

THE DICHOTOMY OF LOVE AND DEATH IN THE FICTIONAL
WORK OF TEOLINDA GERSÃO

by

SUZAN BOZKURT

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School of Arts and Humanities

University of Birmingham

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminary Note

This study investigates how the fictional work of the Portuguese writer Teolinda Gersão subverts dominant power structures, seeking new ways to rewrite socio-cultural as well as narrative conventions. This research focuses on a woman author whose texts emerge in the wake of the 25th of April 1974; indeed, during the 1980s, a plethora of women writers enter the literary scene and, ‘for the first time in history, there are at least as many women as men publishing literature in Portugal’.¹ This tentative political, social and cultural liberation of traditional gender models is mirrored in the writing of Teolinda Gersão, whose first novel, *O Silêncio*, was published in 1981, some years after the authoritarian regime had disappeared and a more liberal cultural climate prevailed. To her, Portuguese politics had been too oppressive to even attempt raising her voice: ‘wozu mit aller Kraft schreiben, wenn die Zensur alles zerstört?’,^{2 3i} Teolinda Gersão states in an interview with the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. After teaching in Germany in the early 1970s she relished the freedom and openness of her host country and felt evermore the stark contrast

¹ Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women’s Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, p.16.

² German quotes are translated into English by myself if not otherwise indicated; they can be found in Appendix 1.

³ Gisa Hasebrink, ‘Aufbrüche von Frauen und Künstlern in den fiktionalen Welten von Teolinda Gersão’, in Elfriede Engelmayer (ed.), *Die Schwestern der Mariana Alcoforado*. Berlin: tranvía, 1993, pp.103-18, p.104.

to conditions in Portugal: 'damals ist mir das Ausmaß der portugiesischen Zensur zum ersten Mal klargeworden. Für uns Portugiesen war die Zensur unter Salazar schon zur Gewohnheit geworden'ⁱⁱ.⁴ As a result of these very difficult conditions under which Teolinda Gersão, and with her a whole generation of women authors, came to writing fiction, it is not surprising that 'all of the [above] writers interrogate the gendered representations of the dominant national mythologies'⁵ and offer a constant voice of resistance to a 'männlichen, monologischen und homosozialen gesellschaftlichen Textes'ⁱⁱⁱ.⁶

Teolinda Gersão's writing is a passionate appeal for a new society, for the transgression of cultural practices that defined gender in a way that excluded women from public life, her texts 'rompem novos espaços e expressões que demonstram vozes da inscrição do sujeito feminino na história [...] questionando lugares tácitos sócio-culturais'.⁷ What sets these women writers apart lies, as Hilary Owen remarks, 'in the writers' aesthetic treatment of the subject matter they use'.⁸ Teolinda Gersão's texts employ poststructuralist techniques, such as destabilising linear time, referential meaning and fixed subject identities. In order to recount the private and individualistic process of female liberation in her protagonists, which then in turn

⁴ Gisa Hasebrink, 'Aufbrüche von Frauen und Künstlern in den fiktionalen Welten von Teolinda Gersão', in Elfriede Engelmayer (ed.), *Die Schwestern der Mariana Alcoforado*. Berlin: tranvía, 1993, pp.103-18, p.104.

⁵ Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, p.21.

⁶ Graça Abranches, 'Verlernen, um zu Sprechen: Politik und Poetik Portugiesischer Frauen im 20.Jahrhundert', in *Portugiesische Literatur*. Frankfurt am Main: Henry Thorau, Suhrkamp, 1997, pp 204-35, p.204.

⁷ Flávio Leal, 'Uma Leitura dos Silêncios', in *Espéculo*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007, p.2 (from the net: www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero37/silencio.html).

⁸ Hilary Owen (ed.), *Gender, Ethnicity and Class in Modern Portuguese Speaking Culture*, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1996, p.6

proposes to bring about a change of societal structure from within. In her novels she embarks on a course of constant questioning, a relentless search for female identity:

num país onde não houve [...] movimentos sociais de mulheres significativos e onde praticamente se não fez uma reflexão teórica consistente sobre questões relativas à identificação de uma identidade do feminino.⁹

This thesis proposes to discuss Teolinda Gersão's novels *O Silêncio* (1981), *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* (1982), *O Cavalo de Sol* (1989), *A Casa de Cabeça de Cavalo* (1995), and *A Árvore das Palavras* (1997), as they are, in terms of literary significance, the most representative of her novelistic *oeuvre*.¹⁰ The main protagonists, Lídia, Lavínia (*O Silêncio*), Hortense (*Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*), Vitória (*O Cavalo de Sol*), Maria de Lado, Virita, Carlota (*A Casa de Cabeça de Cavalo*), and Gita (*A Árvore das Palavras*) are all women who see seek to establish their own voices against the pressures of a traditional femininity. *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes* (1984), though published as a diary and not a novel, was included, as it bears all the hallmarks of the previously mentioned works in its literary significance and the linguistic dissection of prevailing literary and societal codes.

Death in this thesis is discussed as a synonym for otherness, as postulated in

⁹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Lisbon: Caminho, 1995, p.24.

¹⁰ *O Silêncio* and *O Cavalo de Sol* were awarded the Prémio de Ficção do Pen Clube; *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* the Grande Prémio de Romance e Novela da Associação Portuguesa de Escritores; all five novels are widely discussed in press releases and academic publications concerning Teolinda Gersão.

Foucauldian terminology, where the other stands for what 'for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded'.¹¹ Just as life is the 'Other of Death', woman is, in societal contexts the 'Other'. As Death excludes any possibility of physical existence, the binary signifiers man/woman are mutually exclusive in biological as well as cultural and political terms. Simone de Beauvoir states, 'she is the incidental, the inessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute — she is the Other',¹² as she describes a culture where maleness is the interior centre and femininity the exterior margin. Death in Teolinda Gersão's novels becomes a metaphor for the non-representation and ultimate political and cultural non-existence her women protagonists experience in a society dominated by the values of male patriarchy. But in fiction a reversal of this binary mode of exclusion is possible. Hélène Cixous argues that fiction expresses what cultural norms repress:

fiction is a secretion of death, an anticipation of non-representation, a doll, a hybrid body composed of language and silence that [...] invents doubles and death.¹³

The third chapter of this thesis discusses Death as a motor of change, as a possibility of metamorphosis in form, space and time. On the one hand, Teolinda Gersão's protagonists experience Death as exclusion from political, societal and linguistic power structures, but, on the other hand, Death is also a means of

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, pxxiv.

¹² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Pan Books, London, 1988, p.16.

¹³ Hélène Cixous, 'Fiction and Its Phantoms: A reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche ('The Uncanny')', in *New Literary History*, 7.5 (1976), pp.525-48, p.548.

transgressing temporal and spatial structures in order to escape patriarchal hegemony in the forces of memory and creative invention, creating '[uma] figura das mulheres prosaicas e reais que fizeram a cidade e se ocuparam do amor e da vida, e não ficaram dentro das histórias'.¹⁴ In the transitional spaces of Love her women protagonists create places of difference, 're-inventing the very image of the subject as an entity fully immersed in relations of power, knowledge and desire [which] implies a positive vision of the subject as an affective [...] and dynamic structure'.¹⁵ Teolinda Gersão's texts are constructed around the dichotomy of Death and love, exclusion and creativity. Or, as Inês Pedrosa describes it: 'Trabalha com o caos interior da natureza humana'.¹⁶ Questioning persistently the established conventions, Teolinda Gersão's fictional treatment of Death makes apparent 'the frame-break [...] [that] lays bare [the gap between fiction and reality] [...], continual shifts in the structures of knowledge and power [that] produce continual resyntheses of the reality model'.¹⁷

In her work Teolinda Gersão addresses the question of resisting a discourse exclusive of diverging ideologies; to her society represents a world trapped in something akin to Plato's cave of shadows, 'pessoas soterradas em cavernas, em minas, há tanto tempo que perderam o caminho do regresso e não aguentam mais a luz do sol'.¹⁸ Only once the characters in her novels abandon the circles of the

¹⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, Lisbon: O Jornal, 1984, p.55.

¹⁵ Rosi Braidotti, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002, p.7.

¹⁶ Inês Pedrosa, 'Continuar a Ler dentro do Túnel', *O Expresso*, 28.09.2002

¹⁷ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, New York: Methuen, 1984, p.33 and p.51.

¹⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.67.

same in favour of innovative difference, do they become truly 'alive'. The 'mystical otherness of death'¹⁹ introduces a metaphysical dimension into Teolinda Gersão's writing, which, in transgressing the known, creates texts that are subversive of the prevalent societal and literary models:

we are concerned with a transgression of the law. Whether it is in social life or narrative, the intervention of the supernatural element always constitutes a break in the system of pre-established rules.²⁰

Teolinda Gersão uses representations of Death in her texts as a catalytic force that would initiate a metamorphic process of rethinking national myths held as 'unchangeable'. In the explicit images of suicide and abortion characters like Hortense, Lavínia and Lídia affirm their freedom over their existence, just as Vitória, Virita, Carlota and Gita choose the metaphorical Death of societal exclusion on the grounds of their 'otherness' either constituted by madness or flights of fantasy. Death, in this context, becomes a point of departure, where a new identity can be formed. Teolinda Gersão's female protagonists struggle to break free from old societal structures and fight for freedom in their actions and thinking in order to establish transitional spaces of love in madness, laughter and dreams. In clear and concrete pictures her metaphors constitute stumbling blocks in thought processes and so open up the possibilities of a new interpretation of words and language and

¹⁹ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000, p.24.

²⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973, p.166.

ultimately society as a whole; '[Teolinda Gersão] setzt ihre Bilder in einer Art und Weise ein, die ein ganzes Universum an Assoziationen in sich birgt'^{iv}.²¹

1.2 Objectives, Questions and Hypotheses

The first and second part of this study are a discussion of Death in the fictional texts of Teolinda Gersão, as an instrument of exclusion in the first instance and then as a means of metamorphic transgression. Chapter Four analyses the 'transitional spaces of love' that Teolinda Gersão's women protagonists establish for themselves outside and inside the body, creating new images of female subjectivity. In an analysis of the historical aspects of the metaphorical use of Death in her texts, Teolinda Gersão's writing shall be discussed as a means to subvert prevailing political mythologies. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Michel Foucault has linked representations of Death to power; he sees death at once as the locus and the instrument of power: 'for a long time, one of the characteristic privileges of sovereign power was the right to decide life and Death'.²² Hortense's struggle in *A Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Teolinda Gersão's second novel, that deals with Portugal's authoritarian past, is directed against the all-engulfing forces of O.S., who condemns his citizens to physical Death as well as the metaphorical Death of political and societal non-representation. National mythologies are stripped bare in the symbolic language of the novel condemning oppression, which 'com uma

²¹ Gisa Hasebrink, 'Aufbrüche von Frauen und Künstlern in den fiktionalen Welten von Teolinda Gersão', in Elfriede Engelmayer (ed.), *Die Schwestern der Mariana Alcoforado*. Berlin: tranvía, 1993, pp.103-18, p112.

²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume1, Penguin, London, 1978, p.135.

consciência muito subtil da ambivalência das forças com que nos confrontamos²³ reaches deep into the collective unconscious. Death, in this part of the analysis, is seen as a destroying and limiting force, silencing any attempt at creative invention and political opposition; ‘uma ridícula contracção do mundo, um enorme deserto de palavras falsas’.²⁴

The question of cultural exclusion is the focus of analysis in a discussion of the philosophical aspects of Teolinda Gersão’s depiction of Death. Her fiction looks behind the socio-political surface of everyday practices and enters the very depths of identity formed in a linguistic unconscious that unquestioningly repeats meanings. Lídia in *O Silêncio* fights Afonso’s efforts at objectifying her as a reflection in patriarchy’s looking glass that allows women only the space of the same and denies them an independent identity. Lídia tries to establish a creative and unique ‘maneira feminina de estar no mundo’²⁵ that would enable ‘um modelo feminino de abertura’²⁶ of multiple meaning, guaranteeing and perpetuating life. The parameters of a narrative tradition constituted by a binary system are suspended in a writing which advocates a constant questioning of social and cultural norms to a degree, where the ‘Eu deixa de ser entendido como uma substância-garantia epistemológica’²⁷ and endless variations of thought are possible.

²³ Hilary Owen, ‘Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão’s *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*’, in *Portuguese Women’s Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000, pp.41-55, p52.

²⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Lisbon:, Edições O Jornal, 1985, p.15.

²⁵ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Lisbon: Caminho, Lisboa, p.42.

²⁶ Eduardo Prado Coelho, ‘A Seda do Lenço’ in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, 1984, pp.92-99, p92.

²⁷ Ana Paula Ferreira, ‘O Gênero em Questão’, in Maria L. Ritzel Remedios (ed.), *O Despertar de Eva: Gênero e Identidade na Ficção de Língua Portuguesa*, Porto Alegre Edipucrs, 2000, pp.15-28 (25).

An analysis of the linguistic aspects of Teolinda Gersão's depiction of Death in her texts leads to a discussion of (non-)representation of the feminine in language and of the silence her protagonists are submitted to by a patriarchal code of expression that does not reflect the female. In an interview, Teolinda Gersão, talking about her first novel *O Silêncio*, states that 'o texto constroi-se contra o silêncio, que, precisamente vai rasgando. Há uma oralidade característica do livro. Ele é uma voz'.²⁸ In *O Silêncio* Alfredo and Afonso try to impose on Lavínia and Lídia a language that is governed by the ordering effects of male rationality. They seek a 'control of meaning [which] includes the right to name oneself and others',²⁹ which results in a stifling of — female — life forces, a death-in-life existence and suicide. Lavínia accepts the silencing imposed on her; she concedes '[que] há um código que me falta, uma forma de comunicar [...] foi sempre arrastada [...] pelas palavras dos outros'.³⁰ Whereas her daughter, Lídia fights for a right to expression in a language of dream and desire: 'in speaking "at the limit of silence" we must [...] find [words] which reintroduce [...] the sovereign silence which interrupts articulated language'.³¹ She opposes the 'easy death pre-packaged in the language of hegemonic representational injunctions',³² which results in a 'loss of subjectivity'.³³ Lídia's bodily

²⁸ Clara Ferreira Alves, "Teolinda Gersão: 'Não gosto dessa conversa de escrita de mulheres...'", in *Jornal de Letras*, n° 34, 1982.

²⁹ Robin Tolmach Lakoff, "Cries and Whispers: The Shattering of the Silence", in Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz, *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp.25-51, p29.

³⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Lisbon: Publicações Dom Quixote, 1995, p.67.

³¹ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, London: Routledge, 1978, p.263.

³² Ana Paula Ferreira, 'Reengendering History: Women's Fictions of the Portuguese Revolution', in Helena Kaufman, Anna Klobucka (eds.), *After the Revolution: Twenty Years of Portuguese Literature*, London: Associated University Press, 1997, pp.219-42, p229.

language of dream and desire has none of the linguistic conventions and ordering principles of grammar, but in it she is able to express 'a paixão das palavras. Com as palavras construí mundos [...]'.³⁴

In Chapter Three, Death evolves as the ultimate transgression, 'a morte como descoberta, em sobressalto, de dor e redenção',³⁵ in the relentless search for meaning that deliberately unravels tradition and convention. In images of fluidity and metamorphosis Teolinda Gersão creates a dislocation of form, space and time, salient worlds of fiction, where 'convention is undermined, or laid bare, in order to show its historical provisionality'.³⁶ Freed from the limiting finality of Death her women protagonists enter a process of metamorphosis, which makes possible 'the collapse of the limit between matter and mind [...] [and] the effacement of the limit between subject and object'.³⁷ The preconceived rules of time and space become porous and the repressive symbols of patriarchy are subverted by the metamorphic symbols of change. As Eduardo Prado Coelho states in his essay *A Seda do Lenço*, every experience, every incident in her novels 'forma o seu círculo, o espaço da sua verdade evidente [...] [e] abre e fecha um círculo de vida'.³⁸ In *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* Death is depicted as a gradual process, a non-existence that is spread

³³ Hilary Owen, 'Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão's *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*' in *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000, pp.41-55, p43.

³⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, Lisbon, O Jornal, 1984, p.99.

³⁵ Álvaro M. Machado, 'Leituras e Sobrevivências Intertextuais: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão', in *Terceira Margem: Revista de Estudos Brasileiros*, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, No 5, 2004, pp.43-46, p.45.

³⁶ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction*, Methuen, New York, 1984, p.66.

³⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/London, 1973, p.114 and 116.

³⁸ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisbon, 1984, pp.92-99, p.92.

out over various levels of consciousness. The novel is formed of a spiral of concentric narration that descends into the ultimate unknown, that which exists beyond the human experience. As there is no linearity in Death, there is also no linearity in life in Teolinda Gersão's novels and short stories. In a circular process of linguistic expurgation her words penetrate and lay bare 'o sistema de ideias interligadas, de símbolos e de crenças pelos quais uma cultura [...] tenta justificar-se e perpetuar-se'.³⁹

The Chapter 'Death of the Symbol' analyses Teolinda Gersão's questioning of cultural codices, as they are expressed in linguistic signs. In *A Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* it is the all-encompassing power of 'O Mar', the sea, that provides 'Parallelmetaphern der Leere'^{v40} embodied in 'O Senhor da Morte', which touches the lives of not only the women protagonists but an entire population. Like tidal waves authoritarian rule is crushing its people. The linguistic embodiment of the dictatorship's homological discourse is a propagandistic national mythology that denies essence to its opponents. The dictator's words overwhelm and stifle the people; they are 'palavras falsas [que] começaram subitamente a entrar'⁴¹ into the national consciousness. Only once the false mythology of totalitarianism is stripped bare, and totalizing attempts at historicity are exposed can a new historical reality be established that will re-invent a symbolic order representative of all voices.

³⁹ Ana Luísa Amaral and Ana Gabriela Macedo, 'A Palavra, a Identidade e a Cultura Translativa: para uma Introdução ao Dicionário Terminológico de Concertos da Crítica Feminista', in *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp383-408, p.401.

⁴⁰ Dorothea Schurig, 'Teolinda Gersão und ihre Romane *O Silêncio* und *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, in Rainer Hess (ed.) *Portugiesische Romane der Gegenwart: Interpretationen*, Vervuert Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 1992, pp.173-84, p.178.

⁴¹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.16.

The transgression of the limits of space is depicted in the Death of the House, which in Teolinda Gersão's work denotes a synonym for bourgeois domesticity and aristocratic lineage. In 'a casa de Duarte Augusto' and 'a casa de Alcina e Ana' a feeling of limitation and unsurpassable walls prevails. 'The house' is discussed as an 'espaço doméstico'⁴² where relations between the sexes are expressed in a hierarchy of power, 'respeitável e tranquila, solidamente implantada em alicerces, acima de qualquer suspeição de vulnerabilidade ou ligeireza'.⁴³ The repetitiveness of female domesticity and the crushing power of a male-dominated historical discourse are inscribed in its walls providing death-in-life to all the women who cannot liberate themselves from its power. 'A casa de Lídia', on the other hand, is a living being, which does not conform to the conventions associated with the signifier 'house'. Its boundaries are not fixed but moveable: 'nada tem, aliás, muitas fronteiras, e as distâncias não são nunca muito exactas'.⁴⁴

'Os degraus da morte' describe the transgression of the limits of time that is established in the ghostly realm of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, where a secondary universe of the dead opens up time to the forces of memory. The various levels of Death take the protagonists away from the confines of a historicity captured in writing to a 'plane of pure memory, where our mind retains in all its details the

⁴² Teresa Tavares, 'Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo: Representações do Espaço Social e Sexual na Ficção de Escritoras Contemporâneas', in *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos da Identidade*, Maria Irene Ramalho, António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.361.

⁴³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.20.

⁴⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.14.

picture of our past life [...] [where] we can discover thousands of different planes of consciousness, a thousand integral and yet diverse repetitions of the whole of the experience through which we have lived'.⁴⁵ Historically datable time is replaced by the 'inner-time' of memory, which transgresses the irreversible linearity of time and follows the logic of a time of dreams and desire. 'O lençol bordado de Carlota' becomes a metaphor for the patchwork of female 'inner-time' in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, where the oppressive unidirectional flow of time is superseded in a wider plane of memory and dreams, where temporal strata are interchangeable and finally, in 'o último degrau da morte', open up into an endless series of levels of consciousness that transgress the limits of Death. As the bourgeois 'Casa' disappears, no clearly defined parameters of linguistic sign, space or time are left, and in the empty space a creative re-invention can take place: 'é o tempo que passa em direcção ao porvir, que se torna a força dinamizadora da narrativa'.⁴⁶

The fourth chapter maps out the strategies that women like Lídia, Hortense, Vitória, and Gita employ to counteract patriarchal oppression and break free from societal chains in transitional spaces of love inside and outside the body. The sensual presence of 'a casa preta de Lóia' and the earthy logic of 'a casa térrea de Casimira' provide loci of hybridity for Gita and Hortense, where racial and societal norms are broken apart and reformed in order to allow for an independent female self. And Vitória finds in the 'casa de Augusta Braz' the motherly space of an intersubjectivity that enables the encounter of the two lovers not in a subject-object relation but in a

⁴⁵ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, Zone Books, New York, 1988, p.241.

⁴⁶ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.408.

meeting of two individuals rooted in a libidinal subjectivity free from societal norms.

Madness, laughter and dreams provide a transitional space of love inside the body. Love, conventionally in the Western philosophical tradition 'considered as potentially or actually subversive of knowledge',⁴⁷ becomes the crucial factor in gaining awareness of the self. The Freudian daughters Virita, Carlota and Lavínia adhere to the phallic connotations of a psyche, where love is defined as an internalization of a male superego that would satisfy the Oedipal desire for the Father in a lover. In such an economy femininity can only be considered lack and incompleteness. As the women reject the maternal to enter into the male reasoning of their lovers, their self is left empty, a mere shell without life. Vitória, Hortense, Maria Badala and Lídia find a transitional space of love in the unreason of madness, dreams and laughter, so they will 'never succumb to the oppressive and phallic connotation of madness nor do they accept the death to which such a meaning would ultimately lead them'.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Alison M. Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.145.

⁴⁸ Sandra Regina Goulart Almeida, 'Writing from the Place of the Other: The Poetic Discourse of Transgression in the Works of Virginia Woolf, Clarice Lispector and Teolinda Gersão', PhD Thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1994, p.301.

CHAPTER 2

THE MYSTICAL OTHERNESS OF DEATH

2.1 Historical Aspects: Death as an Instrument of Power

This chapter explores the physical as well as metaphorical Death resulting from an exclusion from linguistic and societal power through political mythologies, a Death imposed on those who pose the threat of otherness to a supreme authoritarian 'order [...] which is given in things as their inner law'.⁴⁹ The mythical supremacy of 'O Senhor da Morte', O.S., in *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Teolinda Gersão's second novel, published in 1982, is deeply engrained in the collective unconscious and brings physical Death as well as the metaphorical Death of linguistic and societal non-representation to the characters in the novel. As Roland Barthes pointed out in *Mythologies*, myth, language and power are interconnected and have a direct influence on the individual's sense of being:

Myth has an imperative [...] character: stemming from an historical concept [...] it is I whom it has come to seek. It is turned towards me, I am subjected to its intentional force.⁵⁰

This all-encompassing pressure of political mythology is the central focus of

⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, pXX.

⁵⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.124.

Teolinda Gersão's novel *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* where Hortense is fighting the forces of political myth-making that permeate her experience of language, distorting and renaming things, leaving suicide or a death-in-life existence as the only possibility:

o mito acaba por instituir um dogma e um ritual, não levando à criação e sim à perpetuação de valores sacralizados, exibindo para o homem uma identidade paralisada e paralisante.⁵¹

The waves of the sea become a symbol for a death-harboursing political power that shakes the very foundations of Hortense's life; it killed her husband and son and now tries to condemn Hortense to the metaphorical Death of linguistic and societal non-representation. At the beginning of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* we find Hortense, trying to stem the engulfing force of annihilation battering at the very essence of her being:

—com mais força o mar começara a bater contra a janela, derrubando as cristas-de-galo e as ervilhas-de-cheiro, as chagas e os junquinhos, ondas brancas batendo, empurrando os vidros [...] o vento veio do meio do mar, rodopiou em volta do farol e bateu contra a casa, empurrou a janela, quebrou a vidraça [...] —foi quando uma pancada mais forte a atingiu na cabeça [...] perdia os sentidos, e só

⁵¹ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.1.

obscuramente se sentiu cair sobre uma coisa grande e vaga [...] que [...] a arrastrava consigo para longe.⁵²

Death, just like the water from sea and rain, has washed over her life and the lives of many people at this time in her country's history. And these harbingers of Death, an immense and overpowering but anonymous entity in the beginning of the novel, are soon personified in 'O Senhor do Mar' or 'O Senhor da Morte', O.S., as he is referred to throughout the text. Hortense tries to 'romper o reino de espelhos em que O.S. gosta de se projectar, e com o processo histórico por ele imposto'.⁵³ The figure of O.S. towers over the protagonists of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*:

Entre a ira de Deus e os ventos da História ele levanta-se como um anjo para proteger o seu povo [...] todos os lugares do mundo estão nele, ele é o alfa e o ómega, o princípio e o fim.⁵⁴

The regime exercises totalitarian powers over its people, creating in the collective psyche a time of Death; 'fala-se dum tempo que é de morte tanto para os trabalhadores da terra como os do mar'.⁵⁵ Hortense's battle against the forces of O.S. mirrors the fight for freedom of an entire population; the novel springs from the voice of the Portuguese people recounting fundamental collective events. 'O resto

⁵² Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.10.

⁵³ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, *O Pacto Primordial entre Mulher e Escrita na Obra Ficcional de Teolinda Gersão*, PhD Thesis, São Paulo, 1992, p.109.

⁵⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.83.

⁵⁵ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.424.

do texto também não é meu. De diversos modos foi dito, gritado, sonhado, vivido por muitas pessoas',⁵⁶ states Teolinda Gersão in a preliminary note to *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, stressing the collective experience of a nation that underlies the novel. The 'paisagem', the landscape of the novel, is made up of the memories of the protagonists, which are the collective memories of all men and women that lived through the last few decades of Salazar's dictatorship. The experience of authoritarian government, colonial war, curtailing of civil liberties, and oppressive traditionalism are common to all Portuguese people in the 1960s and 1970s, the time in which the novel is set. Authoritarian power looms over the entire community; it is a 'power [which] in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies and ultimately life itself'.⁵⁷ Hortense is robbed of the life of her son, Pedro, but with her, crying and waiting for the return of their sons and husbands are thousands of other women, all struck down by the power of Death inherent in the forces of O.S.: 'o impacto desmedido da figura de O.S. faz dele [...] uma realidade mítica nacional'.⁵⁸

Hortense is contemplating suicide as her freedom of being and expression is curtailed further and further. Death in this instance is not simply the ceasing of physical existence, the Death of the soldiers, Horácio's early demise due to the pressures the regime put on his life, but also the slow process of the annihilation of the individual, thinking self. Words no longer simply describe an object, water has

⁵⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985,p.5.

⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, Penguin, London, 1990, p.136.

⁵⁸ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.426.

lost the connotation of being mere water, the sea is not merely the sea; they are transported into a mythical dimension 'que lhes deu uma configuração singular, deslocando-os de sua origem primitiva para novo contexto'.⁵⁹ 'O Senhor do Mar', O.S., is mythically inscribed into the collective psyche, intrinsically interwoven into everyone's understanding of the self and the world around. In *Mythologies* Roland Barthes points to that dual function of myth, a metalanguage, permeating and distorting, seeking to influence individual consciousness:

[...] myth is speech stolen and restored. Only, speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back, it was not put exactly in its place.⁶⁰

In *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, O.S. is revealed in his ubiquitous presence bringing Death physically, as the sovereign state sending its sons to die on distant shores, and metaphorically, as the mythical, saint-like figure towering over his people's consciousness. And it is in the latter sense when language becomes a crucial instrument of power, where veiled as mythical discourse its aim is to 'immobilize the world [...] [to] mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of possessions'.⁶¹ Hortense's 'battle with language becomes a quest for survival against the forces of O.S.'.⁶² As a child she resists Áurea, her

⁵⁹ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloisa.htm, p.1.

⁶⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.125

⁶¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.155

⁶² Hilary Owen, "Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão's *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*" in Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, pp.41-55, p.44.

primary school teacher, loyal to O.S., and denounces the latter's falsehood with 'um despudor de estar viva, que a humiliava a ela, porque ela jamais vivera'.⁶³ Hortense battles against the all-inundating myth of the benevolent and paternalistic dictator, trying to expose the deathlike stagnation and uncover O.S. as 'an image/mirage whose intention is to neutralize all aspirations and struggle for change [...] [and] to manipulate the Portuguese into accepting a state of idealized and contented conformism'.⁶⁴ She and her husband Horácio are acutely aware that such an acceptance would mean the loss of individualistic will, which in turn is submitted to the fascist state, leaving the Portuguese people like lifeless puppets:

o homem [...] pegou com as mãos nos bonecos e sacudiu-os com força antes de atirá-los ao chão –mortos, de pau, os braços soltos, as saias de folhos desbotados.⁶⁵

The Death inherent in the authoritarian voice of O.S. does not only affect Hortense's political self, but is also a question of gender, as independent femininity, a manifestation of otherness, is vehemently repressed by the fascist forces. José Ornelas points out that fascism, glorifying war and the (white) male soldier image, showed a rather peculiar concern for the body, establishing it as a key factor in its power concept. Combating the idea of the body as a locus for unruly passions, the fascist 'idea was to create a self-contained, well-ordered, pliable and repressed body

⁶³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.91.

⁶⁴ José N. Ornelas, "The Fascist Body in Contemporary Portuguese Narrative", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol.39, No.2, Winter 2002, pp.65-77, p.72.

⁶⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.37.

(white and male)'.⁶⁶ The authoritarian rule of fascism could not accept female sexuality in any form other than a woman who had no sexual organs, the sexually inexperienced virgin or women like Áurea, who deny their sexuality in order to emulate 'superior' maleness. Women are associated with the destructive forces of Eros:

with emotional excess, passion and sexual appetite, there is a strong fear of the feminine for it may overflow the boundaries of fascist ideology. Women are perceived as a danger to the established order and [...] their bodies have to be kept under constant surveillance, they have to be policed and regulated.⁶⁷

In *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* Teolinda Gersão portrays Hortense not only as a woman whose rights to political expression have been eradicated, but also as a woman whose femininity is put into a social straight-jacket, and for whom the control of passion and feeling makes Death seem the only way of escape. As Hortense's and Clara's life-force, that is their capacity for expressing and experiencing emotions, is curtailed more and more, suicide seems the only solution to them:

estava travado o último combate e nada mais poderia acontecer-lhe.

⁶⁶ José N. Ornelas, "The Fascist Body in Contemporary Portuguese Narrative", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol.39, No.2, Winter 2002, pp.65-77, p.66.

⁶⁷ José N. Ornelas, "The Fascist Body in Contemporary Portuguese Narrative", *Luso-Brazilian Review*, Vol.39, No.2, Winter 2002, pp.65-77, p.75.

Era livre e solta e invulnerável, porque já não tinha a perder coisa alguma [...] Morrer era fácil e poderia morrer se quisesse.⁶⁸

In affirming her right to choose the moment of her Death Hortense escapes '[a mão de O.S.] cortando a alegria, cortando a vida',⁶⁹ reclaiming her sense of individuality, if not in life at least in Death. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Michel Foucault describes how suicide undermined the supremacy of power as 'death is power's limit, the moment that escapes it; death becomes the most secret aspect of existence, the most private'.⁷⁰

This conscious decision to embrace Death is contrasted in the novel with the lives of women who willingly submit to the fascist ideal of womanhood, condemning them to live as translucent shadows, not being mistress of their own individuality and therefore experiencing a metaphorical Death:

a mulher sem desejo nem corpo. A mãe com um perfil de sombra, transparente a ponto de se tornar invisível [...] a figura silenciosa da avó diante da janela —só quando a voltaram viram que estava morta.⁷¹

The experience of existence for Hortense and, to a certain degree, for all women of

⁶⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.11.

⁶⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.66.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1, Penguin, London, 1990, p.138.

⁷¹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.99.

Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo is a cycle that, emulating the movement of the sea, alternates between emptiness and fullness, between surges of life and the annihilation of Death. A thread runs from generation to generation. Times of retreat and submission to the prevailing order, seen in the mother and grandmother, but also in Hortense's own life when the forces of O.S. seem to erase her being, are interspersed with moments of hope: the rebellion of the child and adolescent against parents and teachers to gain emotional freedom and in her relationship to Horácio and Pedro. The women of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* experience these female cycles from generation to generation: 'cada geração tentava, falhava, perdia, ganhava, recomeçava, uma tentativa da mudança'.⁷² At this point the fight for women's civil and emotional liberties is linked to the people's fight for political freedom: 'há no entanto alguma conexão entre o tempo individual das mulheres e o tempo colectivo do povo'.⁷³ As Hortense and Clara realize that they are unable to fight the political and sexual discrimination they face on their own, they become aware that all women share the cultural and social adversity inherent in their sex as an entire population suffers the regime's repressive policies. The all-powerful forces of a cultural and societal bourgeois patriarchy, reinforced by fascism, compel women into the role of the 'asexual' and selfless mother. Initially it appears that Death, as the ultimate negation of cooperation with the regime, seems the only solution: 'a força exterior do mundo parece no entanto ter sido sempre mais forte do que das

⁷² Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.34.

⁷³ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.453.

mulheres'.⁷⁴

As the women are united in their struggle for political freedom, they are able to find an independent voice and identity: 'essas memórias [que] apontam à universalidade de alguns traços [...] [e] unem as mulheres de um determinado lugar'⁷⁵ as Julia Kristeva describes it in her article *Le Temps des Femmes* (1979). When Clara's life force seems to ebb away, Hortense tries to encourage her daughter-in-law's will to live. As Clara tries to commit suicide, Hortense finally finds the strength to fight the overwhelming power of the sea which threatened to engulf her in the opening sections of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*: 'não cedas, grito, arrancamos-te do fundo do mar e trazemos-te connosco para terra'.⁷⁶ In the final part of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* power is restored to the people, as Hortense and with her a whole generation of women, find their voice, finally stemming the forces of fascism. The novel 'uses its artistic epiphany in the feminine to simulate a collective return to expression'.⁷⁷ The cyclical ebb and flow of female life forces is finally broken by the emergence of new life: the impending birth of Clara and Pedro's child. The unrestrained female 'anima', '[which] is the archetype of life itself',⁷⁸ emerges behind the polished image of woman- and motherhood perpetrated by fascism:

⁷⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.453.

⁷⁵ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, "A Diferença Sexual na Literatura: (im)possibilidades de Leitura", in *Textos de Mulher/Muller/Mujer*, María Jesús Fernández García (ed.), Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres, 2004, pp.13-24, p.19.

⁷⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.146.

⁷⁷ Hilary Owen, 'Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão's *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*' in H. Owen, *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, pp.41-55, p.55.

⁷⁸ C.G. Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Routledge, London, 1959, p.32.

um pequeno corpo húmido, perfeito [...] abrindo uma paisagem [...] experimentando bruscamente o ar e o espaço, o choque da sombra contra a luz.⁷⁹

The Death inherent in the denial of essence to women, who are therefore experiencing a 'double marginality',⁸⁰ repressed sexually as well as politically, is superseded by the new hope for a younger generation that has the will to initiate change. *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* captured a moment of celebration and liberation in a historical context, the revolution of the 25th of April, and a very private coming to terms with the past. The deathlike inertia, summed up by Hortense in the image of the eternally suffering Penelope, has come to an end. The nation has resisted 'a eterna repetição do mesmo, escapar à tirania do peso do passado'.⁸¹ Power has been wrenched from the hands of O.S. and the Portuguese people have finally dethroned 'O Senhor do Mar'. They reclaim the right to establish their own historical discourse and become '[o] sujeito agente da História'.⁸² The hegemonic mythical discourse of the regime, which 'deprives [...] the object of which [they] speak [...] of all History',⁸³ is finally vanquished and a new history can be written: 'uma memória que nos julga na sua luz imperecível um rosto e um nome que são os

⁷⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.147.

⁸⁰ Hilary Owen, *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, p.18.

⁸¹ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm

⁸² Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'O Pacto Primordial entre Mulher e Escrita na Obra Ficcional de Teolinda Gersão', PhD Thesis, São Paulo, 1992, p.132.

⁸³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.151.

nossos por nós sermos deles'.⁸⁴

The last section of *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* is therefore marked by 'um tempo de alegria e de solidariedade'⁸⁵ for the Portuguese nation and for the lives of Hortense and Clara. Hortense is able to regain her roots and her individuality and she rescues Clara when she attempts suicide, distraught over the death of Pedro. Hortense acknowledges the fact that the solution to political and social adversity lies not merely in the outward circumstances, but within the women themselves:

não é só fora de nós que é preciso mudar o universo, é também dentro de nós que está a tentação do caminho mais fácil, a voz de resignação, do desespero e da morte [...].⁸⁶

In affirming their unity women will find a strength that surpasses the forces of O.S., the repressive ideology of fascism that seeks to restrain them in order to comply with the air-brushed image of a pure and asexual inferior being and their own desire for annihilation and Death in a world where life seems impossible. Together, women, as well as an entire nation, can withstand the powerful and deathly currents of the sea, reaching dry land and finding their roots.

⁸⁴ Eduardo Lourenço, *O Labirinto da Saudade: Psicoanálise Mítica do Destino Português*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1978, p.68.

⁸⁵ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.421.

⁸⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.146.

2.2 Philosophical Aspects: Death as a Denial of Identity

Death inherent in the repressive exclusion of authoritarianism built the main focus of the previous section, whereas this chapter deals with Death constituted by the mirror of bourgeois patriarchy that defines female identity as objectified reflection. In Teolinda Gersão's first novel *O Silêncio* (1981), which is constituted by the dialogue between Lídia and her lover Afonso, Lídia fights the 'history of the order imposed on things [...] the history of the Same'⁸⁷ and claims her own voice, her own essence of being in a 'world [that] from end to end is organized as mimēsis; [where] resemblance is the law'.⁸⁸ The prevailing patriarchal discourse condemns the women protagonists of *O Silêncio* to an imposed sameness that does not allow for an independent subjectivity; for women like Alcina and Ana the stifling bourgeois order results in the petrification of a death-in-life existence, whereas for Lavínia Alfredo's control of her individuality leads to a loss of self and eventually suicide: 'podem acontecer no mundo todos os milagres e todas as catástrofes, estou dormindo bem fundo, anestesiada, entorpecida, movendo-me entre pessoas mas sem sentir coisa alguma, apenas morta'.⁸⁹

Deathlike, an objectified Sleeping Beauty, 'she is sleeping, she is intact, eternal, absolutely helpless'.⁹⁰ Freud's little girl is eternally incomplete and can only satisfy

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, pxxiv.

⁸⁸ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.149.

⁸⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.59.

⁹⁰ Hélène Cixous and Meg Bortin, 'La Jeune Née: An Excerpt', *Diacritics*, Volume 2, No.2, Summer 1977, pp.64-69, p.66.

her Oedipal desire for the father in replacing him with a man/lover; 'in this sense, woman has no active desire, instead she is doomed to envy the embodiment of desire, which forever eludes her since only a man can possess it'.⁹¹ In *Speculum of the other Woman* Luce Irigaray describes a female essence that lies in the reflection of male subjectivity: 'woman will be the foundation for this specular duplication, giving man back "his" image and repeating it as the "same"'.⁹² In the role of the mere reflector, women necessarily 'are deemed flawed, partial, lacking, different'.⁹³ Lídia rejects that position as mere object of male desire; she reclaims a desire and an identity of her own: 'agora ela tinha uma forma e um lugar, dentro do tempo'.⁹⁴ Lídia refuses the death like existence offered to her by a stifling authoritarian and maledominated bourgeoisie, 'reduzindo-a ao mundo da "dominação masculina"'.⁹⁵

Death in this instance is the annihilation of female identity in a binary hierarchy of opposites, through which the female is negated by the male: 'and the movement by which each opposition establishes itself in order to make sense is the movement by which the couple is destroyed'.⁹⁶ In a language of dream and desire Lídia is able to re-establish the 'technologies of subjectification [...] through which individuals

⁹¹ Jessica Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.84.

⁹² Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.54.

⁹³ Liz Stanley, Sue Wise, *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*, Routledge, New York, 1993, p.199.

⁹⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.52.

⁹⁵ I Flávio Leal, "Uma Leitura dos Silêncios", in *Espéculo*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007, p.2 (from the net: www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero37/silencio.html)

⁹⁶ Hélène Cixous and Meg Bortin, 'La Jeune Née: An Excerpt', *Diacritics*, Volume 2, No.2, Summer 1977, pp.64-69, p.65.

actively fashion their own identities'.⁹⁷ In *O Silêncio* violence is constantly present as the Death of the “psychic” as well as the “organic” self⁹⁸ is at stake as Lídia is well aware that ‘a força dele sobre ela era assim uma força de identificação que a levava a perder os seus próprios contornos, somando-a à vida que era dele’.⁹⁹ The linguistic and cultural mimicry to which Afonso tries to submit her would lead to the stillness of ‘a casa de Alcina e Ana’, where no innovative movement is possible:

bourgeois ideology [...] cannot rest until it has [...] fixated this world into an object which can be forever possessed [...] injected into reality some purifying essence which will stop its transformation.¹⁰⁰

It is the Death inherent in fixity of meaning, which Lídia confronts with her relentless search for new concepts. Her questioning of norms releases Afonso’s aggression as it exposes the fact that ‘ela era forte e ele era frágil, porque ela era água correndo e ele era vazio e pedregoso’.¹⁰¹ As Afonso can only perceive his relationship with Lídia in terms of a subject-object relation, his subjectivity depends on her objectified stillness in the patriarchal mirror image. To Afonso Death resides in a loss of control over the rational order to which he adheres, and so ‘violence and reason become necessary parts of an act of mastery over death’.¹⁰² Afonso opposes a reformulation

⁹⁷ Lois Mc Nay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, p.3.

⁹⁸ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.54.

⁹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.59.

¹⁰⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.155.

¹⁰¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.38.

¹⁰² Jessica Benjamin, ‘The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination’, in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.41-70, p.50.

of the established order; he perceives as an existential threat the 'recontextualização e reparticulação das identidades [...] [que] está a conduzir a uma reformulação das inter-relações [...] entre o vínculo nacional classista, racial, étnico e sexual'.¹⁰³ Afonso cannot tolerate utopian creativity for fear of losing his male supremacy: 'porque se tu soubesses a força que há nos sonhos, de noite levantar-me-ias as pálpebras para ver o que estou sonhando e controlar o sonho'.¹⁰⁴ The irrationality that constitutes Lídia's language of dream and desire is incomprehensible to Afonso and he becomes increasingly hostile to Lídia's attempts to re-invent societal and linguistic concepts: 'não é possível falar consigo, Lídia, você simplesmente exaspera-me porque confunde sempre tudo, de propósito'.¹⁰⁵ Unlike Hortense, who claimed her individuality in the public arena of political expression, Lídia tries to establish a different mode of relationship between men and women, as for her 'a identidade se constrói na intersecção do público e do privado'.¹⁰⁶ Lídia resists the violence and Death of a male rationality that only concedes images of repetition and sameness to women; she flees the control of the patriarchal mirror Afonso holds up to her and refuses to be object and reflection. The result of a rational and male dominated economy signifies the Death of Lídia's thinking self, which she is fighting with all her might. Afonso is anxiously holding on to the status quo of a society,

¹⁰³ Ana Luísa Amaral and Ana Gabriela Macedo, "A Palavra, a Identidade e a Cultura Translativa: Para uma Introdução do Dicionário Terminológico de Conceitos da Crítica Feminista", in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.383-408 (395).

¹⁰⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.62.

¹⁰⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.114.

¹⁰⁶ Teresa Tavares, "'Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo": Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrative de escritoras contemporâneas", in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p349.

where ‘only men are seen to have an essence’.¹⁰⁷ Like Alfredo, who held on to the immovable structure of grammar, Afonso’s life force is grounded in the repetition of sameness and Lídia’s questioning of societal norms causes existential *angst* in her male counterpart. Afonso answers Lídia’s provocation with aggressiveness: ‘o absurdo de tudo isso [...] a paixão da paixão, a procura da procura, o desejo sem objecto, porque o seu objecto é o desejo e nada do que você conta ou diz, ou sonha existe’.¹⁰⁸

The male protagonists in *O Silêncio*, Afonso and Alfredo are tied intrinsically to the old order of society, which provides a stifling death-in-life existence to all that adhere to it. A professor and a medic, they are representatives of a stuffy bourgeoisie. Lavínia and Lídia are diametrically opposed to the men’s way of thinking and their sense of order: ‘Afonso e Alfredo [...] são igualmente seres domesticados, cuja criatividade, imaginação e vida foram sufocadas pelas normatizações sociais’.¹⁰⁹ At first the difference and otherness of Lavínia and Lídia seem highly desirable as they offer a life-force the men lack: ‘the unthought [...] is in relation to man, the Other [...] it is both exterior to him and indispensable to him’.¹¹⁰ Both men are prisoners of their own bourgeois morality codes, condemned to an existence dull as death, suffering from ‘essa incapacidade de quebrar os limites por ele impostos sobre as coisas,

¹⁰⁷ Liz Stanley and Sue Wise, *Breaking Out Again: Feminist Ontology and Epistemology*, Routledge, New York, 1993, p.199.

¹⁰⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.99.

¹⁰⁹ Maria Lúcia Wiltshire de Oliveira, ‘Destinos e Desejos femininos em *O Silêncio* de Teolinda Gersão’, in *Gênero e Representação nas Literaturas de Portugal e Africa* by Constância Lima Duarte, Marli Fantini Scarpatti (eds.), Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2002, pp.129-35, p131.

¹¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, p.326

essa necessidade inelutável de segurança, que o prendem ao já conhecido'.¹¹¹ But in their relationship with Lavínia and Lídia they try to re-establish the control of male rationality over female intuitive creativity. Though at first they were attracted by female otherness, Lavínia's foreignness and Lídia's capacity for creative invention, it is the sameness of rational order to which Alfredo and Afonso revert. In the end they can only accept the other as the objectified mirror image that would reflect its life force on the ageing men. The passion Alfredo and Afonso feel is soon perceived as madness, which 'comes from the world of the irrational and bears its stigmata [...] [and which] crosses the frontiers of bourgeois order'.¹¹² In the emotion that transgresses the limits of ordering rationality lies the threat of a loss of control, which to Alfredo and Afonso is the Death of the supreme male subject: 'Alfredo vai uma vez algum tempo a Paris e traz consigo uma estrangeira [...] e não entende depois [...] o momento de loucura em que saiu da sua norma e seus princípios, há um momento incontrolado em sua vida que o aterra'.¹¹³ Alfredo and Afonso try to re-establish the mirror economy of the same, as they are afraid of the otherness and difference they encounter in Lavínia and Lídia. In the dull sameness of established forms order can be restored and the threat of an emotive subjectivity can be contained in the stillness of the mirror: 'if [t]his ego is to be valued, some "mirror" is needed to reassure it and re-insure it of its value'.¹¹⁴ Alfredo tries to control the threat of otherness in Lavínia; her foreign difference has to be subjected to the codices of sameness. He re-affirms his supremacy, as he asserts his right 'to

¹¹¹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.118.

¹¹² Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p.54.

¹¹³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.69.

¹¹⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.54.

ascribe a name to [...] [Lavínia], and in that name [...] [her] being’;¹¹⁵ ‘achámos difícil, quando chegámos aqui [...] então ela [...] escolheu Lavínia’.¹¹⁶ Together with her name and her mother tongue, Lavínia’s otherness and independent self is lost, she is reduced to a puppet-like copy of herself and becomes more and more Alfredo’s creation. The violence of male rationality, which can ascribe the woman no other space than the objectified mirror image, denies Lavínia an independent subjectivity and therefore signifies the Death of her emotive self. In a last attempt Lavínia tries to regain her lifeforce in her flight with Herberto. But she is betrayed by her lover and returns resigned to Alfredo: ‘foste engolida pela casa e Alfredo tirou a chave’.¹¹⁷

Lavínia’s foreignness and her uncontrolled passion ‘parece oferecer um modelo de resistência à “gramática dominante”’,¹¹⁸ but her rebellion is cut short, when she returns to Alfredo, now finally accepting his supremacy and her status as mere object. She is now reduced to small explosions of hatred against Alfredo’s bourgeois world; ‘não aceitara nunca, e era aí que ela punha as facas sobre a mesa com as lâminas afiadas voltadas contra nós’.¹¹⁹ Imprisoned in Alfredo’s ‘casa estreita [...] de burguesia rica e provinciana’¹²⁰ Lavínia becomes a shadow of herself, ‘representa

¹¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, p.120.

¹¹⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.18.

¹¹⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.82.

¹¹⁸ Teresa Tavares, “Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo”: Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas”, in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.363.

¹¹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.70.

¹²⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.69.

“Toda a mulher” que finalmente se rende a ser “Ninguém”¹²¹. Her life force is ebbing away as her attempt first to subvert and then to leave behind her constricting bourgeois marriage fails; normative society takes over and her flight with her lover Herberto is followed by a ‘retrocesso que lhe é fatal’.¹²² Her otherness becomes the ultimate refuge for her independent identity; she recedes from a world ‘that [...] requires that women lend themselves to alienation [...] and to exchanges in which they do not participate’.¹²³ The unintelligible words she repeats are merely ‘uma palavra morta, que não atingia ninguém [...] vibrava apenas no silêncio sem mudar nada’.¹²⁴ Alfredo succeeded in controlling her subjectivity, but ultimately he annihilates her capacity to live. In the end Lavínia resigns herself and commits suicide, ‘porque não pudeste levar-te a ti mesma voltaste para trás e procuraste na morte uma saída’.¹²⁵

If Lavínia was the woman who resigned herself to nothingness and non-existence, her daughter Lídia is the woman who refuses the non-existence ascribed to women by a male bourgeois society. Lídia ‘tem a “força da revolta” com que se liberta do mundo do silêncio’,¹²⁶ she refuses to accept the Death inherent in the objectified

¹²¹ Teresa Tavares, “Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falamos”: Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas”, in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.362.

¹²² Teresa Tavares, “Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falamos”: Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas”, in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.362.

¹²³ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1985, p.172.

¹²⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, p.70.

¹²⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, p.82.

¹²⁶ Tavares Teresa, “Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falamos”: Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas”, in Maria Irene Ramalho and António

reflection of the patriarchal mirror. In a language of dream and desire she resists the economy of the same in a dynamic process of continual re-invention: 'só quando se compreende que a alternativa é mudar a vida ou soltar da janela se adquire a exacta perspectiva das coisas'.¹²⁷ *O Silêncio* is constructed around the interchange between the two lovers, Afonso and Lídia, but their speeches are 'less like a conversation and more like two monologues'.¹²⁸ Lídia, the painter, the inventor of new words and new spaces finds no way to communicate with Afonso, who is too afraid to let go of the old and imagine new ways: 'o medo do amor [...] o medo que você tem de ir até ao limite de si próprio, de destruir tudo o que fica para trás e criar em seu lugar outra coisa'.¹²⁹ Lídia conceives of a future where redefinitions are possible, 'o momento em que o gênero não seja entendido como uma ideologia - uma 'ficção' sociocultural inscrito num corpo-'sexo'.¹³⁰ It is the binary exclusion inscribed in the words man/woman that so disturbs Lídia. For Lídia identity is formed in this process of reinvention, it is 'not the goal, but rather the point of departure of the process of self-consciousness [...] [and it] is not [...] an "I" continuously prefigured and pre-empted in an unchangeable symbolic order'.¹³¹

Ultimately there is no point of contact between the two lovers in *O Silêncio*; for Lídia

Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.362.

¹²⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.101.

¹²⁸ Darlene Sadlier, *The Question of How: Women Writers and New Portuguese Literature*, Greenwood Press, New York, 1989, p.100.

¹²⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.99.

¹³⁰ Ana Paula Ferreira, 'O Gênero em Questão', in *O Despertar de Eva: Gênero e Identidade na Ficção da Língua Portuguesa*, by Maria Luíza Ritzel Remédios (ed.), Edipucrs, Porto Alegre, 2000, pp.15-28, p.25.

¹³¹ Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies: Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, p.8/9.

love is not a static feeling, a relation between a subject of desire and a desired object: 'ela esperava que o amor fosse uma ponte para outra coisa'.¹³² In a reinvention of cultural and linguistic codices Lúcia provides a language of desire, which constitutes a continual process of 'becoming [that] is involutory, [because] involution is creative'.¹³³ Love is beyond the rationally defined order of cultural and linguistic signification: 'o amor [...] desenha-se sobre este fundo de impossibilidade a não-inscrição no espaço simbólico da fala, do real da relação sexual'.¹³⁴ For Lúcia openness and change are essential to her existence. Her life cycle is open, in a constant process of renewal: 'with no closure of the circle or the spiral of identity [...] passing from inside to outside without ever [...] being resolved, resorbed, reflected'.¹³⁵ In her everything is fluid and flexible; she is personified in the images of sand, water and wind. Her entire being resists Afonso's sense of stiff and unchangeable order; men like Alfredo and Afonso 'transportam em volta da cabeça uma caixa de vidro mental que se fecha por si mesma à menor suspeita de desordem'.¹³⁶

Afonso can only perceive as madness an emotive logic without any firm boundaries: 'louca gritou, da janela, porque ela ia em busca do que não existia, não existiria nunca'.¹³⁷ Afonso is left behind, when Lúcia refuses the sameness imposed on her,

¹³² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.62.

¹³³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.238.

¹³⁴ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisboa, 1984, pp.92-99, p.93.

¹³⁵ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.76.

¹³⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.40.

¹³⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.124.

as a female right to identity is re-established at the end of the novel. Lídia aborts the child she is expecting, because no future can be perceived in a binary exclusion of the sexes. To her a future generation would consist of ‘arquitectos de outras cidades [...] inventarão o espaço e a luz e o céu e o mar e o amor e o corpo’.¹³⁸ Afonso’s incapacity to conceive new societal and linguistic concepts can only harbour Death, and would never allow space for procreation. In the end a bottomless void opens between the two: ‘o silêncio cresce e é fundo e é total’.¹³⁹ Unlike Lavínia, to whom suicide seemed the only possible escape from a male imposed identity, Lídia’s exit does not provide the closure of Death, but the possibility of a new beginning outside restrictive patriarchal and bourgeois conventions: ‘ela estava de repente fora do seu alcance, caminhando, abrindo passagem com o seu corpo’.¹⁴⁰

2.3 Linguistic Aspects: Death as a Locus of Non-Representation

The Death inherent in linguistic exclusion shifts the focus from the political and social mechanisms of repression to the more hidden socio-cultural constructions of domination through language and cultural codices inscribed in words: ‘a política do silêncio e do discurso, daquilo que pode ser dito, de quem pode falar, e de quem ouve’.¹⁴¹ The silence characters like Lavínia and Lídia experience is the silence of the powerless, those who ‘cannot choose to be silent, any more than they can

¹³⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.109.

¹³⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.113.

¹⁴⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.124.

¹⁴¹ Ana Luísa Amaral and Ana Gabriela Macedo, “A Palavra, a Identidade e a Cultura Translativa: Para uma Introdução do Dicionário Terminológico de Conceitos da Crítica Feminista”, in Maria Irene Ramalho and António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.383-408, p.399.

choose to speak, or choose the meaning of their speech'.¹⁴² The silencing is so overwhelming in its oppressiveness that only a violent breaking free can shake off the societal chains; 'o romance é um grito de dor pela violência do silenciamento'¹⁴³ and a space is created, where 'o masculino e o feminino se articulam, discutindo o lugar pronto do sujeito na cultura ocidental'.¹⁴⁴

As the patriarchal mirror of mimicry only provided a reflected objectivity of femininity, the acquisition of language, as described in the Lacanian mirror-stage is also linked to a code of signification defined by the law of the father. In the mirror-stage the infant tries 'to establish a relation between the organism and its reality [...] between the Innenwelt and the Umwelt'.¹⁴⁵ Identity, in Lacanian as well as Freudian psychology, is founded on the separation of the 'I' and the 'Other'; but for Lacan it is language that retrieves the wholeness of the subject: 'language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject'.¹⁴⁶ But the subject that is reflected in language is one defined by codices of signification that are rooted in patriarchal structures. Death, in this instance, is the Death inherent in non-representation as 'the position of woman in language [...] is one of non-coherence; she finds herself only in a void of

¹⁴² Robin Tolmach Lakoff, "Cries and Whispers: The Shattering of the Silence", in Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz, *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp.25-51, p.25.

¹⁴³ Maria Lúcia Wiltshire de Oliveira, 'Destinos e Desejos femininos em *O Silêncio* de Teolinda Gersão', in *Gênero e Representação nas Literaturas de Portugal e Africa* by Constância Lima Duarte, Marli Fantini Scarpatti (eds.), Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, 2002, pp.129-35, p.130.

¹⁴⁴ Flávio Leal, "Uma Leitura dos Silêncios", in *Espéculo*, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2007, p.2 (www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero37/silencio.html)

¹⁴⁵ Jaques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.4.

¹⁴⁶ Jaques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.2.

meaning, the empty spaces between the signs'.¹⁴⁷

The one thing that is noticeable about Lavínia, Lídia and Hortense, is, that their fight against patriarchal and authoritarian hegemony is mainly constituted by subversion and questioning of language. They are caught in the female conundrum of not possessing any mode of discourse, as 'identifications are made [...] through insertion into the pre-existing symbolic order'.¹⁴⁸ Neither the word — the sign — nor its use in a specific context — the signified —, neither *langue* nor *parole*, as Saussure defined them, leave any space for an expression in the feminine. Identity is, in the Lacanian acquisition of subjectivity, tied into linguistic mechanisms: '[man's] nature is woven by the effects in which is found the structure of language, of which he becomes the material'.¹⁴⁹ Meaning is acquired by positioning linguistic elements in a hierarchical fashion in relation to all other elements of language. But this categorizing is practised in a

culture dominated by the Law of the Father [...] and if difference is necessary to acquire a position in this symbolic order, then how can woman be positioned other than in negative terms?¹⁵⁰

The silence described in *O Silêncio* and the authoritarian oppression experienced by Hortense in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* are founded in these empty

¹⁴⁷ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Macmillan, London, 1984, p.8.

¹⁴⁸ Waugh Patricia, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.54.

¹⁴⁹ Jaques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.284.

¹⁵⁰ Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.61.

spaces of non-representation. The women characters in both novels are rendered non-existent in the dominant discourse as they are incapable and unwilling to comply with the prevailing social order. The exchanges between Afonso and Lúcia are not simply a resistance of the woman to comply with male supremacy, but also a representation of Lúcia's claim to a mode of expression, just as Hortense's constant repudiation of 'as palavras falsas [que] começaram subitamente a entrar [...] cortando a sua voz, para que ela não quebrasse o silêncio'.¹⁵¹

In *O Silêncio* the male characters, Alfredo and Afonso, insist on imposing this patriarchal order on the women. Alfredo expects Lavínia, the foreigner, to adapt to cultural and linguistic norms; 'é preciso aprender a língua do país em que se vive [...] e também a gramática, entrar na norma, seguir a norma, depois tudo é fácil'.¹⁵² But 'grammar is politics by other means'¹⁵³ and linguistic domination resides in the same desire for control as political or societal repression: '[a] determinação em manter o domínio sobre todas as palavras, seja resultante de uma profunda insegurança que o inquieta e o assusta'.¹⁵⁴ A reinvention of codes is an existential threat to male supremacy; in demanding a new way of expression 'Lúcia assume simultaneamente o poder da criação [...] criando uma nova gramática'.¹⁵⁵ Men like Alfredo and Afonso have tied their sense of existence, the constitution of their value

¹⁵¹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.16.

¹⁵² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.67.

¹⁵³ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p.3.

¹⁵⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *A Violência das Palavras*, *Jornal de Letras*, 01.05.1990

¹⁵⁵ Teresa Tavares, "'Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo": Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas", in Maria Irene Ramalho e António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.363.

in this world to an image mirrored in women. Lavínia and Lídia seek an expression for their dreams and feelings, which they cannot utter in a linguistic system dominated by male codices, as ‘na óptica masculina os sentimentos não deverão transparecer nas palavras’.¹⁵⁶ This inability to communicate the essence of her inner being, this imposition of silence is a death sentence to Lavínia. She cannot comply with the requirements of the prevailing codices, with the grammar Alfredo so ardently tries to teach her, and so is condemned to eternal muteness and linguistic—and eventually physical— non-existence:

fingiu que falava a mesma língua, mas a tensão crescia, dentro de ela, e um dia estalou de repente e as palavras soltaram-se, todas estrangeiras, de súbito ela cortou todas as falsas pontes e ficou como sempre estivera, isolada dentro de outro contexto, de outro mundo.¹⁵⁷

Her daughter Lídia refuses the cultural and linguistic assimilation Afonso is trying to impose on her and therefore rejects the traditional female position, where ‘the ability of one party in discourse to prevent another from fully participating (‘silencing’) arises out of the disparate powers and roles of each and contributes to the further unbalancing of those roles’.¹⁵⁸ She is fully aware of the Death that is inherent in linguistic non-representation and as the relationship develops it becomes clear that Afonso is unable and unwilling to bridge the gap between normative control and life

¹⁵⁶ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *A Violência das Palavras*, *Jornal de Letras*, 01.05.1990

¹⁵⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.70.

¹⁵⁸ Robin Tolmach Lakoff, “Cries and Whispers: The Shattering of the Silence”, in Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz, *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, Routledge, London, 1995, pp.25-51, p.26.

affirming utopianism: '[Afonso] [...] fechado no seu próprio silêncio, como se não ouvisse, e jamais fosse ouvir coisa alguma. Ela [...] entrou no seu silêncio, e deixou, dentro de si, o vento levar todos as palavras. Porque eles eram dois mundos sem pontos de contacto'.¹⁵⁹ Love cannot live in a climate of control, where the man expects the woman to deny herself essence and expects her to be caught in an endless repetition of sameness in the cultural codices of language and the role she assumes in the relationship. His 'desire is for possession [...] rather than for mutual affection and participation'¹⁶⁰ and Lídia finally 'reconheceu que eles eram um homem e uma mulher que não se amavam, porque não conseguiram falar nunca'.¹⁶¹

Lídia leaves, not seeking an independent identity through the subjectivity of yet another lover, as Lavínia did in Herberto, but truly aspiring to finding new solutions: 'se o amor não existir eu o inventarei com o meu corpo [...] todas as palavras são minhas [...] e há um mundo que se quebra enquanto eu falo'.¹⁶² Lídia tries to establish a libidinal dream language that would not reflect the masculine system of representation, as only in the irrationality of desire a female subject of language can emerge. There is hope in the 'impermanence of linguistic signifiers [and the fact that] 'man' and 'woman' are not necessarily tied to the same objects'.¹⁶³ New codices can be developed that will be used by a new generation: 'uma linguagem própria para as experiências do corpo, da intersubjectividade, deixadas mudas pela cultura

¹⁵⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.32.

¹⁶⁰ Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.61.

¹⁶¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.111.

¹⁶² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.123.

¹⁶³ Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.60.

anterior'.¹⁶⁴ As Lídia leaves she puts herself outside the realm of the controlling male voice: 'a sua voz não podia mais atingi-la'.¹⁶⁵ Lídia, in her resistance to a male code of signification, is intent on building a different linguistic reality that would lack an inscription in the current systems of signification: 'não há interpretante Final: a verdade não se acha no fim: morte é vida [...] cria a epifania do silêncio'.¹⁶⁶ Afonso stays behind, endlessly caught up in the bourgeois codices he cannot transgress; he shuts himself into the death like emptiness of his home and a soul-destroying hatred for all that lies outside it: 'voltou para dentro e fechou a janela. Havia dentro dele um ódio leve, que se estendia a todas as coisas do mundo'.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, "A Diferença Sexual na Literatura: (im)possibilidades de Leitura", in *Textos de Mulher/Muller/Mujer*, María Jesús Fernández García (ed.), Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres, 2004, pp.13-24, p.19.

¹⁶⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.124.

¹⁶⁶ Maria dos Prazeres Mendes, *A Metaleitura da Voz Feminina: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão*, *Via Atlântica*, n°1, March 1997, pp.100-7, p.106.

¹⁶⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.124.

CHAPTER 3

THE METAMORPHIC TRANSGRESSION OF DEATH

3.1 Salient Worlds: Death as a Transgression of Limits

So far Death has been discussed as a limiting and excluding factor: the Death that follows authoritarian and/or bourgeois patriarchal control mechanisms responsible for a silencing intolerant of any heterogeneity. For the women protagonists of *O Silêncio* and *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* bourgeois hegemony meant a curtailing of civil liberties, a denial of — female — essence and an inability of expression in a semiotic system dominated by the law of the Father. Death, metaphorically and as a physical reality, was discussed as the culmination of negativity, a point of exclusion, non-existence and non-representation: ‘as Cixous and Irigaray have shown, femininity is defined as lack, negativity, absence of meaning, irrationality, chaos, darkness, as non-Being’.¹⁶⁸ Women are confined to function as mirror images for male subjectivity, the eternal ‘other’ in an ‘endless series of hierarchical binary opposition’.¹⁶⁹ The symbolic order of the sign, the predominant cultural codices are insufficiently fixated, unable to represent the feminine: ‘language functions negatively, as the limit of the possible’.¹⁷⁰

This chapter explores the fact that Death in Teolinda Gersão’s fiction never only

¹⁶⁸ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, Methuen, New York, 1985, p.166.

¹⁶⁹ Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*, Methuen, New York, 1985, p.104.

¹⁷⁰ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, Jonathan Cape Editions, London, 1967, p.19.

represents this one dimension of negativity and lack, but a dual function. On the one hand there is a notion of Death as a locus of non-existence and non-representation in her texts as mentioned above, but there is also a transformative quality to Death as another plane of consciousness that offers a fresh look at narrative and socio-cultural conventions. Reading Teolinda Gersão's texts, the reader is never left with the notion of pure negativity and an all-restricting power of bourgeois control. Death in Teolinda Gersão's fiction is not merely the limit of representation, a historic, cultural and linguistic topos of non-being, but a transgression of literary and cultural conventions: 'a escrita deixa atravessar pela morte, sobretudo a escrita feminina que surge íntimamente comprometida com uma ideia de transgressão'.¹⁷¹ Death is turned into a literary device, in order to create a distance that would allow the reader to view 'from above' culturally accepted traditions and question their validity.

In their dislocation of place, time and linguistic sign Teolinda Gersão's texts create a world of make-believe, where 'the readers are located within the fictional world that, for the duration of the game, is taken as real'.¹⁷² Her texts bear certain similarities and conventions from the really 'real' world of everyday in order to be decoded by the reader, but are sufficiently removed from it to be able to pretend to be exact representations of 'reality'. Thomas Pavel calls salient worlds

those dual structures in which the primary universe does not enter into an isomorphism with the secondary universe, because the latter

¹⁷¹ Maria Graciete Besse, *Percursos no Feminino*, Ulmeiro, Lisbon, 2001, p.14.

¹⁷² Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts & London, 1986, p.55.

includes entities and states of affairs that lack correspondence in the former.¹⁷³

The realm of Death, rather than representing a metaphysical entity and a place of non-existence, is used by Teolinda Gersão as an instrument of ‘defamiliarization [...], where literature becomes a means of renewing perception by exposing and revealing the habitual and the conventional’.¹⁷⁴ In her writing Death is not simply the dual opposition to life. In an interview concerning the publication of her novel *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Teolinda Gersão states that ‘não tenho nenhuma angústia metafísica’.¹⁷⁵ As in that particular novel, Death in all her fiction is a state set apart from life, but intrinsically interwoven with it: ‘a morte era outra face da vida, uma outra dimensão mais fascinante’.¹⁷⁶

Teolinda Gersão’s fiction represents a mode of writing, where in a post-modern and self-conscious parody — metafictional in all its parameters¹⁷⁷ — convention is undermined. The *rigor mortis* of a hegemonic, bourgeois and patriarchal discourse is undermined and subverted in her texts, allowing for movement in the stifling atmosphere of traditional Western Cartesian rationality, where the feminine was eternally linked to emotion and only the male could ever climb the lofty heights of reason. As José Ornelas puts it, the writing of Teolinda Gersão

¹⁷³ Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts&London, 1986, p.57.

¹⁷⁴ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction*, Methuen, New York, 1984, p.65.

¹⁷⁵ Maria Teresa Horta, ‘Falar da Morte em Tom de Comédia’, in *Diário de Notícias*, 13.01.1996

¹⁷⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.15.

¹⁷⁷ See Patricia Waugh’s definition of Metafiction in: P.Waugh, *Metafiction*, Methuen, New York, 1984, p.2.

representa uma realidade discursiva que oscila entre um tempo parado e um tempo de mudança. Esta oscilação bipolar não só enquadra um espaço masculino associado à ordem, ao status quo, e um espaço feminino de insurreição mas também aponta para a crise da racionalidade clássica.¹⁷⁸

The presence of Death as not merely a limiting factor, but a motor of change that triggers metamorphosis in the main characters, which generates the same effect in Teolinda Gersão's texts that Tzvetan Todorov observed in fantastic fiction:

The Fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.¹⁷⁹

Although Teolinda Gersão rejects the term 'fantastic' for her writing and states in an interview following the release of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, that she prefers that the novel should be considered 'apenas [...] simbólico',¹⁸⁰ this hesitation the reader experiences confronted with supernatural elements is ever present in her texts. There is no question that 'the effect [of her novels] is to split open, to expose the levels of illusion. We are forced to recall that our "real" world can never be the "real"

¹⁷⁸ José Ornelas, 'Subversão da Topografia Cultural do Patriarcado em *O Cavallo de Sol* de Teolinda Gersão', in *Discursos*, n.º5, 1993, pp.115-34, p.115.

¹⁷⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/London, 1973, p.25.

¹⁸⁰ Maria Teresa Horta, 'Falar da Morte em Tom de Comédia', in *Diário de Notícias*, 13.01.1996

world of the novel', as Patricia Waugh describes it in her book *Metafiction*.¹⁸¹ This hesitation of the supernatural creates fictional worlds that are fluid, 'salient', where meaning is not fixed and where 'metamorphosis [...] [which] [...] is the collapse [...] of the limit between matter and mind [and a] transition from mind to matter has become possible'.¹⁸²

Lídia in *O Silêncio* describes herself as 'uma mulher água, vento, folha',¹⁸³ transgressing the limit of the human form. When Hortense battles with the all-engulfing force of the sea, the sea and the entire world surrounding her display human qualities; she addresses the world as a person: 'eu não existo, mundo, não existo, sou apenas uma folha de árvore, uma pena de pássaro, um qualquer objecto leve balançando ao sabor do vento'.¹⁸⁴ As the sea is personified, battering against her door and windows and later in the mythical figure of 'O Senhor do Mar/da Morte', Hortense, the woman, becomes part of nature. Like Lídia she metamorphoses into fluid natural structures escaping the supremacy of the symbol. In a story related in *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes* 'uma pequena empregada bancária'¹⁸⁵ sees a coat made of the fur of a red fox. The desire for this coat brings out the wild animal inside her and in a Kafkaesque twist to the story she eventually leaves behind her human form becoming one with the animal skin:

¹⁸¹ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction*, Methuen, New York, 1984, p.33.

¹⁸² Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/London, 1973, p.114.

¹⁸³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.49.

¹⁸⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.67.

¹⁸⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.74.

a pele ajustada à sua, a ponto de não se distinguir dela, viu no espelho levantando a gola em volta da cabeça, o rosto desfeito, de repente emagrecido, desmesuradamente alongado pela maquilhagem, os olhos em fenda, ardendo em sonho.¹⁸⁶

The woman turns into the fox, running off into the woods outside town, wild and free. Vitória in *O Cavalo do Sol* has a similar relationship to the horse; throughout the events of the novel she is metaphorically transformed into the body of the untameable horse: 'como se formasse com o cavalo um só corpo'.¹⁸⁷ In the final moments of her life, as Death in the form of a black horse approaches her, Maria do Lado can finally let go of form and order: 'sentia-se leve, cada vez mais leve. Como o ar [...] entregue ao vento, ao nada'.¹⁸⁸

All the women, (Lídia, Hortense, 'a pequena empregada bancária', Vitória and Maria do Lado), literally experience the Death of their form as inscribed in the sign/signifier 'woman'; they undergo a metamorphosis into something fluid and part of nature, indescribable and inconceivable, lacking any inscription in cultural codices. The static hierarchy of binary opposition, the mimetic strategies of non-subjectivity, are transgressed in a process of dislocation, which, as Julia Kristeva describes it, is 'indicating a becoming — in opposition to the level of continuity and substance, both

¹⁸⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.79.

¹⁸⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo do Sol*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.70.

¹⁸⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, pp.234/5.

of which obey the logic of being and are thus monological'.¹⁸⁹ Death in Teolinda Gersão's fiction is part of this process, akin to Bakhtin's 'carnivalization [which] constantly assisted in the deconstruction of all barriers between genres, between self-enclosed systems of thought, between various styles etc [...]'.¹⁹⁰ Death opens up the field of semantic and socio-cultural conventions rather than being relegated to a mere locus of exclusion and non-existence, oppressing and limiting.

Death in Teolinda Gersão's work is a dynamic process, a trigger for metamorphosis and change, more like the snake's shedding of its old skin than the allegorical Grim Reaper brutally separating those who, in cultural and political terms, are 'alive' from those who are 'not-present' and 'not-existent' in a particular historical, philosophical and linguistic discourse. Death, the presence of supernatural elements, becomes a necessary means to interrupt continuity. As Roland Barthes writes in *Writing Degree Zero*, in creating fiction 'what must be destroyed is duration, that is, the ineffable binding force running through existence'.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.71.

¹⁹⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984, p.134.

¹⁹¹ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, Jonathan Cape Editions, London, 1967, p.44.

3.2 Death of the Symbol: A Morte do 'Senhor do Mar'

To describe Teolinda Gersão as a writer who merely seeks to establish a feminist consciousness and coming-of-age would be too simplistic, as her re-definition of reality does not stop with re-evaluating the female topoi of non-existence or even the linguistic and cultural connotation inherent in the sign/signifier 'woman', but reaches far deeper into the historical consciousness of her country. In Chapter 2 'Historical Aspects: Death as an Instrument of Power', myth was described as the crucial instrument in perpetuating and eternalizing, and therefore 'naturalizing', the ideology of the repressive regime embodied in the figure 'O Senhor do Mar', who emerged as the all-engulfing authority over life and death, condemning Hortense, Clara, Pedro, Horácio and with them an entire nation to physical or metaphorical non-existence. But Teolinda Gersão does not merely limit her writing to describing a power struggle or marking out modes of difference and dissidence. As 'Clara remarks, killing off O.S. will not be enough';¹⁹² as once the memory of his reign of terror is forgotten, 'resucitá-lo-ão noutra lugar com outro nome'.¹⁹³ Her criticism of the regime reaches far deeper into the mythical regions of Portuguese History, attacking myth itself, exposing it as 'extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree'.¹⁹⁴ It is the symbolism inherent in language, the mythical repetition of certain images that Teolinda Gersão sees as the decisive factor in immobilizing history. Just as the

¹⁹² Hilary Owen, 'Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão's *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*', in H. Owen *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, pp.41-55, p.51.

¹⁹³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.139.

¹⁹⁴ Angela Carter, 'Notes from the Frontline', in *On Gender and Writing*, Michelene Wandor (ed.), Pandora Press, London, 1983, pp.69-77, p.71.

sign/signifier 'woman' had to become fluid and take different forms outside possible or conceivable reality, her writing seeks to 'retirar as imagens da 'imobilidade' [...] de sua função enquanto arquétipos e revitalizar os mitos'.¹⁹⁵ Teolinda Gersão's writing evokes a discontinuity, a Death and rebirth, '[uma] sintaxe do grau zero, do vazio'¹⁹⁶ that would encompass all expressions of cultural consciousness and would begin but not end with history. The dethronement of 'O Senhor do Mar' would require a revolution that goes further than the ceasing of his power and open up history into a dialogical discourse, where the symbolism inherent in semiotics is not fixed but moveable.

In *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* Teolinda Gersão metaphorically uses the events of 25th of April 1974 as a political and cultural watershed in recent Portuguese history in order to artistically re-create the political and historical interruption of continuity as a linguistic and ideological *tabula rasa* from which the metalanguage of myth can be re-invented and new images can emerge. In the incongruence of her fictional worlds with the 'real' world Teolinda Gersão creates a fictional environment where language forms 'the border between [...] the symbolic and the real'¹⁹⁷ which, in turn, leads to a questioning of language and the symbolism it conveys. Language becomes 'o [discurso] do Interpretante Imediato e o do

¹⁹⁵ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.2.

¹⁹⁶ Maria dos Prazeres Mendes, 'A Metaleitura da Voz Feminina: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão', *Via Atlântica*, n°1, March 1997, pp.100-7, p.106.

¹⁹⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.107.

Dinâmico, nunca o do Interpretante Final que elucida, conclui, finaliza'.¹⁹⁸ The Death of the dictatorship was a necessary political development in order to give rise to a literary expression which, though mythically dreamt and evoked through many authors, 'estava na memória, na congelada "reminiscência" canoniana de muita gente, e pouco a pouco de lá surgirá, modificada pela luz póstuma da liberdade que o permite'.¹⁹⁹ The disruption of discourse therefore became intrinsically linked to the discontinuity of history; the monological discourse of authoritarian rule has been overthrown to give way to a 'dialogue and ambivalence [which] are borne out as the only approach that permits the writer to enter history by espousing an ambivalent ethics: negation as affirmation'.²⁰⁰ The current symbolic order of the dictatorship had to 'die' and be relegated to 'non-existence' in order to allow for a new discourse; the fixity of the old system had to be subverted by:

essa ambigüidade posta na relação entre passado e presente [que] tem como maior propósito desfazer a representação homogênea ou continua da história, em favor de uma mobilização ou actualização do passado.²⁰¹

Death in the fiction of Teolinda Gersão is a motor to enable this mobilization of history out of a static discourse maintained for so many decades; it is part of the

¹⁹⁸ Maria dos Prazeres Mendes, 'A Metaleitura da Voz Feminina: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão', *Via Atlântica*, n°1, March 1997, pp.100-7, p.106.

¹⁹⁹ Eduardo Lourenço, 'Literatura e Revolução', *Colóquio Letras*, n°78, March 1984, pp.7-16, p.9.

²⁰⁰ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.69.

²⁰¹ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.3.

process of:

the rewriting of Portuguese history carried out by postmodernist texts [which] involves an ideological unmasking that exposes the discursive construction of the ideas, beliefs, and symbols of the past.²⁰²

The Death of the symbolism inherent in the immediate past, but also in the cultural and historical currents that gave rise to it, is ever present in all of her texts, but is most vividly described in the scene of the dethronement of 'O Senhor do Mar' in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*.

As the personification of O.S., the godlike authoritarian ruler, "O Senhor do Mar" esperava por eles, de pé, no ultimo degrau do trono improvisado, resplandecendo dentro de uma redoma de vidro, quieto e mudo".²⁰³ In his immobility he represents the regime's monological discourse and its attempts to create mythical symbols in order to generate a paralysing permanence: 'in passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics [...] it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth'.²⁰⁴ O Senhor do Mar only tolerates one voice and one historical truth, his own, which he imposes on the people:

²⁰² Helena Kaufman and José Ornelas, 'Challenging the Past/ Theorizing History: Postrevolutionary Portuguese Fiction', in *After the Revolution: Twenty Years of Portuguese Literature*, Helena Kaufman, Anna Klobucka (eds.), Associated University Press, London, 1997, pp.145-67, p.146.

²⁰³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.107.

²⁰⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.143.

por detrás dessa voz, a voz do mar: cala-te, cala-te, não fales, não grites, disse o mar, tapa com as mãos a tua boca, sufoca o choro, ou se não puderes de modo algum calar-te, deita-te de bruços e enterra no chão a tua voz, mas faz uma cova bem funda, para que a tua voz não se ouça nunca, escuta em vez da tua voz a minha voz, eu te ensino a resignação.²⁰⁵

The voice of the sea is deeply engrained in the Portuguese psyche: 'dentro dessas imagens ligadas a uma tradição que se impôs ao país, certamente o arquétipo marítimo é a mais evidente'.²⁰⁶ But far from heralding the proud departure for new shores, here the symbol of the sea is the harbinger of Death, the Death of the individual voice. But the deathlike grip of the supreme ruler's hegemony can be broken by a discourse outside the regime's political and social constraint. At the moment the procession reaches its ritualistic heights, when the effigy of 'O Senhor do Mar' is being carried through the crowds, suddenly a voice contrary to the cultic repetitions of the masses is heard:

mas há também a revolta acumulada, a voz que nenhum mar pode vencer, porque sempre de novo irrompe, tumultuosa, violenta, em puro desespero [...] que ninguém diga nada, que ninguém diga nada, muito tempo me enganaram com palavras falsas e eu fui um povo

²⁰⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.109.

²⁰⁶ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.4.

perdido pela noite [...] mas agora eu encontro a minha voz.²⁰⁷

The very moment a different voice is heard and the monological discourse of the regime is broken, the conventions of its rule are laid bare and can now be ridiculed; transgression has become possible: 'a atitude transgressora por parte deste [do povo] resulta da percepção do absurdo de um culto que só trouxe malefícios [...] deve se converter no seu contrário. A sacralização transmute-se em profanação'.²⁰⁸ In a carnivalesque twist the saint is stripped of his clothes and is finally seen as the lifeless figure he has always been: 'mas de repente, no extremo da falésia, a imagem cai, rasga-se o pano de cetim que reveste o andor'.²⁰⁹ In the Death of the symbol and the transgression of hegemonic discourse, new and different linguistic signs can now emerge: 'ambivalence is reproduced in the stripping of the body, the removal of the mimetic veils of ideology'.²¹⁰ The eternalizing language of myth is replaced by that of creative innovation, as the 'language of the [...] [oppressed] aims at transforming'²¹¹ and is therefore inherently opposed to hierarchical fixity. Things are no longer shrouded in myth, but are seen for what they really are. Under the image of the saint emerges a broken people; 'os homens surgem à luz do dia exaustos [...] os anjos tiram as asas e são apenas crianças fatigadas'.²¹² After the fall of the godlike dictator and the end of the regime's hegemonic discourse, the

²⁰⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.113.

²⁰⁸ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.6.

²⁰⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.114.

²¹⁰ Hilary Owen, 'Through the Looking-Glass of History in Teolinda Gersão's *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*', in H. Owen *Portuguese Women's Writing 1972 to 1986: Reincarnations of a Revolution*, The Edwin Mellen Press, Lampeter, 2000, pp.41-55, p.52.

²¹¹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.149.

²¹² Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.114.

people can now reconnect with reality and a re-writing of history becomes possible.

The Death of a stifling past and the transgression of its formulations in the language of myth are a necessary means of reinvention, 'o corte da ligação com uma tradição apegada a arquétipos e mitos, para que seja assumido o presente histórico'.²¹³ The rupture of historical continuity, symbolised in the Death of the saint, enables the establishment of a new historical reality and the invention of new cultural codices that would represent that reality more accurately; 'as relações estão abertas, a se fazer no ato mesmo do escrever e do ler, atos de mente interpretadora produtiva'.²¹⁴ The people reclaimed power from 'O Senhor do Mar', but also the means of expressing and shaping reality. The Death of the mythological symbol in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* emerges not simply as a reversion of power structures, but the dawn of a new symbolic era: 'era a festa da morte, gritam, mas doravante é a festa da vida, ele caiu do seu trono e somos nós os senhores do mar e os senhores da terra [...] ele não tinha limite, e por isso o derrubámos, e doravante faremos nós a lei'.²¹⁵

²¹³ Maria Heloísa Martins Dias, 'A Presença de Elementos Míticos na Narrativa de Teolinda Gersão', www.hottopos.com/notand7/Heloísa.htm, p.8.

²¹⁴ Maria dos Prazeres Mendes, 'A Metaleitura da Voz Feminina: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão', *Via Atlântica*, n°1, March 1997, pp.100-7, p.106.

²¹⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.114.

3.3 The Death of the Bourgeois 'House': Transgression of the Limits of Space

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Teolinda Gersão's writing represents 'um processo de levar o logos para além dos seus limites'²¹⁶ questioning the concept of 'Reason' by creating fictional spaces in which the limit between matter and mind has become fragile. In the images of metamorphosis and fluidity, preconceived conceptions of reality are questioned; a 'transformation of time and space'²¹⁷ takes place. Space, similar to language and identity, undergoes this process of Death and transgression in order to create new 'worlds': 'abandonara os círculos do idêntico e do uno porque desejava a tensão da alteridade'.²¹⁸ Just as time is not merely constituted by one linear time stratum, and the memories of Lídia in *O Silêncio*, Hortense in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, and the dead narrators of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* create a circular temporal structure, space equally lacks unity in Teolinda Gersão's novels. Her female protagonists create 'other-worlds' of fantasy and desire that cannot be contained by the oppressing forces of patriarchy. These can be concrete spaces, as in 'a casa de Lídia', where the walls are fluid and able to move, or they can exist ideally, as in 'a casa preta de Lóia'²¹⁹ or 'a casa térrea de Casimira'²²⁰, where spaces of difference are created through alternative concepts of mothering.

²¹⁶ Isménia de Sousa, 'Mito e Mito Literário: Trajectórias de Teorizações no Século XX', in *Contextos de Modernidade, Cadernos de Literatura Comparada*, n°5, July 2002, pp.71-90, p.71.

²¹⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, The Press of Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/London, 1973, p.120.

²¹⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.103.

²¹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.11.

²²⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.96.

The one metaphor in the fictional work of Teolinda Gersão that most frequently symbolises the limits of space and their transmutation is that of the bourgeois house, both in its connotation as domestic space and as outward representation of an aristocratic lineage. Teolinda Gersão's fictional universe is made up of houses; they are either a real or ideal outward representation of ideological entities. In 'a casa de Augusto Duarte' patriarchy manifests itself in the very solidity of the masonry. And 'a casa de Augusta Braz' constitutes a female presence and womblike security for the lovers Vitória and Amaro, also expressed in the mothering of Lóia and Casimira, which make up 'a casa preta' and 'a casa térrea'.²²¹ Teolinda Gersão's novels picture spatial unities that lack fixity; walls crumble and dissolve into spaces of fluidity, the outlines of 'A Casa' are never as solid and fixed as they first appear to be. From an oppressive space of domesticity the 'House' is transformed into an open-ended image of shifting parameters, like the ones present in Lídia's house; 'nada tem, aliás muitas fronteiras, e as distâncias não são nunca muito exactas'.²²² Between the two extremes stand spaces of transition, as represented by Lóia's 'quintal', Casimira's 'casa térrea',²²³ or 'a casa de Augusta Braz' in *O Cavalo de Sol* that would lead the protagonists out of the oppressive locus of fixed spaces into a place of fluidity.

²²¹ The terminology described here ('a casa preta', 'a casa de Lídia'), is used by Teolinda Gersão in her novels, but it never constitutes chapter headings or subdivision of her texts. The emphasis on the spatial division into houses is employed in this thesis as a critical tool.

²²² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.14.

²²³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.6.

3.3.1 A Casa de Duarte Augusto, A Casa de Alcina e Ana

The Death inherent in 'A Casa de Duarte Augusto' and 'A Casa de Alcina e Ana' stems from what Barthes describes in his *Mythologies* as an absence of meaning and an overbearing presence of form: 'in the mythical signifier [...] its form is empty but present, its meaning absent but full'.²²⁴ In its form 'A Casa' represents an affirmation of bourgeois and patriarchal power, the all invading presence of the symbol that relegates to non-existence those living within its limitations, as in 'A Casa' the forces of life become solidified, pressed into the heavy stone of patriarchy. 'Uma vez arrumadas, instaladas, as coisas ficam mortas',²²⁵ in 'A Casa' the oppression of the fixity of form and the absence of meaningful identity make it a lifeless place accomplishing what Eduardo Prado Coelho calls '[a] territorialização na imagem da Casa'.²²⁶ Within its walls patriarchy has marked its territory repressing the 'female' forces of life, where dislocation leads to a creative harmony of form and content, of matter and mind. Male supremacy has incarcerated the female protagonists in a continuous state of non-existence; the 'House' and the patriarchal system it represents have stifled their life force, turning them into porcelain dolls, 'feitas de louça, sentadas nos banquinhos [...] de pernas juntas [...] abanando [...] as cabeças diante das visitas'.²²⁷

In the micro-narrative where the dead protagonists of *A Casa da Cabeça de Caval*

²²⁴ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Vintage, London, 1993, p.123.

²²⁵ Clara Ferreira Alves, 'Teolinda Gersão: Não gosto dessa Conversa de Escrita de Mulheres...', in *Jornal de Letras*, n°34, 1982, interview with Teolinda Gersão.

²²⁶ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996

²²⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Caval*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.180.

relate the past of the ancestral Home, Duarte Augusto emerges as the archetypal 19th-century *pater familias*. Tyrannically governing the destiny of the members of his family Duarte Augusto represents a unity that seeks to ‘perpetuar os valores do mundo velho’.²²⁸ He is the voice of the ideology of a ‘realism [...] that functions by suppressing this dialogue [...] of languages and voices’²²⁹ and establishes the rule of ‘reason [which is] associated with [...] the cultural, the universal, the public, and the male’.²³⁰ Duarte Augusto, together with his friend the bishop, epitomizes the pillars on which hegemonic male supremacy has rested throughout Portuguese history. In their world, women are merely decorative, they do not occupy any space in this ideological order as there is no form to their identity, and women, though present in matter, are absent in being. The bishop on his visit sums up the patriarchal ideal of womanhood as one of non-existence and empty spaces; ‘as mulheres eram a renda, o que havia de mais belo, e ao mesmo tempo de mais inexistente no mundo’.²³¹

In *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* the patriarch Duarte Augusto controls with an iron fist the lives of the women surrounding him, stifling the life force within them and therefore creating an immobility through perpetuation, which, like the mythological discourse described in the previous chapter, will allow him control: ‘a sua tirania ia

²²⁸ Maria Teresa Peixoto Braga de Almeida Tavares, ‘A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo de Teolinda Gersão –escrever histórias, reescrever a História como forma de estar na História’, Master’s Thesis, University of Porto, 2000, p.121.

²²⁹ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Methuen, New York, 1984, p.6.

²³⁰ Alison M. Jaggar, ‘Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology’, in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.145.

²³¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.210.

ao ponto de querer controlar as reações dos outros, e de dominar completamente os que o cercavam'.²³² To the women of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* this paralysis of being either results in Death or a death-in-life like existence. Duarte Augusto is responsible for his wife's early Death, 'morreu esmagada por tanta culpa',²³³ his sister's wasted and passive life spent at the windowsill waiting for her lover to return —'bordava e espetava os dedos, uma agulha em cada dedo e cinco na palma da mão, sobre as linhas da vida [...] e pensava em Gaudêncio'²³⁴— and the rivalry between his daughters Virita and Maria do Lado, which makes Maria do Lado eternally subservient to Duarte Augusto's impositions and causes the rebellious Virita to lose the life force within her driving her to madness. The women of the House, from girlhood onwards, are caught in this domestic space, which becomes the 'espaço fundamental de estruturação'²³⁵ of the narration. Maria do Lado, the daughter that most seeks the approval of the patriarch, is ageing before her time, 'tinha vinte e oito anos [...] uma pequena ruga aqui e ali lhe começavam [...] a despontar na face, [...] encontrava [...] alguns cabelos brancos'.²³⁶ A life stifled in its rigorous routines holds her in a deathlike grip as she does not feel any joy for life: 'todas as dias eram dedicadas a uma tarefa bem definida, que ela cumpria com igual rigor'.²³⁷ The monotonous repetition of duty has suffocated her, erasing her identity as a woman and therefore vanishing into nothingness, adhering completely

²³² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.86.

²³³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.92.

²³⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.130.

²³⁵ Teresa Tavares, 'Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo': Representações do Espaço Social e Sexual na Ficção Narrativa de Escritoras Contemporâneas', in *Entre Ser e Estar. Raizes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Maria Irene Ramalho, António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.361.

²³⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.79.

²³⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.78.

to the masculine order of her father and the House.

The patriarchal unity of the 'House' is perpetrated equally by men and women, who seem to comply willingly in creating spaces of immobility. In *O Silêncio* Alcina and Ana, and Hortense's mother and grandmother in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* readily embrace the shadowy existence of death-in-life male hegemony offers to them. Time seems solidified in Alcina's house, as Lídia observes the 'quadros de naturezas-mortas que emergiam da penumbra: o tempo anterior ao sem tempo de agora'²³⁸ in a female gesture of non-existence perpetuated throughout the centuries. Just as women are encapsulated in their stillness forever in the pictures on the walls, Ana and also Alcina, become petrified: 'acabara por oscilar menos entre partir e ficar, fora oscilando cada vez menos até se imobilizar entre os objectos, e o fim da possibilidade de escolher acabara por adormecer a angústia'.²³⁹ Alcina and Ana form a complete oneness with the house they live in, lifeless as the stone and gilded interior that surrounds them: 'Alcina é 'Ninguém' porque não existe fora da casa'.²⁴⁰ Like the women of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* they are turned into a mere detail of the elaborate decorations that adorn the bourgeois home. Significantly it is not the women, inert and lifeless, who finally succeed in leaving behind 'uma casa cheia de coisas mortas',²⁴¹ but Afonso, who in the relationship with the much younger Lídia finds a new lease of life, an escape from the confines of Alcina's and Ana's world,

²³⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.25.

²³⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.26.

²⁴⁰ Tavares Teresa, 'Um Mundo que se Quebra Enquanto Falo': Representações do espaço social e sexual na ficção narrativa de escritoras contemporâneas', in Maria Irene Ramalho e António Sousa Ribeiro (eds.), *Entre Ser e Estar: Raízes, Percursos e Discursos de Identidade*, Edições Afrontamento, Porto, 2002, pp.349-81, p.362.

²⁴¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.32.

where golden picture frames and a damask sofa form the background to a suffocating stillness.

The central unity that a patriarchal and bourgeois hegemony offers, result in petrification, the total suspension of the possibility of spatial or temporal development, in the same manner as myth functioned as a fixation of historical truth immobilizing any dialectics. As female desire and 'emotions [...] needing direction by reason'²⁴² are severely controlled, the female protagonists' life force is restrained and eventually annihilated. 'A Casa', as portrayed in 'a casa de Alcina e Ana' and 'a casa de Duarte Augusto', represents a restriction of female space, inward and outward; a control over their bodies and destinies; 'a repressão do espaço feminino serve de fundamento para a sobrevivência e o êxito do sistema patriarcal'.²⁴³ In the sombre stillness of the bourgeois house, 'a casa imóvel forrado de penumbra e silêncio',²⁴⁴ no voice of dissent can be heard that would cause the effigies of a deadly ideology to tumble and fall.

3.3.2 A Casa de Lídia

Contrary to Alcina and Ana, for whom time and space have solidified, Lídia 'movia-se num espaço livre e solto, num tempo de existir, de se sentir existindo'.²⁴⁵ Lídia

²⁴² Alison M. Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.145.

²⁴³ José Ornelas, 'Subversão da topografia cultural do patriarcado em *Cavalo de Sol* de Teolinda Gersão', *Discursos*, n°5, October 1993, pp.115-34, p.119.

²⁴⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.27.

²⁴⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.22.

rejects the solid unity of a male supremacy that can only conceive of centrism and linearity as socio-historical truth. Her world is open-ended and fluid, 'um espaço livre associado [...] à natureza [...] que lhe permitem a expansão do seu círculo [...] nesse espaço, em uma infinitude de coisas, de outras palavras'.²⁴⁶ If Duarte Augusto epitomizes a maleness based on reason, Lídia represents 'emotion [...] the irrational, the physical, the natural, the particular, the private [...] the female'.²⁴⁷ 'A casa de Lídia' does not conform to the rules of physics; it is fluid, can change from minute to minute; 'talvez porque a casa girava, era uma espécie de grande girassol voltando a cabeça, e era verão ou inverno conforme ela voltava a cabeça para o sol ou para a chuva'.²⁴⁸ As the linguistic sign 'house' is re-defined and re-established, a fictional reality opens up out of the 'realist' space that reflects faithfully the reality of everyday.

The Death of the sign/signifier 'house' is a necessary prerequisite in the invention of new spaces. As the linguistic sign is removed from the socio-cultural inscriptions it carries, new modes of perception become possible: 'arma-se o espaço do enigma: o signo gera signo e distancia-se cada vez mais do seu ponto de partida: o real'.²⁴⁹

Lídia breaks into Afonso's ordered environment governed by reason and unifying

²⁴⁶ José Ornelas, 'Subversão da topografia cultural do patriarcado em *Cavalo de Sol* de Teolinda Gersão', *Discursos*, n°5, October 1993, pp.115-34, p.117.

²⁴⁷ Alison M. Jaggar, 'Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology', in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.145.

²⁴⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.15.

²⁴⁹ Maria dos Prazeres Mendes, 'A Metaleitura da Voz Feminina: Clarice Lispector e Teolinda Gersão', *Via Atlântica*, n°1, March 1997, pp.100-7, p.105.

structure: 'Lídia bringt Unordnung in dieses Haus [...] öffnet Türen und Fenster'²⁵⁰.

The realist notion of space as a unifying structural element is juxtaposed with a notion of chaos, where things can be creatively re-named and re-structured. When she returns from the beach, Lídia finds Afonso writing in neat orderliness in an echo of the stillness characterized by 'a casa de Alcina and Ana': 'reencontrar Afonso —o candeeiro aceso sobre a secretária inglesa, um halo de luz sobre os livros abertos e as folhas de papel, um halo de luz sobre o seu rosto inclinado que ela não vê logo porque ele escreve de costas voltadas'.²⁵¹ Lídia breaks into this order; as she enters, the suspended time is dissolved in a life-affirming gesture: 'ela poisa ao acaso o cesto que acabará sempre por tombar e aproxima-se descalça, pisando a areia que se solta do seu corpo e as flores que espalham pelo chão. E a desordem é subitamente uma forma de amor. Interromper Afonso como o mar entrando'.²⁵² Lídia spills into the room, creating movement where there was stillness. Fighting the ordinary language of social constraint Lídia introduces 'the poem, in the sense that is rhythm, death and future',²⁵³ as it is only in creative invention that the Death of sameness can be overcome.

In the dream that constitutes the opening section of *O Silêncio*, 'a casa de Lídia' completely loses the attributes traditionally associated with the sign 'house'. Reality changes its parameters, as 'o nível da percepção, encontramos a novidade de uma

²⁵⁰ Dorothea Schurig, 'Teolinda Gersão und ihre Romane *O Silêncio* und *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*', in Rainer Hess (ed.) *Portugiesische Romane der Gegenwart: Interpretationen*, Vervuert Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 1992, pp.173-84, p.174.

²⁵¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.22.

²⁵² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.22.

²⁵³ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.27.

captação redonda, não vertical, da realidade'.²⁵⁴ The house of Lídia's dream is a living creature, changing and changeable, impossible to press into the forms of preconceived concepts:

Em geral ela movia-se mansamente, era uma casa mansa, que parecia perfeitamente domesticada [...] nunca ia para longe, mudava-se às vezes para mais perto ou mais longe do muro, mas ficava sempre dentro do jardim, gozando o sol. Com o tempo engordou um pouco [...] com uma preferência pelas formas redondas, de verão abria-se como um guarda-sol de muitas cores, de inverno encoleava-se debaixo da chuva e transformava-se numa casa de caracol muito quente. Só quando o vento lhe batia na primavera ela se tornava de novo esguia e alta como uma árvore assustada [...] era de novo uma casa jovem e notava-se que tinha sido inútil todo o trabalho de domesticá-la.²⁵⁵

Into Afonso's space of sameness perpetuated by society, Lídia is introducing new spaces, 'sua realidade [que] se caracteriza pela expansão, pelo movimento num espaço livre e solto, pela desordem como forma erótica e sensual [...]'²⁵⁶; the Death of outmoded structures is replaced by a movement that is intent on affirming the forces of life. Patriarchal order has lost its grip on Lídia as to her reality does not

²⁵⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.32.

²⁵⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, pp.15/6.

²⁵⁶ José Ornelas, 'Subversão da topografia cultural do patriarcado em *Cavalo de Sol* de Teolinda Gersão', *Discursos*, n°5, October 1993, pp.115-34, p.117.

constitute singularity of meaning; to her 'há sempre dois lados nas coisas, cada uma é também sempre o contrário de si própria'.²⁵⁷ The male dominated 'house' resting on fixed conventions is metamorphosed into a reality, which is 'no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures'.²⁵⁸ It is the transgression of social and natural laws which provides Lídia with an opportunity to change the rules of the game, albeit only the rules which sustain the play world of the fiction, of which she forms one part: 're-instaurado um outro tipo de jogo com novas bem mais subversivas regras'.²⁵⁹ Only once the old rules of space and a woman's place are relegated to non-existence a new origin can take place: 'um espaço de caos anterior a tudo, é nesse espaço de caos que começa verdadeiramente uma casa, crescendo de corpos, cabeças, palavras, uma casa viva, um animal novo'.²⁶⁰

3.4 'Os Degraus da Morte': Transgression of the Limits of Time

So far the dissolution of space has been discussed on purely materialistic premises, describing the collapse of mind and matter in terms of three-dimensional phenomena; such as a house that can move, or a woman that turns into a fox. In her fifth novel, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Teolinda Gersão adds a further dimension to the metamorphic dynamics: time. Although it can be said of all her fictional texts

²⁵⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.12.

²⁵⁸ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Methuen New York, 1984, p.7.

²⁵⁹ Ana Paula Arnaut, *Post-Modernismo no Romance Português Contemporâneo*, Almedina, Coimbra, 2002, p.126.

²⁶⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.62.

that in her protagonists ‘nunca encontramos um tempo vivido ‘unidireccionalmente’’,²⁶¹ it is precisely *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, where time becomes the main focus of metamorphosis. Not only is the linearity of time superseded, but time itself acquires metamorphic properties. In *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* time is interlinked with space in a way akin to what Bakhtin describes as the ‘chronotope (literally ‘time space’) [...] [an] intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships’²⁶² and the Death and transformation of space only becomes possible through the motor of time.

Although in *O Silêncio* ‘a casa de Lídia’ provides a striking symbol for the Death of form and is subsequently metamorphosed into something that suspends the laws of nature, it still retains its unity of object. The antithesis of ‘a casa de Lídia’, ‘a casa de Alcina e Ana’, is spatially removed from the locus of transgression. Despite the permeability of limits, the two spaces represent two distinct realities in fiction. ‘A casa de Duarte Augusto’ in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* sees a transmutation that goes further than the mere dissolution of form. The regressive space of unity, where spatial and temporal development are suppressed, the ‘House’, is turned into a vehicle of transgression by the natural temporality of the ‘Horse’, and notions of the ‘real’ reality of time and space are entirely suspended. It is the ‘House’ itself that goes from a space of fixity to one of mobility, thereby transgressing the spatial as well as temporal conventions of possible reality. As a territorial marker for patriarchy ‘A Casa’, overbearing in its presence of form, is juxtaposed by what Eduardo Prado

²⁶¹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.39.

²⁶² Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981, p.84.

Coelho describes as 'o que existe de desterritorialização na imagem do Cavalo'.²⁶³ The spatial and historical oppression perpetuated by the ancestral 'House' is challenged by the image of the horse, which, ironically, forms a unity with the 'House': 'A Casa tinha cabeça de cavalo. Ou se quisermos, mais prosaicamente: tinha uma cabeça de cavalo na parede'.²⁶⁴ The seemingly impenetrable walls of 'A Casa' are relativized by the metaphorical inscription of the image of 'O Cavalo', '[que] é o símbolo do tempo',²⁶⁵ which, in due course, opens up the immovable symbolism of the 'House' to 'o horizonte móvel e aceso da utopia'.²⁶⁶

If the symbolism of the 'Horse' is linked to time, its galloping footsteps lead the protagonists of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* in only one direction, that of Death. As a symbol of time the 'Horse' is 'portador de vida e de morte [...] noção da fugacidade do tempo'.²⁶⁷ But Death in Teolinda Gersão's *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* does not signify the end of time, but merely another plane of fictional reality, where 'the Ghost is placed on the side of the [...] [reader and forms] the frontier between the supernatural and the natural'.²⁶⁸ It is in the realm of the dead, where time unfolds its metamorphic potential as it is 'no mundo dos mortos que as personagens se movem e é como mortos que recordam o passado e o reconstróem à sua medida'.²⁶⁹ The realm of the dead creates a metafictional frame that unmasks

²⁶³ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996.

²⁶⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.13.

²⁶⁵ Maria Teresa Horta, 'Falar da Morte em Tom de Comédia', in *Diário de Notícias*, 13.01.1996.

²⁶⁶ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996.

²⁶⁷ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *Capelas Imperfeitas*, Livros Horizonte, Lisbon, 2002, p.74.

²⁶⁸ Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts & London, 1986, p.82.

²⁶⁹ Maria de Fátima Marinho, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal*, Campo das Letras, Porto, 1999, p.291.

the fictional nature of history. In the title of the first chapter: 'O Cavalo e A Casa. Aparições',²⁷⁰ the fictionality of both, the symbol of the 'House' and the symbol of the 'Horse' are exposed; neither is capable of inhabiting the 'real world' of history, but both are parts of the realm of the story. In the opening section of the novel Teolinda Gersão quite firmly establishes that 'fiction and history are narratives distinguished by their frames'²⁷¹ as she introduces a frame that would 'function [...] through the problematization [...] of the concept of 'reality'',²⁷² namely Death.

In the symbol of the 'horse' the fictional unity of time and space are entirely dissolved and taken apart, as in the apparition of the horse:

Teolinda Gersão avança numa problemática [...] que é a da passagem para um outro estado, 'outra coisa' [...] porque a casa e o cavalo definem a divisão na unidade, dois mundos inconciliáveis no espaço de um só mundo.²⁷³

In describing 'A Casa' and 'O Cavalo' as 'Aparições',²⁷⁴ Teolinda Gersão underlines the incongruence of her fictional universe with the realm of possible reality governed by logic. In the ghostly vision of the horse she creates a 'Salient World', where 'no momento da aparição o mundo rasga-se e acaba e um outro mundo sobrepõe-se ao

²⁷⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.13.

²⁷¹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge, New York & London, 1999, p.109.

²⁷² Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Methuen New York, 1984, p.40.

²⁷³ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996.

²⁷⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.13.

primeiro²⁷⁵ and time and space have become fluid and moveable. This tension between the fixed parameters of History and the mobile structures of narration and memory runs through the entire novel. The fixity of time, as represented in the aristocratic lineage of 'A Casa' is deconstructed and dismantled by the timelessness of 'O Cavalo' —'era [...] um cavalo sem idade, que em cada primavera renascia'.²⁷⁶ This is intrinsically linked to the forces of nature and its cycles of fertility, birth and Death: 'o corpo do cavalo [...] era um corpo vivo e sexuado [...] quem por ele se deixasse arrastar [...] morria'.²⁷⁷ In the second chapter, 'Desenhos, Testamentos e Galhos Genealógicos' a quasi-lineage of the ancestral home is established only to be thoroughly called into question by the fact that all documentation, save some unimportant scraps of paper, was lost affirming the Postmodern notion of the 'relative inaccessibility of any reality that might exist objectively and prior to our knowledge'.²⁷⁸ The outwardly impressive fixity of 'A Casa' as towering over the village, its inhabitants pillars of bourgeois society, is exposed as a mirage, as in the apparition Teolinda Gersão creates a fictional reality, where temporal and spatial parameters become fluid. None of what the reader is told about 'A Casa' can belong to the reality of everyday as the author reveals: 'a verdade é que a Casa está há muito tempo fechada e todos os seus habitantes estão mortos',²⁷⁹ all along the story moved on the secondary, salient plane of Death, where none of the certainties of our known world can be verified.

²⁷⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.16.

²⁷⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, pp.114/5.

²⁷⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, pp.13/15.

²⁷⁸ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge, New York & London, 1999, p.146.

²⁷⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.27.

The parameters of the entire novel are determined by this secondary universe of the dead, thereby avoiding the temporal linearity of 'earthly' logic and introducing 'uma concepção 'espiralada''²⁸⁰ of time, which makes past, present and future accessible to the protagonists at any given point in time. The dead protagonists of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* have already gone beyond the finality of the reality of the living, in this ghostly House 'na parede da sala havia um relógio de cuco que não batia, o que não lhes fazia falta';²⁸¹ as they are freed from the pressures of linear temporality, the House opens up into 'um espaço tão livre que dava vertigens'.²⁸² All the preoccupations of everyday reality are suspended, the dead need not sleep nor eat; all their envies, annoyances and conflicts simply do not matter from this 'eternal' perspective and Death creates a reality where in the protagonists, as well as the reader, arises that 'hesitation that forces him or her to question the ontological status of what is happening'.²⁸³ Freed from the restrictions of time and social propriety, the dead protagonists embark on a journey, which would discover not the history of 'A Casa' but the individual stories preserved by memory: 'os mortos se recontam o passado [...] para o enterrar de vez, resolvendo conflitos não solucionados ao mesmo tempo que mostram a inevitabilidade de uma focalização parcial [...] e repleta dos interesses e fobias de cada um'.²⁸⁴ As an objectively verifiable History retreats, narration and memory take over and the story of *A Casa da Cabeça de*

²⁸⁰ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.33.

²⁸¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.29.

²⁸² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.30.

²⁸³ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, Methuen New York, 1984, p.111.

²⁸⁴ Maria de Fátima Marinho, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal*, Campo das Letras, Porto, 1999, p.291.

Cavalo is split up into a puzzle to which each protagonist delivers various pieces in the game of recounting. In this fictional universe of the dead the protagonists discover that in narrating they become the masters of the game as fiction's temporal and spatial parameters open up:

ela deitava as cartas como se abrisse um leque, que se podia sempre fechar e voltar a abrir, estava inteiramente na sua mão e inteiramente fora dela. Como o tempo. Também o tempo era um jogo. Simultaneamente perdido e ganho. Só que essa era uma verdade que, enquanto estavam vivos, não sabiam.²⁸⁵

3.4.1 O Primeiro Degrau da Morte

Until the final chapter Teolinda Gersão's *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* moves between the 'real reality' of the narrated histories or stories that describe the despotic rule of Duarte Augusto and the fictional frame, which is formed by the secondary universe of the dead protagonists relating the narration. In this part of the novel the chronotope of 'A Casa' is entirely inhabited by the forces of memory. At this stage the temporal spiral of Death has only opened up slightly; the characters are merely looking back onto a plane of existence that preceded their present state: 'conta-nos [...] como foi a tua morte. A morte, ou, pelo menos, a última recordação'.²⁸⁶ In a desperate attempt to preserve the known faced with the

²⁸⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.35.

²⁸⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.37.

unknown of Death their 'narrative is what translates knowing into telling',²⁸⁷ as like Scheherazade in *1001 Nights* or the protagonists in Boccaccio's *Decameron* they try to stem the all erasing power of Death by narrating. Although the pressure of time has been lifted from them, the non-time of their non-existence faces them with a myriad of questions, not least the one of the durability of this state; recounting for the inhabitants of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* so becomes 'uma forma de fazer durar um estádio securizante da morte'.²⁸⁸

As Martin Heidegger states in *Time and Being*, existence, the state of being he calls 'Dasein' is closely related to space: 'Das Dasein —nimmt im wörtlichen Verstande— Raum ein'^{289vii}.²⁹⁰ Being is bound up in a spatial manifestation, which, in the case of the inhabitants of 'A Casa', is the stories they relate. The dead protagonists can only justify and create existence by narrating. In keeping alive the memory of their own lives and those that have gone before them, in imagining and narrating, they regain the existence, the force of Being lost in Death: 'não tinha importância se em algum momento inventasse [...] o interesse das histórias era avivar a memória'.²⁹¹ It is the force of memory alone that sustains this secondary plane of Death and it makes space for a form of Being entirely given to memorizing and recounting. 'O primer degrau da morte' is a fictional space entirely constructed by memory and the

²⁸⁷ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge, New York & London, 1999, p.121

²⁸⁸ Maria Teresa Peixoto Braga de Almeida Tavares, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo de Teolinda Gersão —escrever histórias, reescrever a História como forma de estar na História*, Master Thesis, University of Porto, 2000, p.32.

²⁸⁹ English translations from the German text are taken from Martin Heidegger, *Time and Being*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996.

²⁹⁰ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.486.

²⁹¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.59.

chronotope of 'A Casa' is turned into a 'memory space' as 'Orte mit besonderer Gedächtniskraft ausgestattet [durch] ihre feste un langfristige Verbindung mit Familiengeschichte'^{viii.292} As the clocks stop in this ghostly house, 'die selbstverständliche Bezugsstruktur der 'jetzt', 'damals' und 'dann', die Datierbarkeit'^{ix.293} breaks down. As a space of History, as shown in the attempt of a quasi-lineage in the chapter 'Desenhos, Testamentos E Galhos Genealógicos', 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo' turned out to be a chimera, and it is only in the process of recounting by the dead protagonists that it really comes to life and the past is finally inhabited by meaning: 'a Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo tinha nessa noite as janelas acesas, disse Ercília. O portão estava aberto'.²⁹⁴

In the same measure as 'die in solcher Weise im Uhrgebrauch 'gesicherte' Weltzeit die Jetzt-Zeit'^{x.295} the 'real reality' of an objectively verifiable historical and datable time retreats, and Ercília's 'leque do tempo' opens and closes displaying various points in the lives of the inhabitants of 'A Casa', the ancestral house is rebuilt and reanimated out of these pieces of memory and its overbearing presence of form is finally filled by meaning. Aleida Assmann in her book *Erinnerungsräume* writes:

Während ein Lebenslauf sich aus objektiv verifizierbaren Lebensdaten zusammensetzt, beruht eine Lebensgeschichte auf interpretierten Erinnerungen, die sich zu einer erinnerbaren und

²⁹² Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich, 1999, p.301.

²⁹³ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.537.

²⁹⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.77.

²⁹⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.557

erzählbaren Gestalt zusammenfügen. Solche Gestaltgebung nennen wir Sinn; sie ist das Rückgrat gelebter Identität^{xi}.²⁹⁶

As datable time collapses and the impossibility of time in reverse becomes a fictional reality, the dead protagonists 'come to life' and 'O primeiro degrau da morte' is (re)-animated by their stories, when they fill the crumbling stone walls with the memories of their unlived dreams and their quest for an identity apart from the historicity of the aristocratic 'Casa': 'criavam agora um clima de receptividade e segurança, em que cada um podia desdobrar o seu sonho, a sua interrogação ou o seu desejo'.²⁹⁷ And as the frame narration that is constituted by the secondary plane of Death, retreats, the stage is given over to memorizing, and, as the dead protagonists faint into the background, it becomes clear, 'dass die eigentlichen Akteure [...] die Erinerungen sind'^{xii}.²⁹⁸ It is the creativity of fictional invention that allows the characters access to the time spiral of memory, therefore keeping them 'alive'. Recounting the stories of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, the dead protagonists abandon any claims of objectivity. They let 'a recordação [...] mitigar-se com a imaginação',²⁹⁹ as they all concede that by combating their ontological insecurity they progress, in a reversion of the temporality of the living, 'backwards': from the memories of their own Death, from Januário's feeble attempts at recording the circumstances of their own lives to the shores of the distant past.

²⁹⁶ Assmann Aleida, *Erinnerungsräume*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich, 1999, p.257.

²⁹⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.33.

²⁹⁸ Assmann Aleida, *Erinnerungsräume*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich, 1999, p.64.

²⁹⁹ Marinho Maria de Fátima, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal*, Campo das Letras, Porto, 1999, p.292.

But the loss of historically verifiable ‘datability’ and the creation of an ‘existence’ purely based on the forces of narration and memory also has its ontological difficulties. Just as the traditional linearity of the ancestral history of ‘A Casa’ has proved to be an unreliable construct, so does the patchwork quilt of memory and Januário wonders ‘onde se iria parar, se as lembranças começassem a misturar-se, ou, pior ainda, a desaparecer?’³⁰⁰ The forces of memory and narration are fluid and not fixed, fleeting constructs in an everchanging present, as is represented in ‘a fragmentação e [...] múltiplas focalizações, [que] transformam o romance num texto sui generis’.³⁰¹ As the impossibility of datable history is established, the dead narrators struggle with the ontological durability of the ‘memory space’ they create in their narration. Might the construct of their memories turn out to be as ‘quebradiça e vã’³⁰² as the walls of ‘A Casa’? To combat the instability of unreliable memories they choose the medium of writing to provide some durability and, ultimately, stability in time to memory. Januário, the intellectual leader of the group seems the natural choice for such a task: ‘muito tempo atrás, tinham-no escolhido para assentar tudo aquilo de que se recordavam e tinham medo de vir depois a esquecer’.³⁰³ At first, even in this shadowy place of Death the protagonists seek refuge in the security of male historicity. And the project Januário conceives is a re-establishment of the ‘datability’ of the ‘real reality’ left behind: ‘assentaria coisas simples como por exemplo nomes de pessoas, de quintas, de lugares, datas, receitas disto e

³⁰⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.47.

³⁰¹ Maria de Fátima Marinho, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal*, Campo das Letras, Porto, 1999, p.292.

³⁰² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.17.

³⁰³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.48.

daquilo'.³⁰⁴

But, although the medium of writing can store and therefore preserve memory in time, it can not take over the task of memorizing, which is ultimately giving meaning to the past in order to create a 'living' identity and a meaningful Being: 'der energetische, produktive und unverfügbare Teil des Gedächtnisses, den Plato mit dem Begriff 'Anamnesis' verband, kann vom Medium Schrift nicht einmal berührt, geschweige denn ersetzt werden'^{xiii}.³⁰⁵ As the ontological justification for the dead protagonists' existence is memorizing, creating a written account proves utterly useless and impossible for Januário: 'as palavras [...] eram terreno minado, buracos em que se caía facilmente, animais selvagens que invertiam a situação e caçavam o caçador incauto e o prendiam em redes de onde nunca mais saía'.³⁰⁶ Januário seems content with a mere list of dates, impersonal and removed from the essence of the characters: 'se escrevesse sobre eles —Inácio, Benta, Ercília, Carmo, Horária, ele próprio— ah, mas não iria nunca escrever sobre eles. Aí estava a primeira armadilha, e ele a começar a deslizar para dentro dela sem dar conta. E cair no fundo'.³⁰⁷ This is exactly the point at which he fails in his attempt, as a mere description of circumstantial facts does not convey the importance of the events or the influence they had on the protagonists' lives. And as he muses over the title page, whether 'Tratado', 'Compilação' or 'Manual' were appropriate descriptions of his writing, Januário comes to the conclusion that the written word will never be an

³⁰⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.49.

³⁰⁵ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich, 1999, p.185.

³⁰⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.49.

³⁰⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.51.

appropriate medium for their recollections: ‘statt echter Weisheit kann [die Schrift] nur den Schein von Weisheit und statt echter Erinnerung nur eine armselige materielle Stütze bieten’^{xiv. 308} As Januário realizes how inadequately his attempt at writing would represent the wealth stored in his memory, he resigns himself to the fact that ‘os apontamentos eram portanto meros auxiliares de memória’.³⁰⁹

The task of memorizing is finally resumed by the community of characters, ‘o leque do tempo’ opens up as each and everyone contributes to the fabric of memory and ‘A Casa’ finally comes to life. It is an undertaking not led by male supremacy, but accomplished in cooperation with all the protagonists, including the ‘mad woman’ Ercília, deemed inadequate at writing, ‘[que] não se podia confiar essa tarefa [de escrever]’,³¹⁰ and the servant Maria Benta, who they integrate ‘alargando o círculo para lhe oferecer um espaço’.³¹¹ As the ghostly characters resume their narration ‘O primeiro degrau da morte’ becomes a space, not of finality and closure, but of a re-evaluating of the past, a making sense of what has been in order to provide meaning to their present state, which, in turn, would allow for the possibility of a spatial — and temporal — ‘Dasein’ [Being] in the future. In time the ‘memory space’ of ‘A Casa’, inhabited by the dead protagonists, is removed from the space of ‘a casa de Duarte Augusto’; and only in the scraps of memory delivered by the various ghostly narrators a ‘real’ picture of ‘A Casa’, Duarte Augusto, Umbelina, Maria do Lado, Virita, Filipe, Carlota and Badala emerges. Just as in medieval plays ‘the [spectator]

³⁰⁸ Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume*, Verlag C.H. Beck, Munich, 1999, p.185.

³⁰⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.55.

³¹⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.49.

³¹¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.59.

sees the play at the Ghost's side, from the perspective of the other world',³¹² a rounded vision of the events can only be provided from the timeless view of the dead. Friedrich Nietzsche states that 'wie der Handelnde [...] immer 'gewissenlos' ist, so ist er auch immer 'wissenslos'^{xv}.³¹³ Unlike the living protagonists of the micro-narrative of 'a casa de Duarte Augusto', who, in acting in a particular moment in time, can only access part of their knowledge and memory, the dead narrators display a completeness of view, which is only possible as they are not tainted by a prejudiced conscience rooted in a present situation, but see events from a point outside time. 'A Casa' is fundamentally changed by the recounting of the dead narrators, as historically datable time collapses, a new time, a time tied to the forces of memory and narration emerges: 'time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history'.³¹⁴

3.4.2 The 'Inner-time' of Memory

Datable time turns incidental in the time-space of 'A Casa' and indeed 'não tinha importância se em algum momento inventasse',³¹⁵ as it is not dates, names or circumstances that count, but the significance of a certain event in the protagonists' lives. The 'outside' time of historical data is turned into the 'Innerzeitlichkeit' of the

³¹² Thomas Pavel, *Fictional Worlds*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts&London, 1986, p.82.

³¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben', in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, Alfred Körner Verlag, Leipzig, 1930, p.107.

³¹⁴ Michael Holquist, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1981, p.84.

³¹⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.59.

soul expressed in memory, where past, present and future converge: ‘Não está no espírito a expectativa das coisas futuras? Não está na alma a memória das coisas passadas?’³¹⁶ In memorizing Ercília’s ‘o leque do tempo’ finally opens up completely, as the memories of the dead narrators, Inácio, Benta, Ercília, Carmo, Horária, and Januário, are intermingled with the thoughts and feelings of the narration’s protagonists, Duarte Augusto, Umbelina, Maria do Lado, Virita, Filipe, Carlota and Badala. And the memories of a pre-time to the narration, the French Invasion and the flight of the Portuguese court to Brazil, become part of the now-time of narration, the story of Maria do Lado’s marriage and Virita’s jealousy, again interpreted by the interjections from the ghostly narrators. Past, present and future all converge in a time entirely dominated by memory, and it is not objectively verifiable time, as presented in the movement of the clock, that matters, but the meaning ascribed to the event; this time of narrating and memorizing is a time ‘onde a História interessa menos do que a recordação ou a importância que os episódios tiveram na vida individual de personagens’.³¹⁷ In her obsession with Gaudêncio Carlota disregards the dominion of datable time, as for her time evolves around the ever same sequence of events: ‘em relação a ele pensou Carlota no jardim da casa, o passado não tinha consistência’.³¹⁸ Her past consists in an eternal repetition of the summer of 1808 (or 1802), from the point when she met Gaudêncio to his leaving for Brazil. It is as if all time before that summer and all time after Gaudêncio’s courtship and departure is erased by the bright memories of his presence; and her present

³¹⁶ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.53.

³¹⁷ Maria de Fátima Marinho, *O Romance Histórico em Portugal*, Campo das Letras, Porto, 1999, p.292.

³¹⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.147.

state of waiting is a time suspended till Gaudêncio will return.

Throughout the dead narrators' recounting 'narrative time can also be delaying, cyclic, or motionless [...] [and the] normal measurement of time counts for next to nothing',³¹⁹ as memories and stories take over from history. The narrated memories are intrinsically interwoven with the desires, dreams and feelings not only of the narrations' protagonists, but also of the ghostly narrators. Saint Augustine writes in his *Confessions*, 'the power of the memory is prodigious, my God. It is a vast, immeasurable sanctuary. Who can plumb its depth? And yet it is a faculty of my soul'.³²⁰

Memory, unlike history, imparts something of the 'soul' or inner being of the protagonists rather than an objectively verifiable list of dates, events and names. Though the narration might not convey any objective truth about 'A Casa', it does impart the dreams and desires of its protagonists, creating a time outside time, just as the dead narrators create a form of 'Dasein' [Being] outside physical existence in memorizing. Martin Heidegger talks of a time within time of things and ideas, which constitutes an 'inner-time' outside measurable time:

zunächst gilt es zu verstehen, dass die Zeitlichkeit als ekstatisch-horizontale so etwas wie Weltzeit zeitigt, die eine Innerzeitigkeit des Zuhandenen und Vorhandenen konstituiert. Dieses Seiende kann dann

³¹⁹ Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts & London, 1998, p. 49 and p.69

³²⁰ Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961, p.216

aber im strengen Sinn nie 'zeitlich' genannt warden. Es ist wie jedes nichtdaseinsmässig Seiende unzeitlich, mag es real vorkommen, entstehen und vergehen oder 'ideal' bestehen^{xvi}.³²¹

In the recounting of Duarte Augusto's dream of heroic defeat of the French, related by Januário, the French invader of almost thirty years before, Godoy, is intermingled with his present hatred of Filipe: 'faziam um bom par, Filipe e esse tal do chapéu. E já agora Godoy, os três à sua mesa de jantar, tomando conhaque e o do chapéu riscando um mapa: o país seria dividido em três partes'.³²² The time spiral has now opened completely; in Duarte Augusto's dream-time, the French invasion of twenty-seven years ago becomes one with the unwanted presence of his French son-in-law. But this dream-time, in its turn, is influenced by the present 'ghostly' reality of Januário's narration interpreting the dream of Duarte Augusto, in which he intermingles his own reflections and desires with those of Duarte Augusto. Three temporal realities, the 'ghostly' narration, Filipe's presence in 'A Casa' and the French invasion of 1807, become one, as in the inner-time of dream and desire the French usurper, be it Godoy or Filipe, are blown away in a gust of wind: 'ele, Duarte Augusto, abria pé ante pé a janela e uma rajada de vento entrava com fúria e levava o chapéu ao do chapéu. Porque vária era a vida, e curiosa a História, rematava Duarte, rindo por sua vez. E então os outros desaparecain, e no lugar onde tinham estado havia só três cadeiras, como por encanto vazias'.³²³

³²¹ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.554.

³²² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.118.

³²³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.119.

What matters is not the reality of the French invasions, nor the reality of the story of Duarte Augusto and Filipe, but the desires and feelings imparted in the dream, those of Duarte as well as those of the ghostly narrator Januário. This dissolution of now-time into the 'inner-time' of the narration is particularly visible in the difference of perception between men and women, or female memorizing versus male historicising. It is as if the two genders lived on two different time scales and reality is certainly very different for the male and female protagonists. For the women this movement between past, present and future is 'natural' as they experience 'uma espécie de ruptura com uma vivência 'linear', entendido como simples sucessão de 'agoras' [...] linearidade [...] é substituída por uma circularidade. A vivência do tempo por dentro, a intratemporalidade [...] é o que instaura nas mulheres essa ruptura'.³²⁴ The chapter *Memórias das Guerras contra a França*, at first, seems to pick up the theme of heroism and heroic male victory perpetrated by Januário's 'historical' account: 'a Guerra ganha uma vez, podia ganhar-se novamente agora, disse Januário. Ele, Duarte Augusto, já a ganhara vinte e sete anos antes, naquela mesma Casa. Com astúcia e audácia, ponderando tudo a seu tempo [...]'³²⁵ But after the proud recounting of clever tactics and courageous male protection of the entire household, Januário's account is interrupted by the female voice of Maria Badala, whose memory is related by the servant Benta: 'Ai, que mentira, riu a Maria Badala, disse Benta [...] o velho Duarte Augusto conta tudo a seu modo, mas não foi nada assim [...]'³²⁶ The memories of Maria Badala, imparted by Benta, are somewhat different. She recounts Duarte Augusto's cowardice, his authoritarian

³²⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, pp.39/40.

³²⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.121.

³²⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.123.

order that shut the entire household within the walls of 'A Casa' and the desperation this act brought to the women and children. Maria Badala tells of Carlota's thinly veiled fury, as the women all seem to go mad under Duarte's pointless and harsh exercise of hiding.

While the male voice(s) of Januário/Duarte Augusto try to establish a justification for Duarte's iron rule of 'A Casa', the female voice(s) of Benta/Maria Badala undermine Duarte's authority, first of all in their laughter, but also in their very different account of events. The male memories of the French invasion that tell of victorious tactics and heroism are brought into perspective by a female view from 'below', which undermines and questions the male authority as the supreme subject of history. In the story of 'o roubo da cabra' Januário makes Duarte Augusto out to be the sole defender of the women and children, who are pictured as an amorphous and inactive mass, huddled together in fear: 'as mulheres e as crianças fechadas num quarto, chorando e rezando'.³²⁷ In the account of Januário/Duarte it was Duarte Augusto alone who saved some defenceless women, who are objectified in their stillness and inaction building a mere backdrop to the heroic actions of the men: 'o seu plano, como se viu depois, salvara todos [...] o mundo era dos bravos, dos que faziam frente ao inimigo e o esperavam, sem vacilar'.³²⁸

Time, as interpreted in the 'inner-time' of memory does not only compress various temporal realities, but also allows for different realities occurring, in datable terms, at

³²⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.125.

³²⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.125.

the same time. Jorge Luis Borges writes that 'el tiempo se bifurca perpetuamente hacia innumerables futuros'.³²⁹ But in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* it is the 'now-time' of narration that is split up into various realities; that of the male voices and that of the female voices. As Januário relates his heroic account of the French invasions, he is interrupted by Maria Benta recounting the memories of Maria Badala: 'Maria Badala não conseguia parar de rir, disse Benta'.³³⁰ In the ghostly memory-space of 'A Casa' all temporal certainties are suspended 'porque o tempo não era contínuo. Mas nada era contínuo, também a razão não era, nem o conhecimento que se tinha das coisas. Tudo era sempre fragmentário e interrompido'.³³¹ Benta's/Maria Badala's version of events does not consist in a time of war and heroism, but one of restored family relations, laughter and feasting, as the 'French invaders' turn out to be 'os primos de Lameirinho': 'Toda a gente riu e ninguém levou a sério, as mulheres e as crianças abraçavam-se, falavam todos ao mesmo tempo [...] se passou como se nada fosse e a Guerra desapareceu de repente'.³³² The objectified women of the male account of war and heroism take centre stage in the female account; and it is through their actions, in the atmosphere of laughter, hugs and kisses that the male phantasy of war, shortages and fear is dissipated into thin air.

³²⁹ Borges Jorge Luis, *Ficciones*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1997, p.117

³³⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.125.

³³¹ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.91.

³³² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.126

3.4.3 O Lençol Bordado de Carlota: Female 'Inner-time'

The question of the relevance of the linear time of history as opposed to the non-linear time of memory and story lies at the heart of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* and it is in the two chapters entitled 'Memórias' that time loses all its fixity. Whereas 'Memórias das Guerras contra a França' focuses on the historical events of the French invasions, the chapter 'Memórias de Carlota' is entirely given to the inner voice of female recounting. Seen from the secondary plane of Death, time and space have lost their coordinates, the narrations follow the voice of female desire alone allowing for an utter and complete displacement in time and space. St. Augustine first described the intrinsic link between time and perception: 'Hence it seemed to me that time is nothing else than an extendedness, but of what sort of thing it is an extendedness, I do not know; and it would be surprising if it were not an extendedness of the soul itself'.³³³ In 'Memórias de Carlota' the account of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* is split up in various levels of time and space all linked to female desire rather than narratable linearity.

In 'o lençol bordado de Carlota [...] os pontos de cruz miúdos, em fileiras muito juntas, todos os fios contados'³³⁴ opens up into a patchwork quilt of memory and fantasy, where all certainties are suspended and 'o lugar fulcral que é sempre a Casa'³³⁵ loses its form in space and time as the grains of memory, just like the sand

³³³ Saint Augustine, Confessions, XI (26), as quoted in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1966, p.480.

³³⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.129.

³³⁵ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *Capelas Imperfeitas*, Livros Horizonte, Lisbon, 2002, p.70

on Lídia's feet, wash up on the shore of female desire. The account of Carlota's memories is delivered by the madwoman Ercília and it soon becomes clear that Carlota is not as contained and rational as it first seemed. Her suffering in waiting and her desire for Gaudêncio have affected her sanity:

e o sangue corria nos sulcos do destino e manchava o lençol e ela tocava no sangue com a língua e pensava em Gaudêncio, e armava um feitiço com o sangue, a vela e a cruz [...] Todos dormem na Casa, os amos, os criados, as crianças, e eu, Carlota, acendo o castiçal e desço a escada, descalça, em camisa de noite [...] e quase tenho medo da sombra que desliza comigo ao longe da parede, e que é a minha.³³⁶

This is the only point in the novel that a narrating 'Eu' breaks through the account of the ghostly narrators; Carlota, witch and madwoman, is the only protagonist capable of crossing the bridge between 'a casa de Duarte Augusto' and the secondary plane of Death. For Carlota 'now-time', the present, lacks immanence; she experiences the 'Jetzt [...] [als] ein Relatives. Es bezieht sich auf Stufen [...]'.³³⁷ Carlota quite freely moves between 'os degraus da morte e da vida'. Time to Carlota is a continuous creation and passing away of memories:

Retentionen, die in sich charakterisiert sind als Modifikationen der

³³⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.130.

³³⁷ Husserl Edmund, *Zur Phänomenologie des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, Gesammelte Werke, Band X, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1966, p.175.

Urempfindung. Zugleich aber mit der ersten Retention ist ein neues 'Jetzt', eine neue Urempfindung da, und mit jener kontinuierlich-momentan verbunden, so daß die zweite Phase des Flusses Urempfindung des neuen Jetzt und Retention des früheren ist'^{xviii}.³³⁸

Each memory conceives other memories that are entirely based on the parameters of desire, transgressing any physical and temporal reality. Carlota, the sad figure embroidering by the window waiting for her lover to return, can suddenly be found amongst the people who flee with the court to Brazil: 'Carlota sentou-se a meio da escada [...] Viu-se também no meio deles'.³³⁹ Or could it be, as Carmo interrupts Ercília, that 'ela partiu com Gaudêncio de outro modo, muito antes [...] e noutra barco?'³⁴⁰ The 'time-flow' as described in Husserl's *Zur Phänomenologie des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins* is 'uma duração que não é homogênea, mas que pelo contrário é variada e qualitativa',³⁴¹ Carlota's Inner-time moves in concentric circles around her desire for Gaudêncio and has no relation to the objectively verifiable time of the clock or calendar. As the washerwoman Preciosa tells her that the witch Vivência 'num instante podia até atravessar o mar',³⁴² Carlota gives herself completely over to the magic of the folk tale; in fantasy and desire time and space become immaterial and the chronotope of 'A Casa' becomes porous: 'se quisesse,

³³⁸ Husserl Edmund, *Zur Phänomenologie des Inneren Zeitbewusstseins*, Gesammelte Werke, Band X, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1966, p.79 and p.81.

³³⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.131.

³⁴⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.131.

³⁴¹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.59.

³⁴² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.135.

também podia voar [...] Bastava entrar no mal com mais força. Enlouquecer'.³⁴³

The historical 'now-time' of 'A Casa' has proved to be so oppressive to Carlota that she can only flee into 'o poder mágico de uma acessível manipulação temporal [que] permite-lhe[s] deslocaram-se em todos os tempos ao mesmo tempo, escapando assim à consciência e à angustia de seu irremediável fluir'.³⁴⁴

The scenes of witches flying into the night, where 'elas amavam os homens que escolhiam e eles gemiam de prazer dormindo'³⁴⁵ are an eternal repetition, the memory begotten of the memory of female desire, personified in Carlota and her dreams of reunification with Gaudêncio. Historicity, in this chapter expressed in the flight of the Portuguese court to Brazil, is overwritten by the multiple temporal realities of dream, desire, and fantasy: 'o não-tempo do inconsciente atira para o seu campo as formas do tempo [...] repetição intemporalizante das cenas'.³⁴⁶ But, at the end of the chapter, Carlota returns from the Inner-time of dream and desire to the reality of 'A Casa' and the female inertia expected by its patriarchal order: 'ele dissera que viria buscá-la. E ela o esperava, esperar era o seu trabalho, o seu modo da vida, a sua razão de ser. Porque ele dissera que voltaria'.³⁴⁷

Historicity is re-established in the chapter 'História de Carlota e Gaudêncio', where the narration takes a more linear structure. Datable time re-emerges as Januário

³⁴³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.136.

³⁴⁴ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.40.

³⁴⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.138.

³⁴⁶ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisboa, 1984, pp.92-99, p.97.

³⁴⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.139.

takes over recounting and the couple are watched over by Duarte Augusto and the abbot: 'lá em cima, na varanda, o abade tomava café e bebia licor de canela com Duarte Augusto. Isso passava-se num domingo de Agosto de mil oitocentos e oito'.³⁴⁸ The 'now', 'then', and 'on that former occasion' of datability are re-instituted as 'die Einheit der horizontalen Schemata von Zukunft, Gewesenheit und Gegenwart gründet in der ekstatischen Einheit der Zeitlichkeit'^{xix}.³⁴⁹ Under the vigilant gaze of the patriarchs drinking liqueurs on the verandah a coherent and unified flow of time seems to unfold; only broken by the carnivalesque lightness of being that Gaudêncio brings to the picture. Gaudêncio, friend of the 'saltimbancos', re-introduces the time of dream and fantasy, this time in anticipation of a future reality, as he relates to Carlota and Umbelina the wonders of Brazil:

Ao alcance da mão, disse Ercília: as bolas incendiam-se no ar, cintilando de cor, e há uma música triunfal que soa, talvez trompete, talvez uma frase teatral de acordeão, as bolas sobem mais [...] Gaudêncio estende a mão e as bolas obedecem, voltam ao ponto de partida [...] e ele pode a qualquer momento recomeçar o jogo, lançar de novo uma bola e outra que sobe no ar e lá no alto se incendeia.³⁵⁰

For the optimistic dreamer Gaudêncio the oppressive 'now-time' of 'A Casa' is a mere interlude to what can or could be; for him 'o ser pensa-se pois no seu poder-

³⁴⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.148.

³⁴⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.483.

³⁵⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.151.

ser, no projecto que de si mesmo define'.³⁵¹ Whereas for Carlota even the present, the summer she spent with her lover, is already turned into memory and a succession of 'have beens':

Gaudêncio passara como um vendaval, disse Ercília. De que sobriariam momentos isolados perturbadores [...] que não se deixam apagar, mesmo que o tempo lhes desfizesse o contexto. Houve [...] o momento em que ele a beijou no jardim [...] houve segredos [...] e houve os encontros furtivos no jardim.³⁵²

The narration is reduced to a single point in time in the chapter 'O Dia em que o Mundo Desabou'. Time seems to stand still as Duarte Augusto's fury is unleashed, first over Umbelina's suspected adultery, then over Gaudêncio's offer to marry Carlota in an echo or a preamble to Duarte Augusto's fury over Filipe courting Virita. The patriarchal figure of Duarte Augusto re-establishes male supremacy in the narration, entirely related by Januário. The only voice that can be heard is that of Duarte Augusto, his thoughts, his fury and hatred of Gaudêncio, his inability to comprehend the emotions and desires that govern the women: 'estavam combinados contra ele, representavam uma comédia, de que só ele não sabia o enredo'.³⁵³ But the oppressive and still male 'Inner-time' is soon superseded by '[...] the carnival [...] a dream logic [that] transgresses rules of linguistic code and social

³⁵¹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.62.

³⁵² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.156.

³⁵³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.159.

morality³⁵⁴ in Gaudêncio's staging of the 'miracle' of 'A Senhora dos Milagres' walking on the rooftops. The very foundations of a society, in which Duarte Augusto's supremacy is grounded, are ridiculed and questioned as under the mantle of the supposed Madonna 'se viu um rabo negro, comprido e peludo'³⁵⁵ and the miraculous vision of 'A Senhora dos Milagres' walking the rooftops turns out to be 'o macaco dos saltimbancos' dressed up in her clothes.

Just as in the unstripping of 'O Senhor do Mar' in *Paisagem Com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* the stifling forces of myth and religious superstition are exposed, the carnivalesque twist in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* splits open again the temporal unity of the last two chapters. At the end of the episode Inácio states: 'tudo isto se passou em mil oitocentos e dois'³⁵⁶ which is in total contrast to the earlier statement in the chapter 'História de Carlota e Gaudêncio', where Januário relates that 'isso passava-se num domingo de Agosto de mil oitocentos e oito'.³⁵⁷ Once more datability is revealed as a mere impossibility and it becomes clear that all along the narration was driven by the forces of memory 'que se tornam espelho de um tempo suspenso numa espécie de nebulosidade fora do tempo'.³⁵⁸ The female Inner-time of dream and desire is firmly re-established in the chapter 'A Lição de Francês de Virita', where one of Western philosophy's basic parameters of time, namely its irreversibility, is put into question. As Martin Heidegger puts it: 'dagegen bleibt

³⁵⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.70.

³⁵⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.165.

³⁵⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.165.

³⁵⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.148.

³⁵⁸ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.44.

umgekehrt die Zeitlichkeit im Horizont des vulgären Zeitverstandnisses unzugänglich³⁵⁹. The women of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* experience time as '[um] constante vaivém entre múltiplas coisas ao mesmo tempo, paralelo [...] à como as mulheres vivem o seu quotidiano [...] policentrado viver feminino'.³⁶⁰ Just as Carlota's Inner-time is an eternal and repetitive chain of memories built upon memories of the ever same events, Virita's Inner-time is one of reversal of the most disastrous day in her life: 'à beira do rio, pode-se também voltar para trás. Subir o rio, em sentido inverso. Tudo é de repente possível, mesmo a felicidade é possível. Jamais ele casou com Maria do Lado'.³⁶¹

3.4.4 O Segundo e O Terceiro Degrau da Morte

'Depois no Segundo degrau, o mundo dos vivos afasta-se [...] [e] o terceiro degrau era da passagem para o desconhecido [...]'³⁶² writes Eduardo Prado Coelho analysing the planes of Death in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*; and it is certainly in the penultimate and final chapter of Teolinda Gersão's novel that 'O primeiro degrau da morte', the fictional space that is entirely constructed by memory, fades away. This secondary plane of Death, already once removed from the 'real' reality of everyday, gives way to a multitude of temporal and spatial entities; and Ercília's 'leque do tempo' opens up completely into something akin to the library Borges describes in his *Ficciones*: 'el universo (que otros llaman la Biblioteca) se compone

³⁵⁹ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt/Main, 1977, p.563.

³⁶⁰ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.43.

³⁶¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.174.

³⁶² Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996

de un número indefinido, y tal vez infinito, de galerías hexagonales'.³⁶³ The carefully preserved ontological certainty of the chronotope of 'A Casa', sole justification and foundation of the dead protagonists' sense of 'Dasein' [Being] as an existence made possible through narration, is swept away as 'nessa altura [...] muita coisa se esfumava na lembrança'.³⁶⁴ As the lights go out and the curtain falls on the drama surrounding 'A Casa', as in the chapter 'Duas Viagens a Cavallo' the primary universe of the narration approaches the secondary level of Death, an eternity unfolds, which is '[an] endless succession of the ages (αιωνες)³⁶⁵ as it was understood by Early Christianity. Time is split into an infinite multitude of temporal strata in the sense of the New Testament description of 'age' or 'αιων [which] designates a duration of time, a defined or undefined extent of time',³⁶⁶ and which is opposed to καιρος, a point in time of a fixed content. Teolinda Gersão's 'Degraus da Morte' therefore stand in stark contrast to an eternity described as timelessness as it is the case in Platonic Hellenistic philosophy, a ceasing of the points in time human beings experience as an irreversible and irretrievable flow as pictured by Heraclitus as 'para quem entrar no mesmo rio, outras são as águas que correm por ele'.³⁶⁷

Time in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* certainly is not unidirectional nor does Death constitute an ending or indeed a beginning of the various time strata. It is the mythical Horse that transports the protagonists from one time stratum to the next

³⁶³ Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 1997, p.86.

³⁶⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.240.

³⁶⁵ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, SCM Press, London, 1951, p.62.

³⁶⁶ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History*, SCM Press, London, 1951, p.39.

³⁶⁷ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Tempo das Mulheres*, Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, Lisbon, 1987, p.25.

and so brings the narration full circle. As in the chapter 'O Cavalo e A Casa. Aparições' the apparition of the mythical horse splits asunder the spatial and temporal reality of 'A Casa', in the chapters 'Duas Viagens a Cavalo' and 'Desaparição da Casa e outras Desaparições' time and space are divided even further as all temporal and spatial certainties are removed. In 'Duas Viagens' the temporal and spatial reality that dominated the narrations surrounding 'a casa de Duarte Augusto' ends with the Death of Maria do Lado and Virita, who are then taken on to a Secondary Plane of Death by the horse; just as in 'Desaparição da Casa e outras Desaparições' the temporal and spatial reality of the dead protagonists Inácio, Benta, Ercília, Carmo, Horária, and Januário gives way to yet another plane of Death. Beginning and end become reversible as Maria do Lado notes waiting for the horse to take her away: 'gozar o momento que passava como se fosse o primeiro. De certo modo, era o primeiro';³⁶⁸ the end of one time stratum does not signify the end of time but simply the beginning of another stratum. The physicist Hans Reichenbach writes that 'the combined space-time order reveals itself as the ordering schema governing causal chains and thus as the expression of the causal structure of the universe';³⁶⁹ but in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* the opening up into a multitude of planes of Death breaks exactly that causality. There is no logical succession of time or time-strata in Teolinda Gersão's novel; the end of one ontological-temporal level is not signified by a ceasing of time, but by the forces of forgetting, taking the protagonists to an ever increased level of uncertainty. Maria do Lado's and Virita's journeys to another plane of existence start with the loss of

³⁶⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.234.

³⁶⁹ Hans Reichenbach, *The Philosophy of Space and Time*, Dover Publications, New York, 1958, p.268.

memory and the deconstruction of their present temporal and spatial reality: 'esquecia tudo, reparou. Sentia-se leve, cada vez mais leve. Como o ar',³⁷⁰ states Maria do Lado and Virita 'não se lembrava do que tinha de fazer naquele dia, mas pareceu-lhe plausível que o cavalo a esperasse, para a levar a um lugar que esquecera'.³⁷¹ Just as in the previous sections, where the Inner-time of memory and female Inner-time were discussed, time is removed from the corporeal-material reality of the 'world-time' governed by clock and calendar. The various levels of existence in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* could be described in the terms that Henri Bergson used to define time:

pure duration [which] is the form taken by the succession of our inner states of consciousness when our self lets itself live, when it abstains from establishing a separation between the present state and anterior states.³⁷²

In vain Virita tries to stem the irremediable flow of time once more, as she reverts to her intimacy with Filipe in her French lessons; 'Quelle heure est-il? Algures, um relógio bateu horas'.³⁷³ But, just as it was the case with Maria do Lado, the measurable time of the clock is erased by the approaching steps of the mythical horse that sweeps Virita, unwilling and still clinging to a past that ceased to exist long ago, away. The end of one temporal and spatial reality of the narration, as

³⁷⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.234.

³⁷¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.238.

³⁷² Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Kessinger, Montana, 1997, p.100.

³⁷³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.237.

Maria do Lado and Virita leave 'A Casa' forever, is paralleled in the fate of the ghostly narrators who, as the story of Duarte Augusto, Umbelina, Carlota, Maria do Lado, Virita, Filipe and Maria Badala ends, experience a similar extinction of memory and ontological displacement:

Não contariam mais histórias, não haveria tempo de contar. Em breve partiriam —boneceiros arrumando os bonecos que tinham representado aquelas cenas, desmontando a barraca e indo embora. Porque tinham estado ali apenas de passagem [...] agora esqueciam vertiginosamente as coisas.³⁷⁴

Just as Maria do Lado and Virita, Inácio, Benta, Ercília, Carmo, Horária, and Januário are going to depart to another level of consciousness, to another plane of Death, which will remove all ontological certainties they associate with their present state.

Henri Bergson in his work on the dualism of mind and matter, that explores how our psychic life or memory has an impact on our concrete actions in the present reality of everyday, represents all our recollections, memories and attitudes by a cone which has a base of pure memory, motionless and firmly rooted in the past, and a summit which, moveable, represents the present and touches the plane representative of the individual's actual representation of the universe. But in this philosophical concept which Bergson describes in *Matter and Mind*, the distance

³⁷⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.243.

between pure memory and concrete action is divided into a variety of levels:

Between the plane of action —the plane in which our body has condensed its past into motor habits — and the plane of pure memory, where our mind retains in all its details the picture of our past life, we believe that we can discover thousands of different planes of consciousness, a thousand integral and yet diverse repetitions of the whole of the experience through which we have lived. To complete a recollection by more personal details does not at all consist in mechanically juxtaposing other recollections to this, but in transporting ourselves to a wider plane of consciousness, in going away from action in the direction of dream.³⁷⁵

Time, in Henri Bergson's concept, is defined by a lived and living consciousness, which constitutes 'the radical force of the time of becoming',³⁷⁶ where the defined parameters of matter are directly influenced by the shifting parameters of the mind. Whereas in Bergson the stiffness of a linear and measurable time is overcome by reaching into the various levels of consciousness of the living human being, in Teolinda Gersão's *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* it is precisely Death that opens up the protagonists' various levels of historical and cultural consciousness. It is only *a posteriori* that the ghostly narrators can make sense of the previous level of existence:

³⁷⁵ Henri Bergson, *Matter and Mind*, Zone Books, New York, 1988, p.241.

³⁷⁶ Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca & London, 2006, p.63.

Nesse degrau os mortos estavam muito voltados para os vivos, sentiam desejo de ajudá-los e tinham também por vezes uma consciência aguda de si próprios, porque agora a vida lhes parecia transparente e brilhante, e se afigurava tão fácil de viver que se espantavam pela cegueira anterior, que os fizera, as mais dos vezes, errar tudo.³⁷⁷

Death's multiple planes signify a process of becoming, not a finality, allowing access to yet another plane of consciousness that will open up yet another reality of being. In this continual process the material reality of the body, represented in Bergson's summit of the cone, is further and further removed as the protagonists progress through the various planes of Death, and more and more a dream logic is introduced making them independent from the physical realities of everyday life:

A morte, pensava Ercília enquanto contava a morte de Virita, estava cheia de degraus. Ou de percursos. Havia antes de tudo um espaço vazio, como um sono, depois do qual se acordava. Vendo tudo, mas sem participar, como se estivesse atrás de uma parede de vidro, ou de água. Olhava-se e compreendia-se, mas era como se as mãos e o corpo não estivessem lá.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.239.

³⁷⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.239.

In the same measure that their physical materiality retreats, the dream logic of pure memory prevails; the pressures of 'A Casa' are ultimately and finally removed and free action becomes possible in the sense of Bergson, for whom 'to act freely is to take possession of oneself; it is to place oneself back in pure duration'.³⁷⁹ But in Teolinda Gersão it is not a heightened intensity of memory as in Bergson's concept that allows for such freedom of action, but an erasure of memory: 'nessa altura [...] muita coisa se esfumava na lembrança [...] porque sentiam que, se os esquecessem, ficavam desligados do universo que lhes continuava a ser familiar, e entravam no desconhecido'.³⁸⁰ Teolinda Gersão's protagonists' journey through 'Os Degraus da Morte' is diametrically opposed to the protagonist's progress in Dante Alighieri's *The Divine Comedy* though the circles of Hell, which leads him through Purgatory to Paradise, where the material and spiritual order of the universe is reinstated as an expression of 'the soul's return to God as fulfilment of that order'.³⁸¹ 'Os Degraus da Morte' do not instate or re-instate a sense of order or fulfilment, but one of the dissipation of any ordering structure. The Third and Final plane of Death is one of total uncertainty rather than of heightened state of ontological knowledge; as Eduardo Prado Coelho writes: 'a morte não é a territorialização final de modo algum; a morte é o salto definitivo do cavalo'.³⁸²

The 'Desconhecido' that stands at the end of 'Os Degraus da Morte' is the key to Teolinda Gersão's novel; 'o salto definitivo do cavalo' leads not to a state of

³⁷⁹ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Kessinger, Montana, 1997, p232

³⁸⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.240.

³⁸¹ Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, p.32.

³⁸² Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'Os Degraus da Morte', in *Público*, 15.06.1996.

certainty, but to a position of difference:

entrar no desconhecido era decerto o último degrau, uma passagem para um mundo inteiramente diferente.³⁸³

In the final chapter of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* a sense of futility prevails; all attempts at capturing time have proved to be in vain. Neither Virita in her desire for Filipe, nor Carlota in her desire for Gaudêncio, consulting magic and witchcraft, were able to reverse the inexorable movement of time, nor could Januário find in writing an adequate medium to contain time and memory. As he has to concede in the end, he will forever remain 'Januário F., que não escreverá o livro por falta de estilo';³⁸⁴ the defined and measured system of writing and language has proved as useless as the movement of the clock in fathoming the depths of existence: 'a própria linguagem também ficava dentro do sistema. Caía às vezes nos buracos do tempo'.³⁸⁵ Ironically the removal of any structure finally brings about the spatial and temporal flexibility the characters have longed for throughout the novel. Just as the yearning Carlota had wished sitting by the window of 'A Casa' dreaming of the witches' flight to distant parts, the physical laws of space are now transgressed: 'os mortos tinham um modo peculiar de mover-se, deslizavam todo um lance de escadas, passavam sem as abrir através das portas. Num instante transpunham grandes distâncias [...] podiam também, se quisessem, estar em mais do que um

³⁸³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.240.

³⁸⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.244.

³⁸⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes*, O Jornal, Lisbon, 1984, p.89.

lugar ao mesmo tempo'.³⁸⁶

'O Último Degrau da Morte' can probably be best defined in the sense of Guattari and Deleuze in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where 'a plateau is reached when circumstances combine to bring an activity to a pitch of intensity';³⁸⁷ it is a heightened state of consciousness, singular, unique and random; which would not lead to ontological clarity but to a continuous questioning and search for new modes of thinking. Despite a sense of dissolution 'as coisas mantinham-se todavia tensas, expectantes, como se aquele apenas fosse um intervalo e algo tivesse de acontecer em seguida'.³⁸⁸ Time for the protagonists of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* has neither end nor beginning, nor does it constitute a continuous flow; 'os Degraus da Morte' have opened up 'A Casa', taken it apart, the poignant insights that Ercília's 'leque do tempo' has offered have deconstructed what 'A Casa' appeared to be. 'O Primeiro Degrau da Morte' inhabited by memory has given way to a multitude of spatial and temporal unities that do not grow organically in order to reveal a perfect picture of unity, but to something akin to the 'rhizome' that Guattari and Deleuze describe: 'a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo [...]'³⁸⁹

The memories of the ghostly narrators did not reveal a complete picture of 'A Casa'

³⁸⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, pp.240/1.

³⁸⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.xiv.

³⁸⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.245.

³⁸⁹ Deleuze Gilles, Guattari Félix, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.25.

in a historical, chronological sense, just as the ontological complexities surrounding the narration were never sufficiently explained '[essa] parede fina, de vidro ou de água'³⁹⁰ that separates the secondary plane of Death inhabited by the ghostly narrators from the protagonists of the narration. At the end of the novel the reader is left in as much uncertainty as the protagonists. Even the brief and temporary illuminations concerning 'A Casa' have come to an end: 'um resto de memória que se ia gastando, como uma vela de cera, e quando acabasse também eles chegariam ao fim e não haveria mais nada [...] então apagaram-se as luzes, um relincho atroou as ares, algo passou por eles, vertiginosamente, tocou-lhes no rosto como uma labareda, e a Casa desapareceu [...]'³⁹¹ The metamorphic potential of a time dispersed into a multitude of time-strata reveals no 'Último Degrau da Morte', as the protagonists 'encontravam-se agora num lugar imenso e vazio [...]',³⁹² a possibility of new and different perceptions or levels of consciousness. The 'rhizomatization' of Time in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, the splitting into infinite and indefinite time-strata without beginning or end has left the protagonists not with an end of time or existence, but with a search for re-definitions of temporal and spatial realities: 'procuraram-se uns aos outros [...] agora não sabiam o que fazer nem para onde ir. De mãos dadas, começaram a andar'.³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.239.

³⁹¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.247.

³⁹² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.247.

³⁹³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.248.

CHAPTER 4

LOVE'S SPACES OF DIFFERENCE

4.1 The Transitional Spaces of Love: Female Resistance to the Forces of Death

As the protagonists leave the 'salient' planes of consciousness in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* facing the enormous emptiness of a space and a time dissolved and not yet born, the critical emphasis that so far has been focused on the forces of Death, where gender was used as an instrument of exclusion in a 'union of the political and the physiological [...] [which] has been a major source of ancient and modern justification of domination, especially domination based on differences seen as natural, given, inescapable, and therefore moral',³⁹⁴ is now shifting to the forces of love, where the Death of the bourgeois 'House' has not only led to a dissolution of the known but also to a creation of the new: 'o choque com o outro [...] estava presa à terra, e as suas raízes misturavam-se à profunda raiz do universo. Era um ser finito e exposto à morte, porque aceitara o risco de amor'.³⁹⁵

While in the second chapter Death was discussed as a disturbance of limits, breaking down the mind-matter dualism and opening up ever increasing circles of uncertainty, this chapter is concerned with the female forces of creative renewal,

³⁹⁴ Haraway Donna J., *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p.7.

³⁹⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.103.

filling the 'void left by man's disappearance'.³⁹⁶ As neither historicity nor memory captured in narration are capable of stemming the flow of dissolution of the concepts of form, space and time, the emergence of new spaces shall be discussed, where, not as in Descarte's philosophy, 'the self is created and maintained by thought',³⁹⁷ but 'desire is what remains unthought at the hearts of thoughts'.³⁹⁸ So far the temporal, spatial and linguistic parameters have been dissected, the circumstances by which Teolinda Gersão's female protagonists have been determined, whereas in this chapter the very notion of self and intersubjectivity lies at the heart of the discussion, the 'eu [...] ponto de intersecção de pessoas, vidas, tempos, espaços, dimensões, ponto de intersecção de planos, luzes, cores, de sons diferentes [...] eu [...] que era sempre uma verdade inconsistente'.³⁹⁹

Classical rationality revolves around the 'cogito', where 'my essence and the only thing of which I can be certain is thought',⁴⁰⁰ whereas recent Feminist epistemology contest this assertion and postulates that 'one of the main issues for women in contemporary philosophy is to need to speak about the bodily roots of the thinking process, of all human intellect, and to reconnect theoretical discourse to its libidinal

³⁹⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.1.

³⁹⁷ Jane Flax, 'Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics and Philosophy', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.20-40, p.27.

³⁹⁸ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.44.

³⁹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.33.

⁴⁰⁰ Jane Flax, 'Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics and Philosophy', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.20-40, p.27.

and consequently unconscious foundations'.⁴⁰¹ But female desire shall not be merely discussed in a symbolic or metaphorical context, rather 'what is experientially female is the association of desire with space, a place within the self, from which this force can emerge. This space is in turn connected to the space between the self and the other'.⁴⁰² The central significance of 'A Casa' in the work of Teolinda Gersão shall be picked up again, but this time not as an expression of a patriarchal and bourgeois hegemony that needs to be transgressed, but as a place of female becoming. As the transgressive forces of Death have left a vast emptiness of meaning, it will not be topoi of fluidity that dominate this chapter, but topoi of creative renewal, spaces of difference and desire, as 'viver melhor as relações humanas é o único sentido da existência'.⁴⁰³ Jessica Benjamin describes 'the interior of the body and the space between bodies [...] [as] an elusive pattern, a plane whose edge is ever shifting....a transitional area [...] [an] image [which] suggests something that both forms a boundary and opens up into endless possibility'.⁴⁰⁴

The transitional spaces of love that shall be discussed in this chapter are divided into two sections, the spaces outside the self, as an expression of the 'space between bodies' that Jessica Benjamin mentions, where a true relationship to the self and the other can be developed, and spaces within the self, the 'interior of the body', where

⁴⁰¹ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.8.

⁴⁰² Jessica Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.97.

⁴⁰³ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.118.

⁴⁰⁴ Jessica Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.94.

difference can be asserted, despite the outward impossibility of a woman's place of her own. After the fading into empty nothingness of the bourgeois 'Casa' at the end of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* the protagonists do not disappear, but start on a search for new places, spaces different to the oppressive domination of 'A Casa'. Jaques Derrida advocates an undoing of a knowledge based on the parameters of Western rationality:

it must expend itself without reserve, lose itself, lose consciousness, lose all memory of itself and all the interiority of itself; as opposed to Erinnerung, as opposed to the avarice which assimilates meaning, it must practice forgetting, the active Vergesslichkeit of which Nietzsche speaks.⁴⁰⁵

In a similar vein Graça Abranches argues that 'die Notwendigkeit, eine andere Herkunft oder andere Schreibtradition zu suchen oder zu erfinden, wird daher [...] in [...] Neu-Akzenturierungen, Neu-Bewertungen oder ausgeprägteren unterschwelligem Unterbrechungen des fremden männlichen Wortes [übersetzt]'^{xxi},⁴⁰⁶ that women in order to write new texts cannot simply overwrite the old ones, but must 'un-learn' in order to speak. In Teolinda Gersão's texts the question of the textualization of reality is problematized; just as Januário discovers the futility of the written word in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo* writing itself is in all

⁴⁰⁵Derrida Jaques, *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1978, p.265.

⁴⁰⁶ Abranches Graça, "Verlernen, um zu Sprechen: Politik und Poetik Portugiesischer Frauen im 20.Jahrhundert", in *Portugiesische Literatur*, Henry Thorau, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1997, pp 204-35, p.205.

her texts, connected with Death: 'perder a vida, para viver apenas em função da escrita. Viver já morto, e ser um texto'.⁴⁰⁷ In order to reconnect the written word with the bodily roots of thought and to express a language of dream and desire, new spaces of a cultural and intellectual tradition need to be created, as traditional models are overwritten: 'the Novel is a Death; it transforms life into destiny, a memory into a useful act, duration into an orientated and meaningful time'.⁴⁰⁸

4.2 'A Casa' as a Place of Re-invention: Transitional Spaces outside the Self

Virginia Woolf has most famously linked female creativity to space; 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'⁴⁰⁹ she writes in *A Room of One's Own*. And it is these spaces of intellectual freedom, where female creativity becomes possible, that shall be described here. Women's only way to expression in bourgeois patriarchy is through 'the 'reasonable words —to which in any case she has access only through mimicry';⁴¹⁰ as exemplified in Lavinia's life-long fight with the grammar of the alien word impressed on her by a foreign patriarchal society. Women's spaces in this first part of the thesis were spaces of 'otherness' and opposition, whereas in this chapter the transitional spaces of love shall open up a possibility of the expression of a libidinal language that has its roots in the body and an intersubjectivity that is not driven by the forces of domination.

⁴⁰⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.68.

⁴⁰⁸ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, Cape Editions, London, 1967, p.45.

⁴⁰⁹ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p.4.

⁴¹⁰ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.134.

'Most theories based on Freud have stressed that the child grows out of an original sense of oneness with the mother-world into a painful sense of his/her own separateness';⁴¹¹ difference and 'otherness' lie at the heart of the development of the self. In Freudian psychoanalytical terms the moral institutions of society, personified in the parents, are represented by the Über-Ich, 'ein Stück der Außenwelt ist als Objekt [...] aufgegeben und dafür (durch Identifizierung) ins Ich aufgenommen, also ein Bestandteil der Innenwelt geworden'^{xxii}.⁴¹² The development of the psyche is very much tied to the subject-object relationship of the self and its surroundings, and 'it conceives of polarity and opposition rather than mutuality and interdependence as the vehicle of growth'.⁴¹³ For Lacan 'this moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the imago [...], the dialectic that will henceforth link the I to socially elaborated situations',⁴¹⁴ as the infant separates from the mother it is the Father's codes of signification that will grant him/her entry into society. It is a process of imitation of societal rules of language and structure that constitutes the Lacanian self; just as Freud's Über-Ich, it is the result of an internalized objectification in order to become a subject. But for the women protagonists in Teolinda Gersão's narratives the development of the self is never a process that would lead to objectified petrification, where once and forever the woman is locked in repetition and mimicry. Vitória in *O Cavalo de Sol* describes the dangers of the Lacanian mirror: 'havia uma outra, sepultada no espelho. Que

⁴¹¹ Jessica Benjamin, 'The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.41-70, p.42.

⁴¹² Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.101.

⁴¹³ Jessica Benjamin, 'The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.41-70, p.45.

⁴¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, Routledge, London, 1997, p.5.

morreria lá dentro, se ninguém a soltasse'.⁴¹⁵ The true self of female 'otherness' is rooted in the body and its language of desire and can never be subject to an objectification that relies on separation, but is constituted by an interconnectedness of the subject with the body and its desires and by the relation of the self to other subjects.

In Teolinda Gersão's text the self is never eternally static, condemned to the death-in-life of female objectification. Characters like Lídia in *O Silêncio*, Hortense in *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Vitória in *O Cavalo de Sol*, or Gita in *Árvore das Palavras* are always flexible, searching for a self outside the constrictions of bourgeois society in a constant dialogue with all that surrounds them. They all manifest 'a beleza alegre e forte de existir, a infinita criação continuada'.⁴¹⁶ But as Virginia Woolf first pointed out, the creative growth of the female self is also tied to a space, where this creativity can be nurtured: 'I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and thinking of the safety and prosperity of one's sex and the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of the writer'.⁴¹⁷ As the aristocratic 'Casa' is transgressed and disappears a new concept of the 'House' is turned into 'spatial metaphors [that] may articulate the search for a desire of one's own. With this space one's own desire can emerge, not as borrowed but as

⁴¹⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.131.

⁴¹⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.71.

⁴¹⁷ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p.31.

authentically one's own'.⁴¹⁸ These transitional spaces of love are, in Teolinda Gersão's texts, often linked to adolescence and early adulthood; in 'a casa preta de Lóia', 'a casa térrea de Casimira' and 'a casa de Augusta Braz', Gita, Hortense and Vitória can grow into women without the restriction of the patriarchal 'House'. They can discover a desire of their own and a female mode of expression, where the central metaphor of the 'House' loses its oppressive elements and finally becomes 'a casa aberta aos outros, um lugar de encontro'.⁴¹⁹

4.2.1 A Casa Preta de Lóia

'A casa preta de Lóia' does not represent what is generally understood by the signifier 'house'; it is not walls and a roof that constitute the structure of 'a casa preta de Lóia' nor does it have any defined boundaries: 'e logo ali a casa se dividia em duas, a Casa Branca e a Casa Preta. A Casa Branca era de Amélia, e a Casa Preta a de Lóia. O quintal era em redor da Casa Preta. Eu pertencia à Casa Preta e ao quintal'.⁴²⁰ 'A casa preta de Lóia' is defined by what it is not; Lóia is not Amélia and the spaces dominated by each woman are therefore different. The African space of Lóia is inundated by '[uma] percepção alargada aos diversos sentidos; o olfacto, o ouvido, o tacto, o gosto',⁴²¹ and it is the sensuality of the 'quintal', the African garden of Gita's home that opens the novel:

⁴¹⁸ Benjamin J., 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.97.

⁴¹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.72.

⁴²⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.11.

⁴²¹ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.32.

corria-se em direcção ao quintal, como se fosse sugado pela luz, cambaleava-se, transpondo a porta, porque se ficava cego por instantes, apenas o cheiro e o calor nos guiavam, nos primeiros passos — o cheiro a terra, a erva, a fruta demasiada madura — chegando até nós no vento morno, como um bafo de animal vivo.⁴²²

But the locality of the ‘quintal’ is elusive; it seems tied to feeling rather than a concrete space in geographical terms. The self in this transitional place is, unlike the Freudian and Lacanian self, not a mere reflection of a linguistic or cultural code, but is re-constituted in a process of continuous re-creation. Jaques Derrida dissects the centrality of subjectivity in Western rationality in *Writing and Difference*:

henceforth it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play [...] the moment when, in the absence of a centre of origin, everything became discourse.⁴²³

Gita’s African garden is such a nonlocus, not a spatial but a sensual presence: ‘não se precisava de olhos para ver, a tal ponto se conhecia e possuía tudo, e também

⁴²² Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.9.

⁴²³ Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1978, p.280.

quase não era necessário esperar nem desejar, as coisas aconteciam por si mesmas, vinham ao encontro das pessoas'.⁴²⁴

Like the enchanted gardens of fairy tales that only spring up in front of those who truly seek them, 'o quintal' has no permanent presence of form, but is an expression of creativity and desire. Gita's garden grows not around a physical space, but around people and it is their capacity to absorb its sensuality that make them part of the 'quintal': 'estava lá e cercava-nos, e ou se era parte de ele, ou não se era. Amélia não era. Ou não queria ser'.⁴²⁵ What to Gita is a magical space full of creative potential, is to Amélia a wilderness that grows at an intimidating rate. The abundance of African nature threatens the orderliness of Amélia's European household. Lóia's difference and defiance to white European cultural and societal norms attract the free spirit of Gita and Laureano, and the wilderness of 'o quintal' grows around the intersection of Portuguese and African culture, creating a space of hybridity that does not conform to any norms, be it those of race or gender. Donna Haraway argues in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* that there is no naturally given, unified subjectivity for 'women', that they are hybrids of various social and cultural backgrounds; and that the spaces occupied by women are not relegated to merely the domestic sphere. Just as there is no oneness in the signifier 'woman' there is not only one space that is, ideologically, inhabited by women, rather 'a woman's place' is a cultural and ideological superimposition of a variety of real and idealized spaces. Haraway states that

⁴²⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.10.

⁴²⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.11.

a woman's place is not a defined variety of spaces but an imposition of a number of locations: trace one vision of women's 'place' in the integral circuit touching only a few idealized social locations seen primarily from the point of view of advanced capitalist societies: Home, Market, Paid Work Place, State, School, Clinic-Hospital, and Church. Each of these idealized spaces is logically and practically implied in every other locus perhaps analogous to a holographic photograph.⁴²⁶

'O quintal', as nonlocus, is such a space where a cultural and ideological superimposition can take place. The young girl's self in this hybrid space is not relegated to the domination of white bourgeois patriarchy, but can grow 'wild' like the African garden:

o quintal crescia como uma coisa selvagem. Brotava um grão de mapira atirado ao acaso ou deitado aos pássaros, brotava um pé clandestino de feijão-manteiga ao lado dos malmequeres, brotavam silvas e urtigas e ervas sem nome no meio da chuva-de-ouro da bauínea —qualquer semente levada pelo vento se multiplicava em folhas verdes, lambidas pelas chuvas do Verão.⁴²⁷

In 'a casa preta de Lóia' Gita does not experience the separateness of the Freudian

⁴²⁶ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p.170.

⁴²⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.10.

or Lacanian self; she is allowed to grow freely and in a constant relationship with her 'African mother' and her natural surroundings. Spatial and temporal parameters of 'a casa preta de Lóia' are not determined by Western rationality, but 'a ligação à natureza tinge o tempo de todas as coisas'.⁴²⁸ 'A casa preta de Lóia' is tied to a corporeal reality rooted in a natural rather than a cultural environment: 'não havia separação entre os espaços, nem intervalos a separar os dias. Porque o corpo ligava a terra ao céu'.⁴²⁹ In the wilderness of 'o quintal' Gita can experience a feminine 'otherness' that frees her from the forces of mimicry and binary oppositions; she can cross over to the 'other' side of the Lacanian mirror, unreachable to the cultural logic of bourgeois patriarchy. For Luce Irigaray 'that 'elsewhere' of feminine pleasure can be found only at the price of crossing back through the mirror that suspends all speculation';⁴³⁰ the woman or girl can only find a true feminine self that is not mere reflection in transitional spaces that are governed by desire and difference. For Gita this free and natural growth of the self results in a hybrid identity, at the intersection of race, culture and gender; to the great disappointment of her white European mother Amélia, 'Gita sofre o pior dos contágios: torna-se negra como Lóia e Orquídea'.⁴³¹

The self Gita chooses is not determined by the unified subjectivity of Western rationality nor does it experience the objectification of the Freudian or Lacanian self; her hybrid identity is the inheritance of her 'African mother's' defiance to European

⁴²⁸ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *Capelas Imperfeitas*, Livros Horizonte, Lisbon 2002, p.70.

⁴²⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.17.

⁴³⁰ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985, p.77.

⁴³¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.18.

cultural norms; it is rooted not in a particular society or culture but in corporeal desire. For Teresa de Lauretis:

what is emerging [...] is [...] the concept of a multiple, shifting, and often self-contradictory identity, a subject that is not divided in, but rather at odds, with language; an identity made up of heterogeneous and heteronymous representations of gender, race, and class, and often indeed across languages and cultures.⁴³²

In 'a casa preta de Lóia' 'there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind';⁴³³ it is a nonlocus of subjectivity where the self can grow unfettered: 'todas as coisas, no quintal, dançavam, as folhas, a terra, as manchas de sol, os ramos, as árvores, as sombras. Dançavam e não tinham limite, nada tinha limite, nem mesmo o corpo, que crescia em todas as direcções e era grande como o mundo'.⁴³⁴ It is only in this culturally unrestrained space that a feminine desire can grow and a poetic language can emerge away from the restrictions of patriarchal society: 'so you must read listen, immerse yourself in its language; discover its music, its gestures, its dance; and have its time, its history, and all history join in a dance'.⁴³⁵ Language in this hybrid space is not tied to the rules of grammar, as the narrative structure in this part of the novel shifts constantly between

⁴³² Teresa de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, p.9.

⁴³³ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p.98.

⁴³⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.16.

⁴³⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.159.

first-person narration and an omniscient narrator. Gita, in a nightmare, expresses her fears of being truncated, of losing her connection to her African mother and the hybrid space of the 'quintal', and Lóia assures her as the girl asks whether there is space for her in Lóia's house 'Eu tem'.⁴³⁶ The syntax of the European language has no hold over Lóia, the language of 'a casa preta de Lóia' is that of dream and desire. Unlike the firm grip of grammar over Lavínia in *O Silêncio*, language in *A Árvore das Palavras* is 'providing some new vehicle, not necessarily in verse, for the poetry in her',⁴³⁷ and Gita is able to find a self that is rooted in the body rather than in cultural and societal conventions.

3.2.2 A Casa Térrea de Casimira

In 'a casa preta' of her African mother Lóia, Gita could develop a self that is not governed entirely by the cultural and societal norms of a European patriarchal bourgeoisie; as in 'a casa térrea de Casimira' Hortense finds a release from the strict conventions and expectations of her childhood home, which is ruled by her authoritarian father. 'A casa térrea' is, like 'o quintal', an idealized as well as a real space, the real space of Casimira's home with her husband and children, but also the ideal nonlocus of a mothering that is not intent on perpetuating the prevalent values of the patriarchal bourgeoisie into which Hortense is born. Just as Lóia refused to accept her cultural and racial inferiority to the European 'masters', Casimira negates the hierarchies of Portuguese bourgeois society, as she is

⁴³⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Árvore das Palavras*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.36.

⁴³⁷ Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992, p.101.

unwilling to show the required subservience of a household servant:

o mesmo modo que tinha Casimira de resistir à casa [...] havia sempre uma distância que ela mantinha e que a impedia de ser assimilada, cumpria exactamente as tarefas, mas dentro de si negava-as todas, chegaria sempre o momento em que bateria com a porta e esse gesto destruiria de uma vez os anos que servira, era de novo livre e voltava ao seu lugar, a uma casa térrea onde havia crianças e onde um homem a esperava.⁴³⁸

Casimira's will is never entirely broken by the patriarchal 'Casa'; she follows an instinctual knowledge that is rooted in her simple upbringing as one of 'o povo'. As she takes over the mothering of Hortense and Elisa instead of the ailing Helena, who, under her husbands' overbearing rule, had become a shadow of herself, a transitional space opens up inside the oppressive walls of the patriarchal House. As in 'a casa preta', Lóia stands in stark contrast to Amélia, Casimira represents an antithesis to Helena in her role as mother. And it is in the idealized space of 'a casa térrea' that Hortense can imagine and create an 'ideal' mother away from the reality of the bourgeois and patriarchal 'Casa'. It is 'through fantasy, [that] the developing individual liberates himself from the constraints of family by imagining himself to be an orphan or a bastard and his 'real' parents to be more noble than the 'foster' family

⁴³⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.96.

in which he is growing up'.⁴³⁹ But in Hortense's case it is not to a 'nobler' origin she is aspiring, but to an origin within 'o povo', as she is aware that it is the 'people' that uphold the glittering exterior of bourgeois society and that without their cheap labour the whole building would collapse. She unmasks 'A Casa' as a chimerical construction resting on ideological rather than real superiority:

e a casa vivia em tensão porque a cada momento elas se podiam ir embora, sentia-se ameaçada e robustecia-se contra elas, acumulava tapetes persas e lustres de Veneza [...] julgava-se forte e tornava-se cada vez mais vulnerável.⁴⁴⁰

Hortense's own mother, Helena, is complicit in the construction of a society that depreciates members of the 'povo' as much as it depreciates women; Hortense sees her 'as having taught a compromise and self-hatred [she is] [...] struggling to break free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of female existence were perforce transmitted'.⁴⁴¹ Hortense's father rules the family supremely and without challenge, 'seu pai. De pé em cima da pirâmide familiar, detentor dos bens e dono único da verdade e da força',⁴⁴² whereas her mother exemplifies the true negation of self and subservience that Casimira denies 'a Casa': 'a mãe retirando do prato o último e menor dos biscoitos'.⁴⁴³ Helena is a complete reflection of her

⁴³⁹ Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, p.9.

⁴⁴⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.94.

⁴⁴¹ Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*, Virago, London, 1977, p.235.

⁴⁴² Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.93.

⁴⁴³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.99.

husband's will, and in her mothering she repeats the values of a society that deemed her invisible; in the sense of Luce Irigaray, Helena is a 'woman [that] will therefore be this sameness — or at least its mirror image — and in her role of mother, she will facilitate the repetition of the same, in contempt for her difference'.⁴⁴⁴ But instead of repeating the law of the Father instituted by a patriarchal and bourgeois society, Casimira follows her own earthy instincts:

[Casimira] era surda a todas as vozes da casa, fechava-se na sua grossa pele de bicho com uma teimosia impermeável e bronca, com a força brutal de não aceitar ideias nem palavras e de encontrar a verdade dentro de si.⁴⁴⁵

In her mothering of Hortense Casimira creates a transitional space for the young girl's self that is set apart from the domineering rule of 'a Casa', as it is 'the reproduction of women's mothering [that] is the basis for the reproduction of women's location and responsibilities in the domestic sphere'.⁴⁴⁶ Unlike Helena, who is dominated by domesticity, Hortense discovers 'a obscura, antiga ligação entre ela e a terra',⁴⁴⁷ she is in touch with a knowledge of the self older than cultural or societal determinism. Consciously she chooses Casimira over Helena as an 'othermother', as ' [a] wom[a]n who assist[s] bloodmothers by sharing mothering

⁴⁴⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1994, p.54.

⁴⁴⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.96.

⁴⁴⁶ Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1978, p.208.

⁴⁴⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.61.

responsibilities’;⁴⁴⁸ as Helena retreats into illness and invisibility confronted by the all-powerful grip of the patriarchal ‘Casa’: ‘Casimira era o pilar, o esteio, a alma da casa, dizia a mãe desde que adoecera. A sua figura silenciosa estava em toda a parte segurando tudo, e nada de verdadeiramente grave podia acontecer, pensava Hortense [...] era tudo sereno à sua volta, nada era difícil de aceitar’.⁴⁴⁹ It is through Casimira’s influence that the adolescent Hortense discovers her bodily voice of dream and desire that will not reflect the exigencies of bourgeois patriarchy. Just as Gita preferred Lóia’s ‘natural’ mothering to Amélia’s attempts at emulating European bourgeois culture, Hortense prefers Casimira’s instinctive connection to earthy affection and simplicity to Helena’s silent acquiescence with patriarchy. ‘Experience may also be re-constructed, re-membered, re-alienated’;⁴⁵⁰ in her choice of Casimira over Helena as mother, Hortense, like Gita, constructs her own experiences of femininity; this time not a hybrid of gender and race, but a hybrid of gender and class. In ‘a casa térrea de Casimira’, Hortense can keep in touch with a sensual and instinctive earthiness, and as she contemplates her image in the hall mirror, she is not, like her mother, mere reflection, but exhibits a libidinal power that will resist the authoritarian rule of her father, as later in life it will resist the forces of O.S:

se voltasse um pouco mais a cabeça a boca aparecia, enorme
entreabrindo-se na esguarda biselada do espelho, dentes brancos,
vorazes, trincando, a ponta da língua assomando rápida no meio dos

⁴⁴⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p.119.

⁴⁴⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.38.

⁴⁵⁰ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p.113.

lábios, um pequeno animal herbívoro, carnívoro, comendo, devorando todas as travessas de comida e no mesmo instante crescendo, e de repente pronto a dar o salto e ir embora.⁴⁵¹

In the mirror Hortense sees a woman who is alive and conscious of her own power; the repetition of sameness that condemned her mother Helena to a death-in-life existence, is broken in Hortense's contact with Casimira's 'casa térrea'. Unlike Ana in *O Silêncio*, who loses touch with her roots in 'o povo' and helps to perpetuate the stifling petrification that is present in the gilded interior of 'a casa de Alcina e Ana', Casimira prises open the stiffness of 'a Casa', so that Hortense can find a subjectivity that is in touch with her body. In 'a casa térrea' Hortense can create for herself a 'poetic language [...] [which] maintains itself at the cost of reaching this repressed instinctual maternal element',⁴⁵² in Casimira's mothering Hortense finds the strength to resist the normative attempts of her primary school teacher Áurea, and as she meets Horácio, she leaves her home and her father's authoritarian rule. Unlike Helena, Hortense will never be a reflection, a mirror image, but will display an independent subjectivity capable of withstanding 'as palavras falsas'⁴⁵³ of fascism and the societal conventions of a patriarchy that 'insists on the incompatibility of creativity and procreativity'.⁴⁵⁴ As an adult Hortense is able to construct a house, where each and everyone of its inhabitants can grow creatively and independently,

⁴⁵¹ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.92.

⁴⁵² Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.136.

⁴⁵³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, p.16.

⁴⁵⁴ Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1989, p.8.

and which resembles ‘a casa térrea de Casimira’ rather than ‘a casa do pai e de Helena’; ‘precisava de um espaço livre, invulnerável, para onde pudesse voltar sempre, uma casa segura contra o tempo e o vento [...] uma casa viva, onde cada um encontrava o seu espaço’.⁴⁵⁵

4.2.3 A Casa de Augusta Braz

In ‘a casa preta de Lóia’ and ‘a casa térrea de Casimira’ the young Gita and Hortense are able to develop a self that does not follow the parameters of the Classical Freudian path of the development of the psyche, which states ‘that individuality is defined by separateness; that separation is brought about through paternal intervention (read authority)’.⁴⁵⁶ It is the intersubjective relationship they maintain with their ‘othermothers’, Lóia and Casimira, which allows them entry into a system of signification, which is not based on the law of the Father, but a maternal instinctual logic tied to nature and desire. Although for Vitória, in *O Cavalo de Sol*, there is no ‘othermother’ present to guide the young woman, it is the space of ‘a casa de Augusta Braz’, where she discovers a self constructed in relationship rather than separation and domination. But, in Vitória’s case, a grown woman and no longer child, it is the relationship to a lover not to an older woman that lets her discover a true self beneath the normalizing efforts of ‘A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo’, where she was raised by her aunt Marcionila and her uncle Fernando

⁴⁵⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon, 1985, pp.70/72.

⁴⁵⁶ J. Benjamin, ‘A Desire of One’s Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space’, in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.82.

Eurico, after being left with them by her father Inácio after the death of her mother. As Inácio dies in a car accident and with him all hopes for Vitória to return to her 'real' parents and her 'real' home, Lisbon, the pressures of the provincial bourgeois patriarchy manifest in her adoptive family, the masters of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo', become too much for the girl; and Vitória 'corria até à Casa de Augusta Braz como se fugisse'.⁴⁵⁷ As the girl's remnants of an independent subjectivity are erased in the impossibility of ever returning to Lisbon and her father, and all that is left to Vitória is acquiescence to an immobilizing objectification, Vitória retreats into a phase of madness.

'A casa de Augusta Braz' is, in geographical terms, set apart from the domineering presence of the aristocratic and patriarchal rule of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo', but it is not, unlike 'a casa preta' and 'a casa térrea', a space inhabited by a woman, but by two men, Amaro and Hermínio: 'na casa de Augusta Braz, na casa que toda a gente continuava a chamar por esse nome, embora a Augusta Braz [...] fosse uma antiga caseira que já tinha morrido há muitos anos'.⁴⁵⁸ Although the space of 'a casa de Augusta Braz' is not that of a female presence, it is, nevertheless, a space of femininity in the sense of Jaques Derrida, who postulates 'the feminine as indeterminacy, oscillation, play of veils and simulacra [...] the creative void'.⁴⁵⁹ It is in the feminine space of 'a casa de Augusta Braz' that Vitória finds a self away from the domination of male rationality, in the novel symbolized in her relationship with

⁴⁵⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.65.

⁴⁵⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.60.

⁴⁵⁹ Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance: A Study of Women in Contemporary Philosophy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991, p.101.

her cousin and fiancé Jerónimo, who denies Vitória an independent subjectivity turning her into an object to be looked at like the insect enclosed in the amber engagement ring he presented to her: 'um insecto petrificado, perfeito, cercado de cristal para sempre'.⁴⁶⁰ In the transitional space of 'a casa de Augusta Braz' Vitória discovers that 'as verdades [...] eram portanto coisas assim: finas, flexíveis, como as folhas de árvore'⁴⁶¹ and it is in her relationship with Amaro that she escapes Jerónimo's attempts at objectifying her as she develops an independent subjectivity 'in love [as] they are organized by the self-other recognition rather than the other way round. The desire for the heightened sense of self is the central meaning of getting pleasure with the other'.⁴⁶² Vitória's relationship to Amaro is not one of objectifying domination, but that of a self growing in intersubjectivity between two independent subjects: 'o Verão adquiria um rosto. O dele. E também ela encontrava um rosto. O seu próprio'.⁴⁶³

Unlike Freudian theory, which postulates the girl's eternal and unsuccessful attempts at emulating the desired maleness of the father and later husband/lover in a never satisfied penis envy, Vitória's development of selfhood is rooted in a discovery of a desire free from efforts of emulation and mimicry. In her relationship with Jerónimo Vitória aspired to the more conventional concept of 'ideal love, the submission to a powerful other who seems to embody the agency and desire one lacks in oneself,

⁴⁶⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.101.

⁴⁶¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.60.

⁴⁶² J. Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.93.

⁴⁶³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.123.

someone who can be a mirror of one's ideal image of the self'.⁴⁶⁴ This objectifying image of selfhood drives her into ever increasing circles of self-abandonment and madness, as the libidinal roots of her subjectivity are dried up: 'ela ficaria cavalgando em círculo, sobre a roda do ano, cavalgando em círculo, até enlouquecer'.⁴⁶⁵ 'A casa de Augusta Braz' becomes for Vitória the transitional space in which her withered self can start to grow again and she develops an intersubjective selfhood in her relationship to Amaro. In the myth of Cupid and Psyche, related by Apuleius, Psyche, the revered beauty, precious object to her parents who elevate her to godlike status, is banned from her home by a jealous Venus and finds herself 'in this soft grassy spot [where she] lay pleasantly couched in her bed of dewy turf and, her great disquiet of mind soothed'.⁴⁶⁶ Away from the cultural and societal constrictions of her home Psyche is free to embrace the passionate encounters with the god Cupid, just as Vitória meets Amaro at the river bank and later in 'a casa de Augusta Braz', nonloci of otherness and difference: 'nessa altura chegara novamente o Verão e Amaro beijara-a de repente sobre a erva [...] a vida corria nela como uma força escura, um rio [...] e ela o encontraria depois na mata, no celeiro, no ribeiro, nos outeiros, atrás do muro do quintal'.⁴⁶⁷ The love relationship to Amaro becomes the transitional space that Casimira's mothering had been to Hortense and the African space of Lóia's 'quintal' had been to Gita. Only after Vitória is aware of her own subjectivity can she experience a desire rooted

⁴⁶⁴ Benjamin J., 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.86.

⁴⁶⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.18.

⁴⁶⁶ Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.51.

⁴⁶⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.119.

in the body rather than in societal norms and conventions, as in Apuleius' 'description of women's sexual awakening occurring in a state of benign aloneness [...] [where] this self-discovery [is contrasted] with Psyche's previous state, when, adulated for her beauty, she was the idealized object'.⁴⁶⁸

After the humiliation by both her lovers, Jerónimo's overt flirtation with Melícia and Amaro's marriage to Rosa, it is the brief summer of love and desire to which Vitória returns before, in the chapter entitled 'Salto', her independent subjectivity finally manifests itself and she is able to leave the dominion of the male rationality to which she was subjected by Jerónimo and a 'Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo':

agora era de novo um longo espaço. Vazio e pleno. Em que não existia, a não ser eles. Ou talvez nem sequer eles, apenas os seus corpos deitados. A sabedoria milenar do corpo, pensou fechando os olhos e sentindo debaixo das mãos as folhas da erva. O mundo de repente em equilíbrio, o sol e a sombra, a noite e o dia. Nada mais contava, os da Casa não existiam, nunca tinham existido [...] ouviu-o dizer que a esperaria, ao fim da tarde. Na casa de Augusta Braz.⁴⁶⁹

Vitória resumes her relationship with Amaro, as she is finally able to break the Lacanian mirror of reflecting idealization and objectification she was subjected to by

⁴⁶⁸ J. Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.97.

⁴⁶⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavallo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.177.

Jerónimo. Patricia Waugh writes that ‘images of mirroring, reflection, rebirth and non-corporeal or non-material forms of connection express an impulse to re-enter and re-formulate the mirror stage’.⁴⁷⁰ In her dreams of madness, when she had lost all hope of ever returning to Lisbon, Vitória fantasizes about breaking the paternal law, reaching the other side of the mirror, in *O Cavalo de Sol* symbolized by the smooth surface of the river: ‘mergulhar no ribeiro, descer até ao fundo, e encontrar a cidade. Mesmo que tivesse de morrer por amor disso’.⁴⁷¹ In the last chapter of the novel Vitória is able to realize her fantasies; after the ball, dejected and humiliated by Jerónimo, she takes off her shoes and dress and enters the waters. And the woman who emerges is very different, ‘surge como ninfa, mulher, ondina, ‘nixé’ [...] ligad[a] à água —ao lago, à floresta, à noite, [...] [ao] mundo elementar do feminino’.⁴⁷² Vitória leaves the phallic domination of a male orientated subjectivity behind and re-connects with an instinctual and bodily femininity; she finds the hidden city of a self that is independent and free, as ‘the pathway to desire leads through freedom [...] freedom to be both with and distinct from the other [...] in terms of an intersubjective reality, where subject meets subject’.⁴⁷³ Only as Vitória finds a true self of desire, she can return to ‘a casa de Augusta Braz’ and meet her lover, but this time not as a furtive side-glance, a short relief, but as a true re-connection with a maternal and instinctual, earthy logic opposed to the paternal rationality of ‘A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo’:

⁴⁷⁰ Waugh Patricia, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern*, Routledge, London, 1989, p.169.

⁴⁷¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.68.

⁴⁷² Teolinda Gersão, *Preface to Ondina*, Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, João Azevedo, Biblioteca Romântica, Viseu, 1989, pp.12/31.

⁴⁷³ J. Benjamin, ‘A Desire of One’s Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space’, in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, pp.97/8.

o Verão inteiro e a vida inteira, disse Vitória. Na casa fechada como um fruto [...] e na casa há urgência e a paz. O cheiro da terra e das folhas, do suor, do esperma, do amor.⁴⁷⁴

Vitória enters a new system of signification, as she refuses to be reflection and object any longer, her sexual awakening is the beginning of the establishment of a female subjectivity rooted in bodily desire. In 'a casa de Augusta Braz', in the arms of her lover Amaro, Vitória re-enters the 'chora (χωρα), receptacle (υποδοχειον), unnameable, improbable hybrid, prior to naming',⁴⁷⁵ returning to a motherly origin she lacked throughout her childhood, in a 'progressão anímica, [que] é, literalmente, um trabalho de psique'.⁴⁷⁶ And as Vitória leaves a system of signification governed by a male rationale, she is no longer what can be subsumed by the signifier 'woman': 'deixar-se-ia levar pelo cavalo, cega mas segura [...] como se não pudesse nunca se derrubar ou cair, como se formasse com o cavalo um só corpo'.⁴⁷⁷ Vitória's secret and animalistic face emerges in a process that re-connects her with her libidinal consciousness and she becomes, in the sense of Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto*, a 'cyborg [which] is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and self',⁴⁷⁸ a hybrid creature, not just an intermingling of race, class and gender, but a being that transgresses the human-

⁴⁷⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.192.

⁴⁷⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.133.

⁴⁷⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *Preface to Ondina*, Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, João Azevedo, Biblioteca Romântica, Viseu, 1989, p.47.

⁴⁷⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.70.

⁴⁷⁸ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Free Association Books, London, 1991, p.163.

animal boundary. In the myth of Cupid and Psyche, as Psyche and Eros, as he is called in Greek mythology, are united 'there was born to them a daughter, whom we call pleasure'.⁴⁷⁹ The fruit of Vitória's union with Amaro is not just sexual fulfilment but the nascent seeds of a true self that rests in bodily desire rather than normative rationality: 'e no entanto ela podia partir, disse Vitória. Como se tivesse juntado os pedaços soltos de si mesma, que agora formassem finalmente um todo, um corpo, o seu corpo [...] o amor era uma força integradora que transformava as sombras em imagens'.⁴⁸⁰

4.3 A Loucura, O Riso e O Sonho: Transitional Spaces within the Self

A transitional space, as a concrete place in geographical terms, within which the female protagonists can discover a libidinal self of desire, is not available to all the women characters in Teolinda Gersão's novels. In some instances the female modes of resistance cannot rely on alternative spaces to the hegemony of the bourgeois and patriarchal 'House'. The transitional spaces described in this part of the chapter are spaces within the self, an 'inner space [which] should be understood as a part of a continuum that includes the space between I and you, as well as the space within me'.⁴⁸¹ As Isabel Allegro de Magalhães notes; 'em Teolinda Gersão é constante essa procura de formas alternativas de existir e de escrever',⁴⁸² and

⁴⁷⁹ Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990, p.115.

⁴⁸⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.203.

⁴⁸¹ J. Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.95.

⁴⁸² Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *Capelas Imperfeitas*, Livros Horizonte, Lisbon, 2002, p.69.

under the pressures of a societal system entirely dominated by patriarchy her women protagonists, if they are not content with the death-in-life existence offered to them, constantly seek a way to escape the dominion of a male and logocentric rationality. *O Silêncio, Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo, O Cavalo de Sol*, and *A Árvore das Palavras* tell the stories of women, who try to find 'o gesto livre do amor, do desejo e do sonho, a liberdade de negar o falso universo estabelecido'.⁴⁸³ Madness, laughter and dream shall be discussed as faculties of the soul, of an innermost female being that tries to combat the Freudian super-ego imposed on the self as a set of internalized societal and cultural norms; a self that is not reflected in the Lacanian mirror of signification, but reaches into the depths of desire.

'Woman's desire would not be expected to speak the same language as man's; woman's desire has doubtless been submerged by the logic that has dominated the West since the time of the Greeks',⁴⁸⁴ writes Luce Irigaray. In a Western philosophical tradition governed by reason femininity per se could never assume the narrow definition of normality, as it was always connected to the natural and irrational and could never be quantified or named. Women's instinctual knowledge was perceived as subversive of the logos. When 20th century psychoanalysis started to uncover the depths of the human psyche, pathological aberrations of psychological states, or 'madness', seemed to reside firmly with women: 'hysteria, the disease with which Freud so famously began his investigation into the dynamic

⁴⁸³ Teolinda Gersão, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, Edições O Jornal, Lisbon 1985, p.80.

⁴⁸⁴ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985, p.25.

connection between psyche and soma, is by definition a ‘female disease’.⁴⁸⁵ Psychoanalysis could perceive unreason only as pathological; ‘psychoanalysis can unravel some of the forms of madness; it remains a stranger to the sovereign enterprise of unreason’.⁴⁸⁶ For Freud there resides within the psyche an uncanny place, an unconscious of libidinal urges waiting to pounce on the rational and ordering faculties of the ego: ‘den Kern unseres Wesens bildet das dunkle Es, das nicht direkt mit der Außenwelt verkehrt’.^{xxiii} ⁴⁸⁷

‘Madness experienced as unreason, that is, as the empty negativity of reason’,⁴⁸⁸ as expressed in the irrational and libidinal Id, is an integral part of the psyche, but seems to be particularly manifest in women. It was Carl Gustav Jung who attributed the dark and uncontrolled threat of the unconscious to the female in the archetype of the anima: ‘the anima [...] is a natural archetype that satisfactorily sums up all the statements of the unconscious, of the primitive mind, of the history of language and religion’.⁴⁸⁹ In patriarchal societies madness was used to contain the unreason inherent in natural expressions of desire and emotion, and, in terms of femininity, served as a means of ‘silencing of those, especially women, who are defined culturally as the bearers of emotions’.⁴⁹⁰ Dreams and laughter, for Freud, were

⁴⁸⁵ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000, p.53.

⁴⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p.264.

⁴⁸⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.68.

⁴⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p.109.

⁴⁸⁹ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Routledge, London, 1959, p.27.

⁴⁹⁰ Alison M. Jaggar, “Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology”, in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.158.

equally manifestations of the unconscious, the socially accepted relations of madness: '[...] und wir benehmen uns wie Geisteskranke, indem wir, solange wir träumen, den Inhalten des Traumes objektive Realität zusprechen'^{xxiv}.⁴⁹¹ Though not pathological as such, it is in dreams and jokes that the dark forces of the unconscious can surpass the watchfulness of the ego.

Madness, laughter and dreams in the novels of Teolinda Gersão also connect her women protagonists with the innermost quarters of the self, but here they are not expressions of an unreason that needs to be controlled by reason. Rather than being a necessary pillar of the healthy self, in Teolinda Gersão's novels, reason becomes a destructive force: 'mas é justamente essa a lógica do sistema, reflecto. Não podendo agir no exterior e transformar-se em acção positiva de amor pelos outros, a paixão moral volta-se finalmente contra o sujeito e converte-se numa força negativa que o destroi, envenenando todas as fontes de prazer'.⁴⁹² In Cartesian rationality 'thought contemplates nature not as experienced [...] but nature as mathematics [...] underlying the concern for certainty is a desire for control, control both of nature and the body'.⁴⁹³ But for Teolinda Gersão creativity and artistic creation can never be born of a world that is entirely governed by mathematical reason; people would turn into automatons: 'no mundo das máquinas aboliu-se o imprevisito, tudo é funcional e perfeito [...] a quantidade é apresentada como

⁴⁹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.60.

⁴⁹² Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, p.118.

⁴⁹³ Jane Flax, 'Mother-Daughter Relationships: Psychodynamics, Politics and Philosophy', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.20-40, pp.27/8.

beleza, o acto estético como uma acumulação de resultados, produto de um trabalho quantitativo'.⁴⁹⁴ To Lídia, Hortense, Vitória and Gita it is the reasonable hegemony of bourgeois patriarchy that drives them either into madness, as it is in the case of Hortense and Vitória, or into an otherworld of fantasy, as is Gita's 'o quintal' or Lídia's dreams. And it is only once they are able to connect to the unreason of their bodily desire that they find sanity away from the dominion of patriarchy.

It is Lídia's, Hortense's, Vitória's and Gita's apparent unreason that makes them appear 'mad' in terms of male rationality, as they do not adhere to societal and cultural norms that are based on it. For Lídia, Hortense, Vitória and Gita it is precisely 'emotions [which] provide the experiential basis for values'⁴⁹⁵ and not calculated reason. As they reach the transitional spaces of a self that is not governed by a controlling mechanism, like Freud's ego or the Lacanian rules of signification, they are free to discover a being that is steeped in the language of the body and desire, where 'o 'logos' não parece [...] separável do 'pathos' na convicção [...] de que o afecto é também instrumento epistemológico válido'.⁴⁹⁶ The spaces of hybridity inhabited by Teolinda Gersão's women protagonists within the body are a selfhood that is not governed by a unifying identity, but by multiple difference; here 'knowledge is made possible and is sustained by irreducible

⁴⁹⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *Os Guarda-chuvas Cintilantes*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1997, pp.70/1.

⁴⁹⁵ Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology", in *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstruction of Being and Knowing*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.145-71, p.153.

⁴⁹⁶ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *O Sexo dos Textos*, Caminho, Lisbon, 1995, p.45.

difference, not identity'.⁴⁹⁷ Female otherness for her women characters is also a difference of knowing and speaking. 'Madness [...] is the Other of the Cogito',⁴⁹⁸ writes Derrida, and for women like Vitória or Hortense it becomes a transitional space, a nonlocus of the soul, where a dynamic feminine becoming is made possible.

4.3.1 Madness

Madness in the novels of Teolinda Gersão appears in a twofold manner, either as an ultimate refuge from patriarchal repression, that leaves the women protagonists no other option, or a transitional space that opens up the possibilities of a feminine growth of the self. Virita and Carlota in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Lídia and Lavínia in *O Silêncio*, Hortense in *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* and Vitória in *O Cavalo de Sol* all are considered 'insane' in terms of the patriarchal society in which they live, as they refuse to accept the rule of the same, the mimicry assigned to women. In their attempts to express a libidinal language of the body, by putting desire at the centre of their reasoning, they are but 'mad', as male rationality can only conceive of emotion as unreasonable and a threat to existing power structures. Michel Foucault writes in *The Order of Things* that:

the history of madness would be the history of the Other —of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be

⁴⁹⁷ Gayatri Spivak, *Outside the Teaching Machine*, Routledge, New York & London, 1993, p.8.

⁴⁹⁸ Jaques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1978, p.52.

excluded (so as to exorcize its interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness), whereas the history of the order of things would be the history of the Same.⁴⁹⁹

The women are excluded and shut out of society as their actions refuse to repeat the mimicry of the same which constitutes the confines of reason; in all they are they have become an unreason to be feared and shunned: 'ela é que é esquisita'.⁵⁰⁰ For Virita, Carlota and Lavínia this exclusion is not only external, imposed by society governed by male reason, but also internal, reaching the very centre of their female self, destroying their innermost being and leaving but an empty shell of the very mimicry they tried to avoid. Hortense and Vitória, on the other hand, descend into madness as a means to re-connect to a maternal creative energy and emerge having formulated positions of difference, spaces of transition, that allow the continual growth of the self in a feminine and female becoming.

4.3.1.1 The Freudian Daughters: Virita, Carlota and Lavínia

In Freudian terms women are defined by lack and incompleteness; 'das Mädchen erlebt nach vergeblichem Versuch, es dem Knaben gleichzutun, die Erkenntnis ihres Penismangels oder besser ihrer Klitorisminderwertigkeit mit dauerneden Folgen für

⁴⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, p.xxiv.

⁵⁰⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.61.

die Charakterentwicklung^{xxv}.⁵⁰¹ And all three of Teolinda Gersão's 'Freudian' characters, Virita, Carlota and Lavínia, exhibit some 'deficiency' in terms of femininity, as it is defined by a bourgeois and patriarchal society. Lavínia's 'deficiency' is her foreignness, 'de resto ela já quase não fala russo, esqueceu tudo o que ficou para trás [...] ela praticamente começa nesta casa';⁵⁰² Alfredo 'creates' Lavínia as a being complicit with the rules and norms of bourgeois patriarchy. Virita, 'com sapatos de seda e pés ligeiros, colhendo afeição como um direito'⁵⁰³ violates Duarte Augusto's right to select and pass her on to the man of his choice by showing a stubborn passion for the unsuitable foreigner Filipe. Her beauty, in patriarchy's terms making her more 'valuable' in the marriage exchange, is thus turned against her, leaving her an elderly spinster. Carlota, like her lover Gaudêncio, wants to seek her luck on foreign shores in a very unfeminine longing to travel to Brazil, after Duarte Augusto prevents her from getting married to the adventurer of uncertain birth: 'Carlota chorou dias inteiros, pensou e repensou, e não encontrou nenhuma solução. Mesmo fugindo e sendo também ela passageira de proa [...] era preciso dinheiro para pagar a passagem, e nenhum deles o tinha'.⁵⁰⁴ Her lack of independent financial means forces her to stay behind and submit to her father's rules and Carlota becomes a prisoner of 'A Casa'.

The sensation of lack and incompleteness, which the girl experiences from early childhood onwards, leads, according to Freudian theory, to a rejection of the

⁵⁰¹ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.51.

⁵⁰² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.18.

⁵⁰³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.82.

⁵⁰⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.160.

maternal and a desire for the father/lover as he possess what the girl most covets but can never have herself:

this 'penis envy' leads her to turn away from her mother [...] whose fate she herself shares: like her mother, she herself is castrated [...] she abandons [the mother] to enter into the Oedipus complex, or the desire for the father.⁵⁰⁵

Lavínia, Virita and Carlota try to escape the narrow confines of patriarchal domesticity by means of escaping with a lover; Lavínia escapes to Lisbon with Herberto, Virita intends to marry Filipe and Carlota wants to follow Gaudêncio to Brazil. But all three women are betrayed by their lovers: Lavínia returns to Alfredo's house broken, 'trémula, magra, as faces frias',⁵⁰⁶ Filipe exchanges Virita for Maria do Lado in order to enjoy the financial security of 'A Casa', and 'Virita fechou-se no quarto e adoeceu';⁵⁰⁷ Gaudêncio never fulfils his promise to return to Carlota: 'e que com tanto mar no meio seria inevitável que o vulto de Carlota à janela se fosse tornando com o tempo cada vez mais pálido, até desaparecer por completo'.⁵⁰⁸ All three women, Lavínia, Virita and Carlota seek an escape from the confines of 'the House' and the despotic rules of a husband, father, or brother by depending on the virile energies and resourcefulness of another man. In Freudian terms, as their superego is compromised as a result of being female, they yearn for a man who can

⁵⁰⁵ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985, p.40.

⁵⁰⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.79.

⁵⁰⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.100.

⁵⁰⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.166.

serve as a substitute for what they themselves lack. In their passion for their lovers they are dependent as they were before, locked in domesticity. Luce Irigaray postulates that:

the formation of the superego will be compromised, and that will leave the girl, the woman, in a state of infantile dependency with respect to the father-man (serving as superego) and making her unfit to share in the most highly valued and cultural interests.⁵⁰⁹

Unlike Gita, Hortense, and Vitória who found the transitional space of an 'othermother' in 'a casa preta' and 'a casa térrea', or the maternal womblike security of 'a casa de Augusta Braz', Lavínia, Virita and Carlota submit their self to the dominion of love to another man. Expressed in Freudian terminology the superego, first constituted by the husband/father/brother, is then transferred to the lover. But once this new superego, the lover/man they chose, leaves and abandons them, the ego, controlled and guided by the superego, is left empty; the self becomes a mere shell. 'For in the metaphysical emptiness [...] they are of course 'self-less', [...] for to be self-less [...] is to be dead';⁵¹⁰ and it is Death or a death-in life existence that awaits all three women after being abandoned by their lovers. Lavínia commits suicide. Virita turns into the doll, Rita, she bought returning from France, where she hoped to be reunited with Felipe, but is robbed and humiliated instead: 'teria primeiro de vestir Rita [...] escolheu para ela um vestido azul. Para ela era fácil, sempre tão

⁵⁰⁹ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985, p.40.

⁵¹⁰ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000, pp.24/5.

bonita'.⁵¹¹ To the day of her death she emulates the objectified beauty she once possessed, which allowed her to exchange the rule of the Father with a lover who seduced but abandoned her for her sister for convenience's sake. Of the lively beautiful woman who danced at the ball only the shell of an empty self is left, as all her life Virita looked into patriarchy's looking-glass in order to establish her selfhood: 'e então ficou quieta, imóvel dentro do espelho —rígida, hirta, vestida de azul, segurando Rita [...]'.⁵¹² Carlota turns into an eternal Penelope in a continually perpetuated female gesture of expectation; without Gaudêncio she is nothing, her self is empty and she becomes a shell, the 'vulto' waiting at the window: 'só restava a Carlota a espera, e a promessa de ele voltar'.⁵¹³

4.3.1.2 As Faces Secretas de Vitória

'Much madness is divinest sense'⁵¹⁴, writes Emily Dickinson; and for some of Teolinda Gersão's heroines it is a phase of madness and unreason, that will grant the self a transitional space, where it initiates the process that will lead to the development and growth of an independent selfhood. Hortense's 'insanity' and return to an earthy and maternal logic in *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* was described in the chapter discussing the historical aspects of Teolinda Gersão's treatment of Death in her novels. Here the emphasis should lie on the dichotomies that exist between Vitória and Jerónimo in *O Cavalo de Sol*; this time not from the

⁵¹¹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.237

⁵¹² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.238

⁵¹³ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.161.

⁵¹⁴ Emily Dickinson, 'Much madness....' (Poem 435), in Thomas Johnson (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Back Bay Books, New York, 1997, p.209.

point of intersubjectivity, as was discussed in 'a casa de Augusta Braz', but in terms of Vitória's victory of a female and libidinal unreason over the male rationality of 'A Casa' and her fiancé.

For Sigmund Freud the independence of the self, the ego, is destroyed by a turning inwards away from reality: 'wenn sich das Ich von der Außenwelt ablöst, verfällt es unter dem Einfluß der Innenwelt in die Psychose'^{xxvi}.⁵¹⁵ The Innenwelt in this instance are the libidinal forces of the Id, as too strong unconscious urges can lead to a weakening of the ego; the ego is helped in this effort by the super-ego as it is in the super-ego that the Außenwelt is internalized: 'in solcher Art setzt das Über-Ich fort die Rolle einer Außenwelt für das Ich zu spielen'^{xxvii}.⁵¹⁶ But in *O Cavallo de Sol* exactly the opposite happens; a transitional space for the self only opens up once the forces of reason are removed. Vitória's descent into the unconscious, her 'madness', is the prerequisite for an independent and mature female self, whereas Jerónimo's adherence to reason, to the forces of the logical ego combined with the super-ego of culturally inherited norms and values drives him into the madness of an unreason he could never fathom and ultimately Death.

Vitória and Jerónimo are imbued with diametrically opposed characteristics; Vitória is the archetypical 'magic authority of the female; the wisdom and spiritual exaltation

⁵¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.68.

⁵¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.102.

that transcends reason':⁵¹⁷ she stands for all that is natural and irrational, for the warmth and brightness of the summer and the sun: 'mas era de manhã que ela chegava. Trazendo o dia claro. Porque ela era diurna, irmã do sol, ela que se banhava nua nos ribeiros'.⁵¹⁸ Whereas Jerónimo is the archetypically male, governed by clarity and reason, he likes the precision of the written word and musical annotation; he stands for the night and the cold clarity of the moon: 'porque ele pertencia à noite. Era como os outros um animal luar'.⁵¹⁹ Just as Jerónimo's vision of the world is dispassionate and analytical, so his relationship to Vitória is one of control. Cartesian rationality consists in organizing and naming as a way of perceiving the world; 'what makes the totality of the Classical episteme possible is primarily the relation to a knowledge of order'.⁵²⁰ Jerónimo tries to impose 'a força da inteligência sobre o mundo selvagem',⁵²¹ Vitória being one of the wild things, as she becomes synonymous with the untameable horse she rides. He wants Vitória to be the beautiful object, another exhibition piece in the perfectly furnished house he builds for them. But unlike Lavínia, Virita and Carlota, who accept the stifling objectification of the female self in the reflective mirror of patriarchy, Vitória is not content with being simply an object. In her article 'The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination' Jessica Benjamin points out that, 'the male position is to make the woman an object, both by his violence towards her and his rational self-control. The female position is to feel herself a passive object and accept her

⁵¹⁷ Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, Routledge, London, 1959, p.82.

⁵¹⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.211.

⁵¹⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.207.

⁵²⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, p.72

⁵²¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.86.

lack of control'.⁵²² Jerónimo forces his rationality upon Vitória's earthy and bodily knowledge: 'e tal como ela o seguia, por onde quer que ele fosse, no campo das palavras'.⁵²³ He tries to enter her self as the male super-ego the girl lacks; he wants to reign supreme in her feelings and thoughts:

pegava-lhe assim pelos ombros, no canto mais escuro da veranda atraía-a um pouco a si —sem a beijar, sem a beijar. Antes a repelia já, com suavidade calculada, como se quisesse protegê-la dos olhares que de dentro da sala furtivamente os seguiam, mais deixando-lhe sentir bem claro que não entrava no seu jogo, porque era demasiado inteligente e brilhante para se deixar envolver por jogos irrisórios de mulheres.⁵²⁴

Vitória, unlike Lavínia, Virita and Carlota, refuses the transplantation of the inner parts of her self onto the will of a lover; she negates the male superego, as she takes flight to the protective forces of the female unconscious, symbolized in the novel by the womb-like enclosure of 'a casa de Augusta Braz', and the depths of the waters in the river. Unreason, that is to say perceived madness, becomes a refuge for the girl from the oppressive norms of 'A Casa': 'Unreason [...] all that is constantly in retreat from reason, in the inaccessible domain of nothingness'.⁵²⁵ In her nervous breakdown after the death of her father, Vitória, in her unconscious

⁵²² Jessica Benjamin, 'The Bonds of Love: Rational Violence and Erotic Domination', in H. Eisenstein, A. Jardine (eds.), *The Future of Difference*, Rutgers University Press, London, 1990, pp.41-70, p.51.

⁵²³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.77.

⁵²⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.168.

⁵²⁵ Foucault Michel, *Madness and Civilization*, Routledge, London and New York, 2001, p.101.

dreams and fantasies, first re-connects with the eternally female of the river: 'avançar até ao ribeiro, chegar até à margem, mergulhar na água, deixar-se cair até ao fundo'.⁵²⁶ When swimming in the river, as in riding the horse, Vitória touches a self that is otherwise kept carefully under control by the patriarchal order of 'A Casa'. With the movement of the horse or the flow of the water she re-enters, as Julia Kristeva formulated it, 'the semiotic process [that] relates to the chora',⁵²⁷ the maternal essence of an ancient unconscious prior to consciousness. She is no longer Jerónimo's reflection and demure object to be looked at, but unleashes the forces of the 'dark' Id, the Jungian anima, her bodily consciousness:

Vitória a doce, a clara, a flexível [...] mas detrás dessa, havia uma outra face. Escura, imprevisível, sinuosa. Que poderia sempre revelar-se de repente, sem controle. Como o cavalo que montava.

As faces secretas de Vitória. Subterrâneas, de sombra, perdendo-se na noite [...] como se ela se atirasse para dentro de um espelho de água.⁵²⁸

In unreason there opens up a transitional space for the female self, as it allows Vitória to re-connect with a feminine essence that in rational terms could only be defined as madness. This process is diametrically opposed to the naming and classification of Cartesian rationality; as '[...] this domination of the philosophical

⁵²⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.69.

⁵²⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.6.

⁵²⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.145.

logos stems in large part from its power to reduce all other to the economy of the Same'.⁵²⁹ But for women the reduction to the same, as with Lavínia, Virita and Carlota, leaves but an empty shell of a true and alive feminine self. Submerging in the river Vitória reaches a consciousness that remains outside the confines of space or time and a self that is untouched by the normative rules of society. As in the unreason of madness all attempts at classification and ordering become obsolete, Vitória discovers an emotional knowledge independent of the rational logos. For Henri Bergson it is in the all-enveloping depth of feeling that the human being connects with the innermost self:

a violent love or a deep melancholy takes possession of our soul: here we feel a thousand different elements which dissolve into and permeate one another without precise outlines [...] hence their originality [...] the feeling itself is a being which lives and develops and is therefore constantly changing.⁵³⁰

Emotion, unlike the ordering logos of rationality, cannot be classified or named precisely; it defies the attempts at naming and therefore being fixed in a system of signification. Vitória's emotional logic is one of continuous becoming and non-fixity, where no certain name can be ascribed to things. Vitória's understanding of self is thus not governed by a desire to please or be an aesthetic reflection of a perfect beauty; the self she discovers in the waves of the rivers and on the back of the horse

⁵²⁹ Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is not One*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, New York, 1985, p.74.

⁵³⁰ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, Kessinger, Montana, 1997, pp.132/3.

is a continually developing and growing sense of selfhood deeply rooted in bodily desire:

e muita coisa ficaria sempre inexplicada. Por detrás de cada movimento, havia uma série de outros, não visíveis, por detrás de cada face, havia outras, nem sequer compatíveis.⁵³¹

In the non-fixity of this transitional space, consciousness is decentred, as geographical space lost its centrality in 'a casa preta de Lóia', 'a casa térrea de Casimira' and 'a casa de Augusta Braz'. The unreason of Vitória's madness turns into a nonlocus of the soul, where a true feminine becoming is possible, away from the ordering principles of rationality: 'becoming is a rhizome, not a classification or genealogical tree. Becoming is certainly not imitating, or identifying with something'.⁵³² Vitória's descent into the archetypical unconscious thus also does not end in a loss of self, where the ego removes itself ever further from reality, but in a heightened consciousness of an independent female selfhood. As if she were still riding her horse she is finally overcoming the ultimate obstacle to freedom, her ties to the rational dominion of Jerónimo and 'A Casa': 'mas não era o vento que a levava, pensou [...] era ela que partia, finalmente. Como se saltasse uma barreira'.⁵³³

⁵³¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.144.

⁵³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.239.

⁵³³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Cavalo de Sol*, Edições Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1989, p.214.

4.3.2 The Laughter of Maria Badala

In the chapter describing the 'Inner-time' of memory the laughter of Maria Badala already rippled the pages to reveal a reality that is far more in touch with the bodily essence of emotions than the historical heroism recounted by Duarte Augusto. If the ultimate transgression in time and space is only completed in the last chapter of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Maria Badala is certainly the one character of the novel that attempts to dismantle the forces of 'the House' all by herself: 'porque ela lutava contra a Casa. Abria às escondidas portas e janelas —de algum modo derrubava também as paredes e fazia o telhado ir pelos ares'.⁵³⁴ She is aware of the dangers of submission to the Death brought by the patriarchal and despotic rule imposed by Duarte Augusto, and so the fight Maria Badala leads against 'A Casa' is one of carnivalesque subversion, setting the comic against male reason. 'Laughter is, above all, a corrective',⁵³⁵ writes Henri Bergson; and Maria Badala's explosions of laughter are always directed at Duarte Augusto as a means to undermine his authority and reveal his position as ridiculous: 'mas ela, Badala, não se deixava endoidecer nem sufocar. Ela ria. E o seu riso abanava a Casa, que tremia até aos alicerces [...] já lhe dava gosto, ouvir o seu próprio riso ribombar entre as paredes'.⁵³⁶

Maria Badala is a maternal and earthy force in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*. Social hierarchies mean little to her and she continually questions Duarte's authority, as

⁵³⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.179.

⁵³⁵ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Macmillan, London, 1913, p.197

⁵³⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.179.

she opposes his rule of male reason, as ‘the carnival is above all a place in which such hierarchical distinctions break down’.⁵³⁷ Maria Badala’s laughter attacks the ordering classifications of rationality as well as the hierarchical structures of bourgeois society. Her laughter is not purely intent on ridiculing and humiliating the master of the House, but tries to impart a female living being onto the women of ‘A Casa’. Unsuccessfully she teaches laughter, as an outlet of an innermost femininity, to Umbelina’s and Duarte Augusto’s five daughters: ‘mas elas riam sempre tão mal, as meninas [...] bonecas, que só ganhavam vida quando alguém as sacudia. E ela sacudia-as muito, mas não adiantava, ficavam logo outra vez de louça’.⁵³⁸ Just as the unreason of madness was to Vitória a refuge from the stringent rules of ‘the House’, so is laughter to Maria Badala a transitional space that allows for an earthy knowledge rooted in the body. Sigmund Freud described jokes as ‘sense in non-sense’,⁵³⁹ as, just as in the case of pathological neuroses or madness, the libidinal forces of the Id bypass the watchful ego. Maria Badala tries with all her might to prevent Maria do Lado, Virita, and her sisters from emulating and aspiring to the law of the Father imposed by Duarte Augusto and therefore entering into the symbolic order of a male rationality, but they dare not follow her instructions: ‘eram só asseio, regras feitas, compostura, porque assim queria seu pai e assim as forçava a lei do mundo’.⁵⁴⁰ In early childhood the girls quite naturally adopt Maria Badala’s bodily joyfulness that transcends her entire being. As Julia Kristeva points out:

⁵³⁷ Keith M. Booker, *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection and the Carnavalesque*, University of Florida Press, Gainesville, 1991, p.14.

⁵³⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, pp.180/1.

⁵³⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewussten*, Imago, London, 1948, p.197.

⁵⁴⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, pp.180/1.

the simultaneity of laughter with first vocalizations has long been recognized. The speed-continuity of movements and its checks — punctuation of the discontinuous: an archaic topos that produces laughter and probably supports Bergson's psychology of laughter and Freud's jokes as well. The chora is indeed a strange place.⁵⁴¹

Maria Badala's laughter is not merely a carnivalesque subversion of Duarte's despotic rule, but constitutes, just as madness did in Vitória's case, a transitional space of female becoming. At first the girls emulate their 'othermother' Maria Badala:

riam com ela. Com as histórias que ela contava. Mais depois cresciam e mudavam: Tanto era o peso da Casa e da lei do mundo. Esqueciam tudo. Sentavam-se nos seus lugares na sala e nunca mais se riam.⁵⁴²

But unlike Gita and Hortense who welcome the transitional spaces of 'a casa preta de Lóia' and 'a casa térrea de Casimira' as a feminine and maternal space in which they could grow and develop an independent self, the girls of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo' accept the lifeless and selfless existence of the 19th century angel of the house: 'whether she becomes an object of art or a saint, however, it is the surrender of her self — of her personal comfort, her personal desires, or both — that is the

⁵⁴¹ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.284.

⁵⁴² Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.182.

beautiful angel-woman's key act'.⁵⁴³ After Felipe marries Maria do Lado, Maria Badala tries, in a last attempt, to urge Virita not to accept the dominion of romantic love that is instigated by a male subjectivity and to re-connect with the principles of pleasure and female desire rather than an obstinate adherence to her admiration for Felipe: 'e além do mais ele não te servia, nem para enfeite'.⁵⁴⁴

Maria Badala urges Virita to re-discover the joyful self that she, Maria Badala, had nurtured from early childhood onwards; in the carnivalesque story of Dom Crispim and Dona Isabela Bela, she tries to stir Virita's instinctual self that lies underneath the imposition of patriarchy's norms. For Bergson laughter is the means:

by which the outer crust of carefully stratified judgements and firmly established ideas will be lifted, and we shall behold in the depths of our minds, like a sheet of subterranean water, the flow of an unbroken stream of images.⁵⁴⁵

In laughter, as in madness, the unconscious desires flow beneath the surface, and if only Virita, like Vitória, let herself be swept away by a feminine experience of pleasure, her self could be restored from Filipe's rejection. Dona Isabela Bela, also in love with a man she cannot marry, as she needs to marry for money not love, turns Dom Crispim, the young romantic hero, into her lover, and after him 'Dom

⁵⁴³ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000, p.25.

⁵⁴⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.183.

⁵⁴⁵ Henri Bergson, *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, Macmillan, London, 1913, p.42.

Gaifás e Dom Gaifós e todos quanto lhe agradavam⁵⁴⁶ while also pleasuring her elderly husband. Dona Isabela Bela, who satisfies the desires of an independent subjectivity while also fulfilling her marital duties, beats the patriarchal marriage economy that had broken Virita's self, with its own weapons. Unlike Virita, who seeks to hold the interest of her lover by turning more and more into a beautiful object to be looked at, Maria Badala is intent on restoring within her a female self in touch with its libido. The carnivalesque story Maria Badala tells is mirrored in the ridiculous position Augusto Duarte finds himself in, as he inadvertently listens to the adventures of Dona Isabela Bela; he is attending to the very basic needs of his own body in the outhouse. The carnivalesque twist of the tale is one too many for the despot and 'Badala foi despedida nesse mesmo dia, não obstante o desespero e as lágrimas da Casa inteira'.⁵⁴⁷

Although Duarte Augusto firmly re-establishes the patriarchal supremacy in 'A Casa', the laughter of Maria Badala returns after Duarte Augusto dies and a new transitional space of female becoming opens up for Maria do Lado's daughter Tina. 'Desire directly invests the field of perception, where the imperceptible appears as the perceived object of desire itself'⁵⁴⁸ and Maria Badala urges the young girl anew not to submit to the male rationality of 'A Casa': 'e tu também não fiques presa na Casa, vai procurar o amor onde o houver, e a vida onde ela estiver, desejo que

⁵⁴⁶ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.187.

⁵⁴⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.189.

⁵⁴⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.284.

encontres o amor, Tina'.⁵⁴⁹ For the generation of Maria do Lado and Virita a truly independent selfhood is only possible in Death, as the magical horse carries them away from the oppressiveness of 'A Casa'; hope can only lie in a future generation that could fully appreciate and emulate the laughter and defiance of Maria Badala and the transitional space of female becoming that opens up out of a libidinal pleasure rooted in the body which is indifferent to any societal norms.

4.3.3 Lúdia's Dream

Teolinda Gersão's first novel *O Silêncio* commences the narration in a language of dream and imagination: 'Lúdia imaginou [...] eram um homem e uma mulher e falavam'.⁵⁵⁰ And throughout the novel dream is imperceptibly interwoven into the dialogue between Lúdia and Afonso to a point where it is difficult to tell what is imagined and what is 'real' in terms of the narration. Eduardo Prado Coelho argues that in *O Silêncio* 'três verbos sustentam o dispositivo fantasmático de Lúdia: correr, cair, partir';⁵⁵¹ and one might add 'sonhar', as the basic conflict of the novel lies in Lúdia's dreams and Afonso's inability to dream. The transitional spaces inside the self that were constituted by the unreason of madness for Vitória and by laughter for Maria Badala are made out of dreams for Lúdia. In dream Lúdia can transgress space and time; as described in the chapter 'a casa de Lúdia', Lúdia's house has no confined borders nor does it rest in any concrete geographical space. Her

⁵⁴⁹ Teolinda Gersão, *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*, Publicações Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1996, p.214.

⁵⁵⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.11.

⁵⁵¹ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisboa, 1984, pp.92-99, p.99.

description of the house she imagines in her dream is not tied to any rational spatial parameters. The dream content does not follow any logic pattern, but rests firmly in instinctual and emotional knowledge that is tied to feeling rather than thought. For Sigmund Freud in dream the maternal, dark forces of the unconscious could gain access to consciousness without causing harm:

der Schlaf ist eine solche Rückkehr in den Mutterleib [...] [er] erlaubt nun dem Es ein jetzt unschädliches Maß an Freiheit [...] der Traum bringt Erinnerungen, die der Träumer vergessen hat, die ihm im Wachen unzugänglich waren^{xxviii}.⁵⁵²

Lídia's dream speaks a libidinal language, a language of desire; her dream logic is the foundation for a 'poetic language as an opening up of beings; as an openness that is checked but nonetheless occurs'.⁵⁵³ In dreams a transitional space of the self opens up; and a space and a time are accessible to the dreamer, which is otherwise only transparent in the forces of memory. This space of interconnectedness would allow for a genuine intersubjective relationship between Lídia and Afonso, but Afonso refuse to enter into Lídia's space of dream and imagination. In the opening section of the novel, as the lovers lie on the beach and Lídia recounts her dream, Afonso enters partly into her logic of dream and desire in order to humour Lídia, but 'quando finalmente falou foi com ironia, porque tinha já saído parcialmente do

⁵⁵² Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.1.

⁵⁵³ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Basil Blackwell Publisher, Oxford, 1980, p.23.

diálogo'.⁵⁵⁴ Afonso, the medic, adheres, like Jerónimo in *O Cavalo de Sol*, to the ordering classification of Western rationality, a libidinal language that lacks boundaries and definitions is anathema to him. Increasingly Afonso and Lúcia can not find a common language, as he refuses to enter her logic of dream and desire and the silence between the two lovers grows: 'soube que se falasse [...] Afonso não responderia coisa alguma, apenas sorriria, com uma espécie de indulgência distante [...] que era o seu modo de dizer que não acreditava'.⁵⁵⁵

For Afonso Lúcia's dreams are perceived as a threat, just as Maria Badala's laughter constituted a carnivalesque subversion to 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo'. Afonso resists Lúcia's dreams, because he fears 'uma subversão que o sonho desencadeia'.⁵⁵⁶ Afonso's language is steeped in the signification process ruled by the law of the Father acquired through mimicry in infancy; 'mas Afonso não punha nunca o seu próprio universo em causa, e não viria nunca ao seu encontro. Ela não aceitava risco algum'.⁵⁵⁷ He refuses to enter into a dialogue with Lúcia, as words, for Afonso, need to be captured in the well-defined spaces of the crosswords he likes to solve; and a language without limits of signification he cannot comprehend. 'Desire, like symbolization, is a property of men, in both senses of the word: something men own, possess, and something that inheres in men, like a quality'.⁵⁵⁸ Afonso, like Jerónimo, seeks Lúcia as an object in a love relationship that is constructed around the two poles of subjectivity and objectivity, where there is no possibility of the

⁵⁵⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.14.

⁵⁵⁵ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.31.

⁵⁵⁶ Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, *Capelas Imperfeitas*, Livros Horizonte, Lisbon 2002, p.79.

⁵⁵⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.34.

⁵⁵⁸ Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema*, Macmillan, London, 1984, p.20.

transitional space of intersubjectivity of two independent subjects. Eduardo Prado Coelho notes:

o feminino é o continente negro de que Afonso se esquivava [...] recusa o ponto de ruptura para onde ela o arrastava [...] no universo das palavras cruzadas em silêncio onde Afonso se fala, todo o objeto é sempre desejo de objeto, amparado na relação de objeto, no pequeno outro onde se agarra.⁵⁵⁹

In such a love relationship the only space for the feminine self is that of objectivity, as the place of thought and (linguistic) structure is firmly occupied by the male ego/superego, on which the girl/woman rests, as she is always incomplete in such a system of signification. But Lídia refuses to leave the transitional space of dream, in which her independent subjectivity resides:

—porque você recusa o real, você recusa,
—porque sempre sonhei viver de outro modo,
—mas só existe o real e é preciso resignar-se,
—mas quem vai definir o que é real,
—o real é o contrário do sonho
—e se for o sonho que é real [...] ⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisboa, 1984, pp.92-99, p.97.

⁵⁶⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.37.

The classical Western episteme is built on a rational system of classification; dynamic processes, as expressed in a libidinal language of dream and imagination, can therefore not be named and seem inexistent. As Lídia points out to Afonso, such a system of signification is far removed from a real dialogue that would reach the innermost states of the self. Michel Foucault writes that, 'the name is the end of discourse [...] in this striving to reach a name that remains always formidable because it exhausts, and thereby kills, the possibility of speech'.⁵⁶¹ For Lídia dream contains a richer and more complete reality, which would enable a deeper dialogue between the two lovers, as it also includes an emotive layer of consciousness. Dream is not outside life, but life should also consist of dream: 'os sonhos aconteciam, pois era apenas questão de empurrar com força, até o sonho cair dentro da vida'.⁵⁶² The woman in Lídia's dream is able to transgress space as well as time; the dream opens up horizons which are inaccessible to the rationality of thought.

As Afonso and Lídia see a shoal of fish swim past, their perceptions of the event are very different. Lídia points out the emotive content of the visual impression: 'mil peixes, disse ela seguindo-os com os olhos',⁵⁶³ whereas Afonso tries to number and realistically contain what he has seen: 'cem peixes, disse ele, cem apenas'.⁵⁶⁴ Lídia's dream reality of the imagination adds an extra layer to the immediately perceptible, in her version in the 'milagre dos peixes Lídia conta um por um o

⁵⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1970, p.118

⁵⁶² Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.21.

⁵⁶³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.48.

⁵⁶⁴ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.48.

incontável do desejo'.⁵⁶⁵ Dream, like laughter and madness is firmly rooted in the realm of unreason; they are the expression of a primordial unconscious: 'die entscheidenden Regeln der Logik haben im Unbewußten keine Geltung, man kann sagen es ist das Reich der Unlogik'.^{xxix}⁵⁶⁶ As for Afonso only logical content is accessible and 'real', the transitional space of Lídia's dream seems strange and unreal, even threatening, to him: 'por isso ele proibia-a de sonhar [...] mas ela abria um guarda-sol na veranda e sonhava [...] onde ele não pudesse ver a sua cabeça e os sonhos que corriam dentro dela'.⁵⁶⁷ The woman he tried to possess as an object in the paternal order is escaping further and further into a space he can not reach: '[...] ele exercia sempre violência contra ela –mas era uma violência necessária, Lídia, porque não temos para viver senão este universo, e era preciso que ela aceitasse isso'.⁵⁶⁸ Afonso's self is constituted around the static parameters of the Freudian psyche; desire is a question of erotic domination and surrender, of a subject being fulfilled by an object of love. His idea of a relationship is that of romantic or 'ideal love, the submission to a powerful other who seems to embody the agency and desire one lacks in oneself, someone who can be a mirror of one's ideal image of the self'.⁵⁶⁹ Afonso, a middle-aged man, has left his stale marriage to Alcina to be invigorated by Lídia's youth: '[...] dois corpos sobrepostos, um corpo no limiar do declínio e um corpo jovem, apressado, trémulo, procurando ainda a sua

⁵⁶⁵ Eduardo Prado Coelho, 'A Seda do Lenço' in *A Mecânica dos Fluidos*, Imprensa Nacional, Casa de Moeda, Lisboa, 1984, pp.92-99, p.95.

⁵⁶⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Abriss der Psychoanalyse*, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt/Main, 2009, p.62.

⁵⁶⁷ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.57.

⁵⁶⁸ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.86.

⁵⁶⁹ J. Benjamin, 'A Desire of One's Own: Psychoanalytic Feminism and Intersubjective Space', in T. de Lauretis (ed.), *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1986, pp.78-102, p.86.

própria forma'.⁵⁷⁰ The relationship Afonso seeks is not one of connectedness, of a meeting of independent subjectivity, but one of a paternal ego or superego impressed on the female self that is constituted by youthful unexperience and incompleteness.

For Lídia the self is never static, but undergoes a continual process of imaginative creation: 'não há alternativa senão ir vivendo e experimentando a vida, não há outro valor por que lutar senão pela liberdade de inventar a esperança, aceitando a possibilidade do desastre'.⁵⁷¹ Afonso demands of her the separation of her independent subjectivity, of her inner self of dream and imagination. The silence that grows in *O Silêncio* is that of creative and imaginative individuality stifled by the totalitarian language of patriarchal society. Lídia resists any attempts at eroding the transitional space of dream inside her; her thoughts and emotions are like living beings continually changing and never fixed. In dream Lídia experiences 'a becoming [which] is not a correspondence between relations. But neither is it a resemblance, an imitation, or, at the limit, an identification'.⁵⁷² In dream Lídia is able to connect to an inner female self that enables her to act out of an emotive and bodily impulse rather than out of logical reasoning. In the closing section of *O Silêncio* dream and reality become ever more interchangeable, as Lídia, contrary to the rules of logic, finds her ability in acting freely and independently not in reasoning rationally but in realising a language of dream. As Lídia gets fully immersed in her

⁵⁷⁰ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.47.

⁵⁷¹ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.119.

⁵⁷² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/ London, 1996, p.237.

creative and emotive self she can finally find a voice that would break the (female) silence(ing). Lídia demands a libidinal language that would enable an intersubjective relationship: 'eu quero a palavra dita, rente ao corpo [...] movimento do eu e do outro [...] e que é talvez, talvez, o amor'.⁵⁷³

⁵⁷³ Teolinda Gersão, *O Silêncio*, Dom Quixote, Lisbon, 1995, p.118.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

A Morte Como Outra Face Da Vida: The Dichotomy of Death and Love in the Novels of Teolinda Gersão

In this present analysis of the metaphorical use of Death in the novels of Teolinda Gersão, Death emerges as fulfilling a dual function: as political, societal and linguistic non-representation, on the one hand, and as a means of transgressing conventions of time, space and linguistic signification on the other. Death in *O Silêncio*, *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo*, *O Cavalo de Sol*, and *A Árvore das Palavras* is constituted by a patriarchal and bourgeois hegemony that allows only spaces of political, societal and linguistic non-existence for Teolinda Gersão's women protagonists. 'Os Degraus da Morte' in *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo* transgress the very foundations of a rationality grounded in the values of bourgeois society, as on the secondary plane of Death parameters of space and time become fluid. In the transitional spaces of love, which are concrete geographical locations, but also modes of resistance within the female psyche, Lídia, Hortense, Vitória, Maria Badala and Gita find a way of subverting existing cultural and societal norms in order to establish a female Self that would not submit to the objectifying mimicry inherent in the patriarchal bourgeois conception of femininity.

In the First Chapter Death is discussed as a mechanism of exclusion; in *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* the political exclusion of the fascist authoritarian rule of 'O Senhor do Mar/ O Senhor da Morte', or O.S., as he is referred to throughout the novel. The mythical discourse of fascist rule claims power over life and Death for an entire nation. O.S. imparts Death physically, in the Death of the soldiers and tortured dissidents, but also metaphorically, in a mythological discourse excluding otherness and difference. In suicide Hortense sees the only way to escape the totalitarian supremacy of a state controlling its citizens' minds; fascist femininity can only be perceived as an asexual purity or the selfless mother, which would condemn Hortense to a shadowy death-in-life existence like her mother and grandmother. Only once the cyclical surging and retreating of female life forces is broken by the emergence of new life, Clara and Pedro's son, can Hortense re-connect with an earthy and maternal substance and is finally able to resist the all-inundating forces of fascism.

The societal exclusion of women is constituted for Lídia in *O Silêncio* in a denial of identity. Death, in this sense, is the stillness of the patriarchal mirror image that includes women in an economy of the same, which denies her a female essence. Her lover Afonso's male rationality has a violent hold over Lídia's expressions of independence. A loss of control would be an existential threat to Afonso, as his subjectivity depends on Lídia's reflected objectivity; he can only be a desiring subject through the existence of a desired object. The otherness of Lídia's creative reinventions and her mother Lavínia's foreignness can only be perceived as madness

in the rational bourgeois order to which Afonso and Alfredo adhere. Alfredo succeeds in controlling Lavínia's foreignness and unrestrained passion, but annihilates the life force within her; Lavínia's suicide is only the culmination of a process of bourgeois assimilation that renders her non-existent. Lídia, on the other hand, rejects the binary exclusiveness of the terms man/woman and the fixity of permanence. In a continual process of change her identity remains fluid, and in her parting with Afonso she leaves behind the Death inherent in his normative bourgeois world-view in search of new societal codices that would allow her an independent female identity.

Death as exclusion is also present linguistically in *O Silêncio*; in a system of signification entirely dominated by the law of the Father women can only find themselves in the empty spaces between signs. Lavínia's foreign codices and Lídia's language of dream and imagination are repressed and rendered non-existent as they fall outside the confines of defined codes of signification. Alfredo tries to impress the prevailing rules of grammar, rooted in patriarchal society, on Lavínia's foreignness, which condemns her to linguistic muteness and non-existence. The silence of *O Silêncio* results from Afonso's incapacity to conceive of linguistic codes of difference and an imposition of 'rational' language on the dreamer Lídia. But Lídia resists all his attempts, trying to establish a new linguistic reality away from current systems of signification. In the end Lídia breaks free from normative society, as she leaves Afonso behind in a bourgeois home that is empty of meaning in its deathlike fixity.

The Second Chapter discusses Death as a means of transgression in a dislocation of time, space and linguistic sign. Death creates fictional spaces that are 'salient' and where redefinitions of form, space and time are possible as conventional parameters of perception are questioned. In the salient worlds of fiction the limit between matter and mind is fluid and flexible, and metamorphosis, as a transition from mind to matter, becomes possible. The women protagonists in Teolinda Gersão's novels often lack the permanence inscribed in the sign/signifier 'woman'. Lídia and Hortense escape the bourgeois hegemony of words and definitions in assuming the natural forms of water, wind and sand. Vitória in *O Cavalo de Sol* and 'a pequena empregada bancária' in *Os Guarda-Chuvas Cintilantes* find femininity unrestrained by society inside the skin of a horse and a fox. Only through the Death of form fixated in cultural and linguistic codices can the women metamorphose into an entity representative of their essence. In *Paisagem com Mulher e Mar ao Fundo* the Death inherent in the mythological supremacy of the regime is metamorphosed into a historical discourse that more accurately reflects the nation and its people. The dethronement of 'O Senhor do Mar' ends the hegemony of the authoritarian discourse of fascism introducing a mythological and historical discourse sustained by many different voices. Once the all-powerful figure of 'O Senhor do Mar' is stripped bare of its mythological content, its historical reality can be relegated to non-existence and new cultural codices can emerge representative of a new symbolic order.

The transgression of limits of space in the novels of Teolinda Gersão signifies the Death and disappearance of the bourgeois 'Casa' as an oppressive space of domesticity and locus of the ancestral bourgeois House. In 'a casa de Duarte Augusto' and 'a casa de Alcina e Ana', spaces of bourgeois fixity are juxtaposed with 'a casa de Lídia', where the form inscribed in the signifier 'house' becomes fluid and moveable. The anchoring in datable historicity of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo' undergoes a similar transformation as the mythical horse opens up linear time into the spiral of the 'Inner-time' of memory, where various temporal planes are accessible to the dead narrators of the novel and the flow of time is never only unidirectional and irreversible. Objectively verifiable history retreats, as the narration becomes a patchwork quilt of memories on a secondary plane of Death that does not comply with the temporal parameters manifested in the movement of clock or calendar. Ercília's 'leque do tempo' opens and closes in order to display various moments in the lives of the inhabitants of 'A Casa', as the dead narrators can only 'exist' in the stories they tell.

Writing as a means of preserving memory proves utterly useless as it fails to perform the task of memorizing, which is giving meaning to events in the past. Past, present and future exist simultaneously in a temporal reality governed by memory, where it is not historical accuracy that matters but the desires and feelings imparted by the memory. This temporal fluidity is particularly manifest in the women of *A Casa da Cabeça de Cavalo*: the female 'Inner-time' of Carlota or Virita is a time of desire that

transgresses all temporal and spatial fixity. Carlota returns in elliptic movements to the summer of love she spent with Gaudêncio before his parting for Brazil; and in the multiple temporal realities of dream, desire and fantasy Carlota can be found amongst the crowds who join the court in their journey for Brazil and following the witches in their nocturnal flights transgressing continents in search for sexual fulfilment. Whereas Virita reverts continually to a point in time, when Filipe had not yet abandoned her in favour of Maria do Lado.

In 'O Último Degrau da Morte' all temporal and spatial certainties are removed and the bourgeois 'Casa' disappears, leaving the protagonists on a plane of consciousness entirely made up of dream, where mind has taken over matter in a process of continual becoming not fixed in time or space. Time is split into a multitude of time strata without a defined beginning or end, something akin to the process of 'rhizomatization' described by Guattari and Deleuze, which leads not to ontological clarity, or a heightened sense of order, but constitutes the departure point for a continuous search for new modes of thinking.

In the Third Chapter the focus on the exclusive and transgressive potential inscribed in the metaphorical use of Death shifts to the female modes of resistance encountered in the Transitional Spaces of Love. After all rational parameters of time and space have been dissolved in the disappearance of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo', love, or an emotional consciousness of the self, replaces the supremacy of the male rationality of the Cartesian 'cogito' and female desire grounded in

intersubjectivity allows for relationships away from subject-object relations of the economy of the same. 'A Casa' re-emerges as a space of renewal and re-invention, where subjectivity is not experienced as separation but interconnectedness. 'A casa preta de Lóia' and 'a casa térrea de Casimira' represent spaces of female difference, where Gita and Hortense are nurtured by their 'othermothers', Lóia and Casimira. 'A casa preta' and 'a casa térrea' are spaces of hybridity, where racial and social hierarchies are dismantled: in the nonlocus of Lóia's African garden and Casimira's earthy mothering Gita and Hortense can develop an identity away from preconceived values that would truly reflect their independent female subjectivity. 'A casa de Augusta Braz', though not inhabited by a woman, is also a maternal space, which in womblike security provides a place for Vitória, away from the patriarchal bourgeois supremacy of 'A Casa da Cabeça de Cavallo'. After the loss of her father, Vitória, in an episode of dream-like madness, recovers the sense of her independent self in 'a casa de Augusta Braz', which later will provide the space to develop her intersubjective selfhood in the relationship with Amaro that reconnects her with bodily desire. Vitória, like Gita and Hortense, becomes a hybrid that crosses the boundaries between human and animal form, as she becomes one with the untameable horse she rides.

'A Loucura', 'O Riso' and 'O Sonho' provide Transitional Spaces of Love within the Self, as the unreason inherent in madness, dream, and laughter form an antithesis to the male rationality of the Cartesian 'Cogito'. In laughter and dreams the unconscious surpasses the watchfulness of the Ego, allowing the content of the

libidinal Id to float to the surface. Madness in Teolinda Gersão's novels has a dual function; for some of her women protagonists, like Lavínia, Virita and Carlota, madness is the expression of an empty self, the shell that is left by objectified reflection. The three women act as true Freudian daughters, as they compensate for their lack of subjectivity with the Ego of a lover, which then abandons them, and all that is left is the empty, doll-like reflection in patriarchy's looking glass. For Vitória madness is a means to distance herself from the dominion of male rationality of 'A Casa', personified in the novel by her fiancé Jerónimo. In the unreason of madness Vitória re-connects with an earthy and maternal bodily knowledge, as she enters the waters of the river or rides on horseback. Just as 'a casa preta' and 'a casa térrea' lacked any inscription in geographical space, Vitória's madness is expression of a decentred consciousness, a non-locus of the soul that is not fixed and continually changing.

'O Riso de Maria Badala' has the same subversive potential as did Vitória's madness. In her laughter Maria Badala tries to impart a female essence onto the women of 'A Casa', but without success; they remain the lifeless dolls that patriarchy wants them to be. In the carnivalesque story of Dona Isabela Bela she tries to rekindle Virita's life force, after she is abandoned by Filipe, but Virita chooses a romantic love governed by a male subjectivity to the development of an independent female Self. Only in Maria do Lado's daughter Tina is there hope for a future generation that would emulate Maria Badala's defiant laughter.

'O Sonho de Lídia' is, like Maria Badala's laughter and Vitória's madness, a transitional space of unreason, where Lídia can develop a language of desire and dream, away from the normatizing efforts of her lover Afonso. Afonso is unable to accept the unreason of dream, as he adheres, like Jerónimo, to the ordering classifications of Western rationality. The subversive potential of dream is a threat to Afonso, which he tries to suppress in Lídia. But for Lídia life is meaningless without the deeper emotive layer provided by a language of dream and desire, which would give her an independent female voice.

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APPENDIX 1

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- ⁱ Why write with all your might, if censorship destroys everything?.
- ⁱⁱ then I realised for the first time the extent of the Portuguese censorship. For us Portuguese censorship under Salazar had already become commonplace
- ⁱⁱⁱ male, monological, homosocial societal text
- ^{iv} [Teolinda Gersão] uses her images in a way that conjures up an entire universe of associations
- ^v parallel metaphors of emptiness
- ^{vi} Lídia causes disorder in that house [...] opens windows and doors
- ^{vii} Dasein takes space in; this is to be understood literally
- ^{viii} spaces inhabited by a particular force of memory through their firm and longstanding links with family history
- ^{ix} the 'now', the 'then, and the 'on that former occasion' [...] the seemingly obvious relational structure which we call 'datability'
- ^x 'now-time' [...] which is 'sighted' in this manner in the use of clocks
- ^{xi} while a curriculum vitae is constituted by objectively verifiable life data, life's story is made up of interpreted memory, which is given a memorable and narratable form. Such form giving is called meaning; this is the fundamental basis on which lived identity is built
- ^{xii} that the main actors are the memories
- ^{xiii} the energetic, productive and inaccessible part of memory, which Plato called 'Anamnesis', can not be touched by the medium of writing let alone be replaced by it
- ^{xiv} instead of real wisdom [writing] can only offer the appearance of wisdom and instead of real memory [it provides] only a poor material prop
- ^{xv} the one acting is always without conscience in the sense that he is without consciousness
- ^{xvi} we must first understand that temporality, as ecstato-horizontal, temporalizes something like world-time, which constitutes a within-time-ness of the ready-to-hand and the present-at-hand. But in that case such entities can never be designated as 'temporal' in the strict sense. Like every entity with a character other than 'Dasein', they are non-temporal, whether they really occur, arise and pass away, or subsist 'ideally'
- ^{xvii} the Now as relative. It corresponds to stages
- ^{xviii} the first primal sensation changes into a retention of itself, this retention into a retention, and so on. Conjointly with the first retention, however, a new 'now', a new primal sensation, is present and is joined continuously but momentarily within the first retention, so that the second phase of the flux is a primal sensation of the new now and a retention of the earlier one
- ^{xix} the unity of the horizontal schemata of future, Present and having been, is grounded in the ecstatical unity of temporality
- ^{xx} temporality is inaccessible in the reverse direction
- ^{xxi} the necessity of exploring or finding a new heritage and literary tradition is therefore translated into new-accentuations, new-evaluations or striking subversive transgressions of the alien male word

^{xxii} a part of the outside-world is abandoned as object and has therefore (through identification) become part of the ego, and therefore part of the inner-world

^{xxiii} our innermost being is constituted by the dark Id, which does not have any direct contact with the Außenwelt

^{xxiv} we behave like madmen, as we, while we dream, declare the content of the dream reality

^{xxv} the girl is struck, after an unsuccessful attempt at imitating the boy, by the realization of her penis deficiency, or expressed in a better way, her clitoris inferiority with lasting effects for the development of her character

^{xxvi} when the ego is detached from the Außenwelt it descends, under the influence of the Innenwelt, into psychosis

^{xxvii} in such a manner the super-ego continues to play the part of the Außenwelt for the ego

^{xxviii} sleep is such a regress into the womb [...] it allows the Id a now harmless amount of freedom [...] the dream harbours memories, which the dreamer has forgotten, which were inaccessible to him while awake

^{xxix} the basic rules of logic have no function in the unconscious, one could say it is the realm of the unlogic