos à sepultura dela. A partir daí, não foi preciso explicar nada ao senhor violonista para que ele percebesse. (...) O céu não tinha estrelas. O céu era toda a escuridão do cemitério, dos nossos olhares e de toda a escuridão que desenterrávamos do interior da terra. A minha força era do tamanho da minha esperança. (74)

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1. Horace Walpole in his preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*. The expression was taken from *Exodus* 20:5.

*Uma Casa na Escuridão* by Peixoto is thus an example of how the Gothic, which inhabits this fictional house, haunts contemporary Portuguese literature. According to Chris Baldick in the well-known introduction to *The Oxford Book of Gothic Tales*, the association between the past's inheritance and the influence of a claustrophobic space is key in Gothic narratives since "[f]or the Gothic affect to be attained, a tale should combine a fearful sense of inheritance in time with a claustrophobic sense of enclosure in space, these two dimensions reinforcing one another to produce an impression of sickening descent into disintegration". (xix) Peixoto's dark poetic narrative seems to be a dream but turns out to be a violent and real nightmare. The writer created a house that represents a country which is never directly identified. The characters' subjectivities disappear and are destroyed by the house invaders, the soldiers who use violence and brutality to mutilate human beings. Like in *O Reino* by Gonçalo M. Tavares, in his novel, Peixoto evokes the dark side of authority recalling the period of dictatorship in Portugal at the time of Salazar's government. Individual existence is thus totally annihilated by this repressive and superior power. In addition, death invades the house through the influence of a black plague that contaminates all the bodies leading them to total disintegration. Terror and guilt substitute love which is mentioned in the chapters' titles and in their epigraphs but cannot be recovered. There seems to be neither salvation nor regeneration because terror takes hold of life becoming the only possible life, which explains the presence of the Gothic in this novel, where life, death and love are so intertwined.

To Peixoto's melancholic writing we can also associate Pedro Cabrita Reis' melancholically archaic sculptures which form inaccessible enclosures with windows of stained glass that are impossible to open, doors that open to floorless rooms and stairs which lead nowhere. His works have been on display in several international exhibitions, like *States of Flux*, Tate Modern, London 2011-2013. Like his fellow contemporary countrymen, Cabrita Reis too was influenced by the American art of the second half of the twentieth century, especially by artists like Pollock, Barnett Newman, Robert

Ryman and Brice Marden. Representatives of art movements such as abstract expressionism, conceptualism, abstractionism and minimalism, these artists are wholly in tune with Cabrita's concept of art as a way of permanent questioning. Abstract expressionism can be associated with the gothic aesthetics through its interest in the expression of strong emotions like the ones present in Cabrita's *A Roving Gaze* (2019), where the artist represented a sense of constant disquiet which he considers very important to art because he thought it preserved its authenticity. As Christoph Grunenberg observed, "Art that presents 'horror' in aesthetic terms is related to Expressionism and Surrealism in its elevation of interior (and perhaps repressed) states of the soul to exterior status". (35)

Finally, without meaning to overlook Paula Rego, Rui Chafes, Paulo Nozolino, Jorge Molder and Julião Sarmento, Nuno Cera's art is much more admittedly Gothic. Indeed, Cera has been internationally recognized as a representative of contemporary Gothic art. In *Hell Bound – New Gothic Art* (2008) by Francesca Gavin, there is an interesting chapter dedicated to some of his more important works, where he expresses his darkest visions illustrated by black and white photographs showing empty and disturbing spaces haunted by mysterious contrasts between light and darkness. Very influenced by horror films, Nuno Cera participated as a resident artist at The International Studios and Curatorial Program, NYC, USA, in 2006. Most of his works have English titles like *Dark Forces*, *The Prora Complex*, *Lost Souls*, *Symphony of the Unknown* or *A Situation*. A photographer and video artist, Cera developed artistic experiments in Berlin and New York where he made art as a metaphor for contemporary social and cultural collapse, having created zombies as outsiders and ghosts as lost people, devoid of past and future, hovering aimlessly in a decadent space. This Portuguese artist has asserted himself as a creator of a system of visualization that results from visual and temporal experiences, research, landscapes, images of places, light, movement, nature, small actions, non-places, beauty, horror, architecture, people and cities, using photography, film and drawings complementarily as means of artistic expression. In the intersection between different

artistic practices, we can find the relationship between memory and architecture since in many of his works there are empty, desolated architectonic landscapes, which substantiate his interest in the suburbs, non-spaces and peripheral architecture. What is more, his abandoned buildings seem to contain very specific and particular stories and memories. Hence, his interest in the relationship between spaces and memories, as he can resort to an abandoned location and its corresponding debris of the past to build a story. As Nuno Cera himself made clear, "Like a photo-video-archaeologist, I use my vision to register, document and communicate these spaces for the future". (Gavin 20) Cities and the lonely wandering of those who inhabit it, like nomads and hypothetical ghosts, are thus the subject-matter of many of Nuno Cera's artistic projects. In them, the artist incorporates the degradation of urban life and underscores our condition as mortals trapped in eternal wandering, searching for a specific path while constant frenzy and agitation make us forget about the inevitability of the death we refuse to acknowledge.

In Nuno Cera's 2005 short film *The Lost Soul*, a metaphor for current social decadence is presented via a disquieting narrative that underscores how anyone can become a force of evil. As Cera noted, it is a work "about the inescapable dark side, exploring the blurred frontiers between mind and body, real and unreal". (Gavin 22) The movie directed by Cera follows a ghostly woman who heartbrokenly walks through the night in a nightdress and eventually becomes a zombie, bleeding out more and more intensively until the narrative reaches an extremely disturbing ending. According to the artist, his goal was to capture a familiar feeling: to grasp that anyone of us can be a victim of a terrorist attack. In the movie's abandoned buildings, which seem to announce the imminent and unexpected arrival of death, the artist and director recreates atmospheres of suspense that favor the invasion of terror, which always seems to be intimately connected with urban spaces. Cera explains that, "I'm interested in exploring the urban context to create fiction – using a city or a specific building as location for an action or situation. The horror is a reflection of our time. It is dispersed every day throughout the media, turning cities into ground for

terror". (Gavin 22) The metaphor of decaying buildings parallels the rotting corpses, an idea attested by the presence of blood in *The Lost Soul*. Spaces in ruin find their counterpart in desolated souls, as both share the same condition that results from complete abandonment.

Although most of Nuno Cera's work is focused on urban areas, concern with nature is not absent given that his artistic research lies on a set of dichotomies: Photography vs. Video and Architecture vs. Nature. A series of stills entitled *Dark Forces* (2004) are an example of this. In this sequence, photographs taken from filming and a movie in Super 8, all conducted in forest areas near Viseu after the great summer wildfires, are presented. Speaking of this work, Nuno Cera mentioned that what matters to him the most are emotions, landscape, visual and temporal experiences, space and movement. All these aspects were also present in an exhibition entitled *Fantasmas* (2006), displayed at Centro Cultural de Belém's Exhibition Centre, which featured videos, photographs and drawings. In the exhibition, visitors were faced with a video depicting one of the artist's eyes on a two-meter diameter screen, creating a colossal and intimidating effect. In front of this video, a photograph, *Being Anywhere #9*, was placed showing a camcorder which, along with the aforementioned image, created an interesting metaphor about the manipulative power of the processes of perception. The aim was for the artist and the spectator to abandon their natural voyeuristic urges, look into themselves and face their own dark side, that unfathomable shadow, impenetrable to any natural or artificial process of portrayal.

This attempt was likewise made by all other authors and artists who, through Anglo-American literary, cultural and artistic experiences, also tried to capture that same darkness. It is difficult to say there is a gothic tradition in Portuguese literature, existing only, perhaps, at some points of the country's literary history, and some works by a few writers. However, through all these selected works by Portuguese contemporary writers and artists, we can perceive a dark vision present in modern art and literature that shows how some creative processes, influenced by the Gothic, are inevitably associated with the Jungian psychoanalytical concept of "shadow".

This happens, as Christoph Grunenberg recalls, because the Gothic raises a very rich psychological insight from the darkness of the unconscious: “It buries in shadow that which had been brightly lit, and brings into light that which had been repressed”. (156) Perhaps it is now clearer that some Portuguese creators are part of this same cultural and aesthetic inheritance haunted and contaminated by some gothic themes and forms which always aimed at revealing the dark side of human existence. We might then say that without all these luminous shadows, Portuguese art and literature would surely be surrounded by an impenetrable darkness.

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