

THE INFLUENCING SIMULACRUM: FAULKNER  
REVISED BY ANTÓNIO LOBO ANTUNES

Margarida Vale de Gato  
ULICES (University of Lisbon  
Centre for English Studies)

António Lobo Antunes has often acknowledged Faulkner's influence: "Faulkner me donne envie d'écrire parce que j'ai toujours envie de le corriger" — he said, in an interview to the French newspaper *Libération*.<sup>1</sup> This urge to correct the literary forefather brings to mind contemporary accounts of the relationship between a writer and his precursors, such as those highlighted by John Barth in "The Literature of Exhaustion" and by Harold Bloom in *The Anxiety of Influence*. According to Bloom, the writer's "doing amiss of what the precursors did" will ultimately lead him to the stage of *apophrades* — a poetical notion etymologically related to the holy days in Athens in which the dead came back to the houses where they had dwelled: "so that the tyranny of time is almost overturned, and one can believe, for startled moments, that they [the later poets] are being *imitated* by their ancestors."<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I intend to present some topics that may suggest how Antunes's miswriting of Faulkner's fiction allows for the re-reading of both writer's works.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.libération.fr/faulkner/fau3107.html#antunes>, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence—A Theory of Poetry*, London: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 83, 141; see also John Barth, "The Literature of Exhaustion" 1960; repr. in *The Novel Today. Contemporary Writers on Modern Fiction*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury, Glasgow: Fontana/Collins, 1977.

## 1. Drawing from "the material that is at hand"<sup>3</sup>

As William Faulkner constructed the mythical county of Yoknapatphwa, António Lobo Antunes created the mythical country of Portugal: "Portugal só me interessa como país de ficção" ("Portugal interests me only as a fictional country"), stated the Portuguese writer.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that both fictions stem from the breaking down of teleological narratives of History.

Indeed, the South occupies a peculiar place in American culture, cherishing the past and the support of History in a way that belies the "New World" epithet of the young American nation. The goal of a "promised land" clings to notions of progress that were frustrated by the effects of defeat in the *post-bellum* South, just as, before the war, the politics of the slave trade corrupted another goal integral to the "youth" of America, that of innocence and equal opportunities. Failure, however, did not deny the Southerners access to the ideology of the "chosen people"; only, they started to consider themselves chosen because of their suffering rather than their prosperity.

In his biography, *The Life of William Faulkner*, Richard Gray provides a subtle insight into the "making" of Southern history. Even though the South was built by determined yeoman farmers set on the American dream, these people felt the immediate need to justify their course of action against the Northern liberal ideal of industrialization. Thus, they nourished the illusion of an aristocracy that made them the guardians of patriarchal agrarian values. Faulkner's fiction is then a commentary on the preference of the South, Old and New, for *simulacra*.<sup>5</sup> Characters such as Sutpen (or even Faulkner's own great-grandfather) engaged in an imitation of an imitation: they were not just copying what existed in another time or in another place; they were copying what never existed outside the dream world of plantation legend.

What Faulkner called "the reactionary instinct to stick to the old ways"<sup>6</sup> is very well known to us, Portuguese, who vaunt in our

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<sup>3</sup> Faulkner in *Faulkner in the University*, ed. F. L. Gwinn and J. Blotner, 1959; repr., Charlottesville and London: The University Press of Virginia, 1995, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> António Lobo Antunes interviewed by Catherine Argand in *Lire*, November 1998.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Gray (*The Life of William Faulkner*, Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1994, p. 28) uses the word after Frederic Jameson's definition: "an identical copy of something for which, in the culture in question, the original never existed."

<sup>6</sup> Faulkner in *Faulkner in the University*, p. 57.

national anthem the voice of our forefathers emerging from the fog of memory. The very title of one of Lobo Antunes's novels, *O Esplendor de Portugal* (1997), is intended to parody our nostalgia for a victorious past projected onto the future in the notion of the "Quinto Império," which, either spiritual or physical, recedes further and further from our reach.

## 2. The Colonial Argument

The plantation legend, as well, rings immediate resonances in the Portuguese mind, to which the indoctrination of the Estado Novo bestowed an embellished family romance of what in reality was a lurid colonial system. We are all familiar with the constraining myth of the extended family which reproduces the *domus* of classic Rome, slaves and masters supposedly forming a community of benign transferences that could be described in the same words critic Louis D. Rubin uses to portray the legend of the Old South: "colorful Creoles and warm-voiced planters... slaves who said 'massa' and heroes whose heart beat strong because always pure".<sup>7</sup> Of course there are crucial differences between the race-distinction economy, prevalent in the South, and the colonial economy, such as the one enforced in Africa by the Portuguese — differences that, for instance, root the latter's pursuit of miscegenation in arguments unsustainable by the former. However, I believe that the colonial experience may support Faulkner's immense literary fortune in countries that once were either colonizers or colonized — that is, in South and Latin America, as well as in Western and mainly Mediterranean Europe.<sup>8</sup>

The ambiguous relationship between white master and black servant is rendered by both Faulkner and Lobo Antunes as a process of assimilation and resistance which can be summed up in the phrase "almost the same but not quite," to avail myself of

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<sup>7</sup> Louis D. Rubin Jr., *Writers of the Modern South—The Faraway Country*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1963, p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, in Latin America, we have the successful cases of García Márquez (Colombia), with his fictional Macondo, and of Osman Lins (Brazil), both of which are compared at length with William Faulkner in Rosa Sima's *Circularity and Visions of the New World* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1993). Additionally, Helen Oakley, in *The Recontextualization of William Faulkner in Latin American Fiction and Culture* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), relates Faulkner to the Chilean novelist María Luisa Bombal, the Mexican Juan Rulfo, and the Uruguayan Juan Carlos Onetti — this latter, particularly, repeatedly avowed his fidelity to the North American author, and wrote about an imaginary town on the Río de la Plata, "Santa María."

the expression coined by post-colonialist critic Homi K. Bhabha.<sup>9</sup> According to the oft-quoted sentence of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), “a nigger is... a sort of obverse reflection of the white people he lives among”;<sup>10</sup> thus, negotiating roles within social otherness, a white person may often feel like somebody else’s nigger, as phrased by Lobo Antunes in *O Esplendor de Portugal*:

éramos os pretos dos outros da mesma forma que estes possuíam os seus pretos ainda, em degraus sucessivos de miséria... aquilo que tínhamos vindo procurar em África era transformar a vingança de mandar no que fingíamos ser a dignidade de mandar

*we were the niggers of others just as they, too, possessed their own niggers in successive degrees of misery... what we had sought for in Africa was to change the revenge of ruling to what we pretended to be the dignity of ruling*<sup>11</sup>

A prevailing sense of failure and undeserved guilt drives Portuguese and Southerners alike to seek solace in a past transfigured by imagination, basing the actual upon the apocryphal and vice-versa. Faulkner and Lobo Antunes take this process one step further, as fiction and historical testimony give way to the historical revisionism that has become a keyword for contemporary post-modernism.<sup>12</sup>

Historiographic metafiction summons the past to the present, unburying the dead, the voices of our forefathers, which emerge from foggy memories and mingle with our own. Thus, Maria Lúcia Lepecki offers the following reading of Lobo Antunes’s *As Naus* (Lisboa, Publicações D. Quixote, 1988):

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<sup>9</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury: The Corrected Text*, New York: Vintage International, 1990, p. 86.

<sup>11</sup> António Lobo Antunes, *O Esplendor de Portugal*, Lisbon: Publicações D. Quixote, 1997, p. 255. All translations from the Portuguese are mine.

<sup>12</sup> This subversion of historical data is defined by Linda Hutcheon as “historiographic metafiction” — a narrative that does not put History to the service of verifiability, but instead upsets the truth of History through the possibilities of narration (Cf. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 114, 122.) See also, about the use of “faction” (the blending of fact and fiction) in Portuguese colonial literature, R. A. Teixeira, *A Guerra Colonial e o Romance Português*, Lisbon: Editorial Notícias, 1998, p. 108 *passim*.

*Eus* foram aparecendo ao longo da História de Portugal, e descuraram enterrar, segundo o costume e no estrito respeito das sociedades e dos sobreviventes, os *eus* que os tinham precedido. A partir daí, num mundo superpovado, acomodam-se, perplexos, passado e presente.<sup>13</sup>

Several *I*s appeared along the history of Portugal and failed to bury, according to the respectful rituals of the societies and of the survivors, the *I*s that preceded them. From then on, in an overcrowded world, past and present thrive together in perplexity.

Words to the effect may apply to the restless burials and deaths in Faulkner's fiction, joining past and present in a time of retarded and elastic movement akin to Bergson's *durée*.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Indeterminacy of Genre

The well-known plot of *As I Lay Dying* (1930) is built around a family's 10-day pilgrimage to bury the dead mother in her native soil. The ordeals of this journey, along with reactions to the death itself, are perceived through the interior monologues of different characters. The central monologue is ascribed to the dead woman, who does not seem to know that she is dead. This is an important feature because, even though the pivotal idea for the narrative might have been the common wish to attend our own funeral, death becomes in this novel "a function of the mind... and that of the minds of the ones who suffer the bereavement."<sup>15</sup>

Antunes's *Auto dos Danados* (1985) also depicts several consciousnesses surrounding a dying character. Though different speculations may result from the fact that this person is the family's patriarch (whose death parallels that of an animal in a ritual bullfight denouncing Portuguese *machismo*), both novels

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<sup>13</sup> M. L. Lepecki, "A Cabeça do homem e as dissociações." In *Diário de Notícias*, 2º caderno, August 7, 1988, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> "La durée toute pure est la forme que prend la succession de nos états de conscience quand notre moi se laisse vivre, quand il s'abstient d'établir une séparation entre l'état présent et les états antérieurs." (Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience*, 1889 ; repr. Paris: Librairies Félix Alcan, 1939.)

<sup>15</sup> William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying: The Corrected Text* (1932), New York: Vintage International, 1990, p. 43-44.

revolve around familial decay. In both, storytelling engages competitive points of view that undermine communication:

Será que eles não se vêem uns aos outros ou não se querem ver, não se ouvem uns aos outros ou não se querem ouvir, do mesmo modo que a vila se mantém surda aos mil ruídos da noite, ao pânico do gado e do boi que vai ser morto à navalhada... ao silêncio do defunto antigo do castelo, de morto de ossos e de raízes e de veias de xisto que se dilui no caixão oco do escuro?

*Can it be that they don't see each other or that they don't want to see, that they don't listen to each other or that they don't want to listen, just as the village stays deaf to the myriad sounds of the night, to the panic of the cattle and the bull that will be stabbed to death... to the long-dead silence of the castle, deceased in an agony of bones and roots and veins of slate, dissolving in the hollow coffin of darkness?*<sup>16</sup>

Orchestration of different monologues stresses the characters' helplessness against the desires and anguishes of others, irrevocably dooming them, as suggested by the very title *Auto dos Danados*. Interestingly enough, this title may shed new light on the controversy of genre raised by some critics of *As I Lay Dying*, puzzled by its indebtedness to the conventions of drama, its farcical tone, its "style too grandiose for the action", its "kind of mock-epic structure."<sup>17</sup>

Lobo Antunes adds a post-modernist tilt to this controversy by claiming an affiliation to medieval plays performed in Portugal on religious feast days. The story of *Auto dos Danados* encompasses the two days preceding harvest celebrations and the three days on which they take place. The culminating event is the bullfight that mimes the agony of the patriarch — alluding perhaps to the allegorical burials that announced the beginning of a new cycle in medieval festivities.

Portuguese *Autos* originated in mystery and morality plays. As we remember from *Everyman*, it is a *topos* of moralities (as it

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<sup>16</sup> António Lobo Antunes, *Auto dos Danados*, Lisbon: Publicações D. Quixote, 1985, p. 122.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Swiggart, *The Art of Faulkner's Novel*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1962, p. 110; about the genre-indecision of *As I Lay Dying*, see also André Bleikasten, *Parcours de Faulkner*, Paris: Association des Publications près les Universités de Strasbourg / Éditions Ophrys, 1982, p. 173-175.

would be, for instance, of Gil Vicente's *Trilogia das Barcas*) to represent man's soul summoned by death. The human creature would then try to revisit crucial events in life, in much the same way as the dying characters of *Auto dos Danados* and *As I Lay Dying*; moreover, in this latter text, the pilgrimage itself reads like a conspicuous feature of the morality genre.<sup>18</sup>

Rejecting far-fetched interpretations of *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner offered the following comment: "I took this family and subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer — flood and fire, that's all."<sup>19</sup> But flood and fire are the most efficient instruments of God's wrath, and so the biblical subtext of deluge permeates the narration of Addie's coffin temporarily submerged in the flood, whereas Darl's incendiary rage may relate to St. John's *Apocalypse*. The representation of Noah's episode was a staple of medieval mystery plays, while the Last Judgement would have been the source of moralities like *Everyman*. Flood and fire rise to their utmost eloquence in Doomsday, sending the reader back to the title *Auto dos Danados*. In both Faulkner's and Antunes's texts there is a parody of biblical style and theme, as illustrated by the three days Addie's corpse lies waiting for the burial pageant: "She laid there three days in that box... On the third day they got back and loaded her into the wagon."<sup>20</sup> The festival, in *Auto dos Danados*, lasts three days as well — the number of days it took to represent a mystery cycle, which would often be staged on a pageant-wagon, such as the one that carries Addie's corpse. Interestingly enough, in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* the days 6th, 7th and 8th April 1928 fall on Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

*Autos* may be thought of as the medieval equivalent of the cathartic release of classic tragedy; nonetheless, mingling *pathos* and *bathos*, they account for more hybrid texts. The same merging occurs in *As I Lay Dying*, where grandiloquence and trivia alternate, and tragedy gives way to farce — bringing also to mind the open forms of medieval *romance*, which subvert mimesis and present the quest plot in fragmentary sketches. Additionally, this mode represents a "leap toward the wonderful and rhapsodic" in which J. W. Tuttleton roots what he calls "contemporary

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<sup>18</sup> It has been argued that *Everyman* was influenced by the devotional work *Ars Moriendi*, also depicting a man on the brink of death, deserted both by Fortune and Nature, and depending on God's relentless mercy — it is worthy of notice that the Latin gerund echoes the past continuous of Addie's death in *As I Lay Dying*.

<sup>19</sup> Faulkner in *Faulkner in the University*, p. 87.

<sup>20</sup> Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, p. 92

antirealism,” expressing a “revolt against realism and representation... closely tied to the revolt against a unitary psychology of the self.”<sup>21</sup>

This foregrounding of the issues raised by re-presentation is an inevitable consequence of the modernist decentralized novel, as practiced by Faulkner, Joyce or Woolf. What post-modernism adds to the state of the art — and what Antunes’s novels add to Faulkner’s texts — is the exaltation of the signifier, the appearance, the phenomenon, and hence the spectacle of simulacra, driving modernist epistemological doubts to their utmost absurd consequences.

#### 4. *Camp* and the grotesque

Discarding the earnestness of the modernist search for ontology, post-modernists delight in the multiplicity of form; hence their baroque stylistic incursions, their bold experiments with language, leading them to disrupt the heroic distinction between high and low. From these principles stem literary irony and *camp*, a term which I have used elsewhere to describe the most disliked and shocking features of Antunes’s work, bordering on the abject:<sup>22</sup>

Desde Abril do ano anterior que a tropa e os comunistas se aproximavam das fachadas dos prédios, erguiam o membro como animais para urinar, e abandonavam nas paredes um mijo de vivas e morras que se contradiziam e anulavam, logo coberto por cartazes de comícios e greves, fotografias de generais, propaganda de conjuntos rock, cruces suásticas, ordens de boicote ao governo e convites de retrete, dedos de letras entrelaçadas num namoro que o tempo desbotava.

*Since April 1974, the military and the communists had been lingering around the front-doors of buildings, raising their members like animals about to urinate, leaving on the walls a piss of hails and deaths that contradicted and undid each other, at once covered by advertisements for*

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<sup>21</sup> In intr. to John Kuehl, *Alternate Worlds: A Study of Postmodern Antirealistic American Fiction*, New York: New York University Press, 1989, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> I’ve analyzed Lobo Antunes’s preference for *camp* in my MA dissertation, *(Dis)Cursos da Ausência em William Faulkner. Variações e Repercussões no Escritor português António Lobo Antunes*: Lisbon, University of Lisbon / Faculty of Letters, 1999, p. 179-180 *passim*.



*demonstrations and strikes, photographs of generals, rock music propaganda, swastikas, boycott declarations and obscene invitations, fingers of intertwined letters in a loving embrace erased by time.*<sup>23</sup>

In this excerpt, reality assails us in a multiplicity and arbitrariness which fictional order cannot resist. Quantity overcomes quality, and text becomes a palimpsest for layers of signs that unsettle significance in our media-ridden society.

Curiously enough, Antunes's indulgence in metaphors of dubious taste may relate, in its abjection, to the Faulknerian grotesque, resorting to dismemberment and vilification. Drawing on Terry Eagleton's definition of the grotesque as a "semiotic switchboard," Patricia Yaeger revises the Southern grotesque, foregrounding the ways in which society superimposes itself upon bodies: "In forcing readers to confront subterranean class, race, or gender struggles, the grotesque mobilizes the pain of classificatory schemes that 'function below the level of consciousness,' moving what is out of sight into bodily cognance."<sup>24</sup>

In *As I Lay Dying*, the strongest physical evidence of the projections of societal and psychological constraints upon buried levels of consciousness is the decaying corpse of Addie Bundren inside the prison of its coffin. Incidentally, Lobo Antunes's fiction, colored by his professional practice in psychiatry, may be of help in the way we read the grotesque signals of the entrapped body.

## **5. The delusional machine of the decentralized self**

*Auto dos Danados* ends by merging the dying patriarch's monologue with those of his son and daughter, in a section called "The Importance of the Influencing Machine in the Origins of Schizophrenia." This phrase pays homage to an influential essay written by Freud's dissident student Victor Tausk, in 1919, entitled "On the Origin of the 'Influencing Machine' in Schizophrenia." Tausk describes the case-study of Natalia A, who claimed to be under the influence of a machine operated by a rejected suitor, with terrible effects: it produced delusions, commanded the young woman's thoughts and, by means of

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<sup>23</sup> Lobo Antunes, *Auto dos Danados*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Patricia Yaeger, "Faulkner's 'Greek Amphora Priestess': Verbena and Violence in *The Unvanquished*." In *Faulkner and Gender*, ed. Donald M. Kartiganer and Ann J. Abadie, Jackson: The University Press of Mississippi, 1996, p. 200.

several switches, sent orders to various parts of her body, namely the genital organs.<sup>25</sup>

This description matches similar accounts of other schizophrenic patients claiming to be controlled by a machine. The striking feature in Natalia's case is that her machine had the form and sex of her body but was carved in a coffin (bringing to mind the graphical shape of Addie Bundren's vessel). She could not see the head — presumably on account of her belief that her thoughts resulted from the appropriation of *the other* who could read her mind.

It is obvious that Antunes puts Tausk's findings to a metanarrative purpose, foregrounding the process of writing fiction as a schizophrenia geared toward the discourse of the other, influenced by a delusional desire to manipulate and control. This is a process that, in Natalia's story, stems from the image of the coffin-corpse, endowing unconscious signifiers with tentative and deferred meanings. Likewise, in *As I Lay Dying*, Cash, the carver of his mother's coffin, may represent the artist in the process of creating his dangerous "influencing machine." His mother's urn, then, becomes the coffin where he is to be born, since, in Faulkner's own words: "If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of old ladies."<sup>26</sup>

Natalia's influencing machine deteriorates: it loses its head and sexual organs, no longer transmitting erotic impressions; similarly, we watch Addie Bundren's corpse decomposing and her head being drilled with holes. Most tellingly, when Addie speaks of herself she seems not only to have forgotten the name of her sexual organs but also to be deprived of them: "and then I would think: the shape of my body where I used to be a virgin is in the shape of a: and I couldn't think Anse, couldn't remember..."<sup>27</sup> We are encouraged to think of Addie as an empty vessel manipulated by the politics of those around her, while in turn corrupting them with the putrefying agony of her grotesque body.

The image of the delusional coffin reappears in Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936): Quentin and Shreve's bedroom exhales

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<sup>25</sup> Victor Tausk, "De la Genèse de l'Appareil à Influencier au Cours de la Schizophrénie" 1919; repr. *Les Psychoses de la Perte de la Réalité*, ed. Bela Grumberger and J. Chassequet-Smirgel, Paris: S.E.T.E., 1980, p. 89-115.

<sup>26</sup> William Faulkner in *Lion in the Garden: interviews with William Faulkner 1926-1962*, ed. J. B. Meriwether and M. Millgate, New York: Random House, 1968, p. 239.

<sup>27</sup> Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*, p. 173.

a “tombl-like air,” as they tell the story of Henry and Bon, identifying with them and reading their minds. The influencing machine seems to hold Quentin under its spell, turning him into a box of echoes: “his very body was an empty hall echoing with sonorous defeated names: he was not a being, an entity, he was a commonwealth.”<sup>28</sup>

Arguably, the plot of *As I Lay Dying* frames many of Lobo Antunes’s narratives: *O Manual dos Inquisidores* (1996) and *Não Entres tão Depressa nessa Noite Escura* (2000) both represent a patriarch on the brink of death, while *O Esplendor de Portugal* depicts a dying mother who, like Addie, does not seem to know that she is dead. For the Portuguese writer, the alignment of different voices has become an experimental work-in-progress. Thus, in *Não Entres tão Depressa Nessa Noite Escura* (the title of which is a tribute to Dylan Thomas’s poem about the death of his father), all the different voices stem explicitly from the delusional mind of the feminine narrator who is undergoing psychoanalysis:

deito-me neste divã e o que vejo são nuvens (...) e creio que o que lhe digo se relaciona com as nuvens, assim lentas, sem contornos, mudando de forma e doendo-me por dentro tal como a minha mãe e o meu pai me doem por dentro, a minha irmã me dói por dentro, eu me doo por dentro e por me doer invento sem parar, esperando que imagine que invente e desde que imagine que invente e não acredite em mim torno-me capaz de ser sincera consigo.

*As I lie down on the couch, it’s clouds that I see (...) and I think that what I tell you has to do with clouds, slow as they are, limitless, changing shapes, and hurting me inside like my mother and my father hurt me inside, my sister hurts me inside, I hurt myself inside and because it hurts me I keep making things up, hoping that you’ll imagine I’m making them up and, as long as you imagine I’m making things up and do not believe me, I can be honest with you.*<sup>29</sup>

After having presented several suggestions for a cross-reading of Faulkner and Lobo Antunes, I now wish to return to what

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<sup>28</sup> Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!: The Corrected Text*, New York: Vintage International, 1990, p. 29 and p. 7, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> António Lobo Antunes, *Não Entres Tão Depressa Nessa Noite Escura*, Lisbon: Publicações D. Quixote, 2000, p. 365.

Bloom himself calls his “machine for criticism.”<sup>30</sup> This is a machine that works out the later poet’s “homesickness” into a desire for replacing the Poetic Father in the coitus with the Muse, his mother, so as to beget himself<sup>31</sup> — an act of transgression that recalls Faulkner’s joke about the robbed mother. Bloom moves on to accept the process of “recollecting forwards” as the dialectical principle of misinterpretation to which the later poet submits his precursor. Repetition triggers “revision” through the forcible reinvention of the forefather by the later poet.

Literary revisionism is, therefore, intimately associated with the post-modernist foregrounding of *simulacra* — imitations for which the original never existed. I am well aware that Frederic Jameson first used the word *simulacrum* to criticize the “derealization of the whole surrounding world of everyday reality” with the consequent weakening of historicity.<sup>32</sup> I believe, however, that total disregard for background and historical values could only ensue if the “culture of the *simulacrum*” let go of its fundamental tenet, which is precisely to expose *simulacra* that were previously regarded as “the real thing.” Through the exposure of myths that underlie the narratives of particular contexts, postmodernism achieves an important social function of historiographic reassessment, as in the case of Lobo Antunes and Faulkner before him.

Furthermore, as far as literary influence is concerned, the *simulacrum* — an image of an image — replaces all pretension to an original story, particularly if we link it to the psychoanalytic *imago*: the distorted idealization of the progenitor. By means of a specular mis-reading, Faulkner and Lobo Antunes engage in a relationship of desire and struggle for difference, which projects them both in different guises. Thus, Addie Bundren’s coffin, a powerful image of the South trapped by a delusional fiction, may become an influencing machine for the burial of Portuguese paternalistic politics in *Auto dos Danados*.

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<sup>30</sup> Harold Bloom, *Poetry and Repression: Revisionism from Blake to Stevens*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 61.

<sup>31</sup> “What is the Primal Scene, for a poet *as poet*? It is his Poetic Father’s coitus with the Muse. There he was begotten? No — there they failed to beget him. He must be self-begotten, he must engender himself upon the Muse his mother. (...) To beget here means to usurp.” (Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, *op. cit.*, p. 37.)

<sup>32</sup> Frederic Jameson, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (1991) in *From Modernism to Postmodernism—An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence Cahoone, Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.