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MY NAME IS LEGION LITERATURE AND GENEALOGY IN ANTÓNIO LOBO ANTUNES

Aino Rinhaug

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (RCN)

University of Oslo | IGRS School of Advanced Studies

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Abstract || The present contribution seeks to examine the topic of “national identity and literature” by focusing on how a collective – family or nation – is constituted by a number of “power relations.” These “power relations”, in turn, are produced, or created by the collective as a whole and could be said to represent the frontiers of the group at any given time. When these considerations are brought into a work of fiction, it becomes clearer that the relations in question are of a discursive nature. Discourse is power and, as such, disciplinary of both of the collective as well as of each individual within the group. As an example of this kind of discourse, the analysis focuses on the novel, *O meu nome é Legião*, by Portuguese author, António Lobo Antunes.

Key-words || António Lobo Antunes | *O meu nome é Legião* | National identity | Family theory | Power relations | Discourse | Autopoiesis | Genealogy.

Vou inventando infâncias. A minha já a esgotei.
António Lobo Antunes

0. Introduction

In light of how today's worldly climate, including all disciplines of inquiry, is largely governed by postmodern "undecidables" (Connor 1997: 29), the importance attached to the question of "identity" and "nation" becomes all the more evident. Or, the two concepts seem as intricately connected as they are indeed incongruent counterparts. The present essay seeks to take into consideration how both identity and nation come to play a significant part in the constitution of contemporary literature. Moreover, in the face of an increasing sense of historical discontinuity, literature is forced to engage with a bewildering conception of self, belonging and the role of writing. If the quest for "national identity" entails a negotiation across borders of all kinds, then the same pursuit could be seen as directing the writing of literature beyond established genre frontiers, say, for example of post-colonialism. The assumption is, furthermore, that contemporary literature is pushing further into the muddy waters of postmodernism toward that which seems to refute a "name" or definition. In other words, these ongoing explorations of borders take the negotiations over the signification of national identity into a new territory. My investigation will relate these preliminary reflections to the question of "voice," "space" and "narration" in order to see how new genealogies (hence borders), or family constellations are created. If a "family" is understood as a representative fragment of a "nation," then "identity" is broadly conceived as subjectivity belonging to a line of historical and discursive – hence genealogical – material. Supporting the inquiry into the connection between national identity and contemporary fiction, references will be made to the novel *O Meu Nome é Legião* (2007) by Portuguese author, António Lobo Antunes.

1. In between the margin and the centre

The novel is written in the same way as other recent publications by Lobo Antunes, that is, as a conjunction of narrative voices, each speaking from his or her point of view as concerns a particular experience or event. In the case of *O Meu Nome...*, the narration revolves around a changing order, or, say, the fall of an authority. The opening pages are written as a police "report" ("relatório"), documenting a criminal incident, which involves a group of young boys, all inhabitants of the disorderly social quarter "Bairro 1st of May." As such, the investigation into and disclosure of the unlawful state of the site in the north of Lisbon could be seen as an exposure, first of how relations between people are formed based on the

relation they have to the site; in other words, of the power exercised by the site over its inhabitants; and secondly, of the extent to which it is possible to speak (and act) as an individual as opposed to as a collective whole. Overall, these considerations relate to the question of belonging, which remains unresolved. As for the Bairro, the site comes to represent an autonomous territory, a world in miniature, set in a piece of fiction that seeks to penetrate into the question of what disciplines, but also resists, the creation of a self on site. The quarter of exiles becomes, thus, the centre of narration, where the conjunction of individual storylines unfolds and new genealogies are drawn up, perhaps even a genealogy of literature itself. These remarks amount to a recognition of how writing comes to connect the exiled, or marginalised with the centre, or rather, how it is necessary to rethink both the margin as well as the centre as indicators of belonging.

1.1. A postmodern *Legião*: in exile

In regard to the question of exile vs. belonging, the novel takes its title from the Bible. A story both of exorcism and salvation, we are told how Jesus meets the Gerasene demoniac Legion, whose spirit is unclean, because he is possessed by a legion of demonic voices. In Mark's version of the story, we read:

And they came to the other side of the sea, to the region of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus got out of the boat, suddenly there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who was living among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, not even with a chain, for he'd been bound with fetters and chains many times, but the chains were torn apart by him and the fetters smashed, and no one was strong enough to tame him. And every night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was screaming and gashing himself with stones (Newheart 2004: xix)¹.

Jesus saves the ill-possessed man, who comes to spend the rest of his life retelling of how his saviour called upon the demonic spirits, who then took refuge in a herd of pigs and later drowned. In the novel by Lobo Antunes, it could be said that the Bairro speaks as an "unclean" collective whole, inhabited, as it is, by an entire legion of voices that are all exiled by society. However, instead of going into hiding, chained and fettered, the Bairro, by being under constant surveillance by the law, or Police, is subjected to a "disciplinary" regime, or, to speak with Foucault, a disciplinary control that was originally applied to marginalise the "leper" from the rest of society. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault writes:

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1 | Lobo Antunes refers to the same story by quoting Luke 8: 26-28 at the beginning of the novel.

The constant division between the normal and the abnormal, to which every individual is subjected, brings us back to our own time, by applying the binary branding of exile of the leper to quite different objects; the existence of a whole set of techniques and institutions for measuring, supervising and correcting the abnormal brings into play the disciplinary mechanisms to which the fear of the plague gave rise (Foucault, 1991: 199).

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2 | J. Bentham, *Works*, ed. Bowring, IV, 1843.

Effectively, the relation between the leper exile and the contemporary Legion becomes reinforced in the novel. In the case of the Biblical Legion, God, through Jesus, exercises his power over Man by healing the sick. The latter is, then, reinstated into the order of the people. In regards to the role of the site, it is worth noting that the healing of Legion takes place in Gentile territory (Newheart, 2004: 38): “[T]he unclean spirit has brought the man into unclean places” (42). Brought into a contemporary context, the expulsion of the leper from society and the exercise of power by a supreme authority resurface in the theory of punishment and discipline in Foucault’s reflections on *panopticism*.

Referring to Jeremy Bentham’s “inspection house,” or *Panopticon* (1787), Foucault observes how the construction allows, for example prisoners, to be surveyed without being able to see the surveyor. Every person is kept in spatial unities and the guards, in turn, can “see constantly and recognize immediately” each individual with the consequence that visibility becomes a trap and power is exercised automatically (200-201). Contrary to what happened to the biblical Legion hiding amongst the tombs, the aim of the Bentham’s disciplinary construction, as referred to by Foucault, was to ensure that “[t]he crowd, a compact mass, a locus of multiple exchanges, individualities merging together, a collective effect, is abolished and replaced by a collection of separated individualities” (201)². Also, the *Panopticon* was a laboratory of power, “it could be used as a machine to carry out experiments, to alter behaviour, to train or correct individuals” (203). These individual bodies in space, it must be noted, are the opposite of a singular, supreme power; it is the “whole lower region” of the panoptic domain “of irregular bodies, with their details, their multiple movements, their heterogeneous forces, their spatial relations” (208), and what is required in terms of disciplinary analysis of this heterogeneous group, are:

[m]echanisms that analyse distributions, gaps, series, combinations, and which use instruments that render visible, record, differentiate and compare: a physics of a relational and multiple power, which has its maximum intensity not in the person of the king, but in the bodies that can be individualized by these relations (208).

According to these observations, the Panopticon, as a social body,

indicates as its object, “relations of discipline” (208) rather than the presence of a sovereign power. If, as Foucault writes, Bentham dreamt of creating a society that would be “penetrated through and through” by a network of disciplinary mechanisms, then the Panopticon provided a formula for that arrangement (209)³.

By taking a long leap from the role of the Panopticon in contemporary society to the question of national identity and literature, it is obvious that society, as a panoptic domain, has become increasingly more unruly and difficult to keep in check or analyse. Disciplinary, inter-personal relations have become hugely more complex, as has the question of the individual, identity and nation. Today, the combinatory possibilities between individuals within the collective whole seem infinite and visibility alone cannot ensure any form of discipline and order, largely because order itself has become relative. Indeed, the impression arises that order has become as relative as the discourses that seek to maintain it. Could it be, thus, that the form of panopticism today can only be defined according to the operating *discursive* relations of contemporary society? Holstein and Gubrium, debating the notion of “narrative identity in a postmodern world” (2000) seem to hold such a view. Referring to Foucault, they write:

Across the various institutional realms, newly emergent discourses formed subjectivities of their own. Rather than the individual self being the center of experience through time immemorial, Foucault argues that the idea of a centered presence is itself a discursive formation, part of a historical set of language games, if you will, that articulate the discourse of a present subjectivity on several fronts (Holstein, Gubrium 2000: 79).

And further:

This contemporary panopticism is a massive set of language games we engage in virtually every day. Their various terms locate and discursively ground the construction of the empirical self. This ending for the story of the self directs us to the local incitements of seemingly endless personal narratives. These are not grand narratives of the self. To be sure; instead, they are accounts that borrow from diversely situated and formulated language games to convey who and what we are in our private spheres and very ‘own’ inner lives (80).

As might be derived from these observations, postmodern panopticism as a practice of discourse is closely related to the concept of the collective whole as a composite social body. The assumption held in the present examination is, therefore, that this discursive, disciplinary, but also resistant and even “revolutionary” relation between individuals can be played out creatively, as literature. Furthermore, within the “institution,” or “state” of literature the idea of national identity can be performed as a creative practice, whose complex genealogy is found – as mentioned earlier – in the “social” territory between the centre and the margins.

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3 | In *Discipline and Punish* (1991) Foucault gives an historical account of the evolution of disciplinary institutions, including the organisation of the police apparatus, which became co-extensive of the state in the eighteenth-century. See pp. 218-228. Bentham, *Works*, ed. Bowring, IV, 1843.

2. *On site*: the postmodern family and genealogy

The assumption is, that *on site*, discursive relations take place and create a “social body,” whose complexity in terms of meaning and identity derives both from the site as well as from each participant in the field. Quoting Deleuze’s view on Foucauldian power suffices to make the density of the site problem more than obvious. Taken from a seminar section called ‘A New Cartographer’, he writes: “The thing called power is characterized by immanence of field without transcendent unification, continuity of line without global centralization, and contiguity of parts without distinct totalization: it is a social space” (Deleuze, 1988: 27)⁴. As Gregg Lambert observes, the crucial thing to draw from this description is that “social space itself [is] a multiplicity of relations (i.e., immanence, continuity, contiguity) that are not already structured into a hierarchy or pyramid” (Lambert, 2008: 141). This observation, opposing that of a “higher” authority, renders the idea of power and dominance more difficult, as power “does not flow in one direction only, as ‘from above’, but also ‘from below’, since dominated subjects also produce the reality of the dominator-function as a moment of transcendent unification” (141). Also, as is further noted, it is important to keep in mind that power is not something that is “added on” to the social field, but something “deeply rooted in the social nexus” (Foucault, 1994: 343). This, in turn, will affect our view on power, history and genealogy, which in light of the present topic and novel, becomes evident. For Lambert, Foucault’s theory of power is genealogical rather than historical, since “only a genealogical method must account for sudden deviations or accidents that might befall the *genus* (form)” (145). In other words, there is no inner logic to the development of forms, which exist as a multitude of interconnecting events (Dodd, 1999: 90). Lobo Antunes’ novel, however, demonstrates that in literature as an event and as a language game, the notion of “national identity” is put in question by a continuous production and usage of discursive (“genealogical”) material. More precisely, in the case of literature as a “site” of power in its own right, we have to do with a form of an ongoing negotiation between the historical and the a-historical from the way in which the order of a “genealogical model” continues to be disrupted by the extension of the discursive mode. Furthermore, literature, as the a-historical model of power, is constantly in the process of becoming historical by the fact that the discursive participants feed on, or are maintained by, their own genealogical and historical material of the past. Consequently, the individual storylines, which constitute the heterogeneous collective site of power relations, is also a site of memory, and the latter is brought back to the present, or actualised, by the participants, productive of their own singularity as subjectivities.

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4 | Quoted in Lambert (2008: 141).

3. A legion of selves: “For we are many”

In order to demonstrate the above considerations, I will now turn to the novel *O meu nome é Legião* for a closer analysis. As mentioned earlier, the novel, as the major part of Lobo Antunes’ work, demonstrates how the conjunction of narrative voices creates a collective whole that speaks as “many in one.” Returning to the question of power relations, the striking feature of the novel is that these voices speak from a position that no longer belongs to any kind of fixed order. Deprived of any authority, the representatives of the law are powerless in the face of the Bairro, which seems to exist according to its own laws. Here, on the one hand, the voices speak as anonymous nomadic figures, discernible only by colour or other physical traits⁵. On the other hand, the discourse is a continuous exploration of the past, or of the question of who and what “we” are in terms of selves and sites. The novel seems to emphasise that when the “old” order has failed⁶, there is no real difference between representatives of the law (Police) and the exiled inhabitants of the Bairro in terms of authority; nor is there any discursive difference between voices from the past and those of the present. Hence, the genealogical is aligned with the historical material. When each of the living voices remembers voices from the past, whether these belong to family members or ex-lovers, every voice and every individual story line is joined together in the production of the literary work. As such, the constellation of narrative voices can be seen as similar to a “family,” or broadly speaking, a “nation,” whose “frontiers” are determined by the various operations taking place within the entity.

3.1. Statements, order words and bodies

In terms of composition, it has already been noted that the opening chapter is written as a police report, hence formally composed according to convention, but intersected by the personal memories of the narrator:

escuto um oco de gruta no interior de mim ou seja pingos vagarosos e raros que deduzo pertencerem a episódios da época há tanto tempo morta em que me emocionava, o meu chefe a estranhar
-Tem as pálpebras vermelhas você e o pisa-papéis de uma banda para a outra a atanzar-me, defendo-me calculando quantos palitos no restaurant de Ermesinde ou a imaginar a minha filha no mesmo banco que eu a observar os prédios igualmente misturando e separando dedos, talvez prove um dos bolos, talvez pingos também, dava oito décimos do ordenado para saber o que pensa em mim se é que pensa em mim, não acredito que gaste tempo comigo, em pequena ria-se a dormir, gatinhava para trás, espalhava a mão na cara
-Fui-me embora (Antunes 2007:35).

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5 | Cf. “[D]e acordo com a ordem habitual ou seja o chamado Capitão de 16 (dezasseis) anos mestiço, o chamado Miúdo de 12 (doze) anos mestiço, o chamado Ruço de 19 (dezanove) anos branco e o chamado Galã de 14 (catorze) anos mestiço na dianteira e os restantes quatro, o chamado Guerrilheiro de 17 (dezassete) anos mestiço, o chamado Cão de 15 (quinze) anos mestiço, o chamado Gordo de 18 (dezoito) anos preto e o Hiena de 13 (treze) anos mestiço assim apelidado em consequência de uma malformação no rosto [...]” In Antunes (2007: 14).

6 | The policeman in the beginning of the novel expresses the connection between a social and a bodily sense of “disorder”. The fall of the regime is described with references to a physical deterioration: “o que este país decaiu com a democracia senhores, a falta de respeito, o desgoverno, os pretos, as minhas víceras até que trabalhavam com eficiência, oleadas, tranquilas e por favour não me venham com o argumento que a idade é outra porque não é a idade é o salve-se quem puder que se transmite aos órgãos, aí estão eles cada qual para o seu lado a funcionarem sozinhos que bem sinto as supra-renais e o pâncreas egoístas, ferozes a atormentarem-me o verniz com as unhas sob o aparador do estômago [...]” (p. 37).

The narrating policeman relates, thus, to two temporal lines, that is, to voices both from the past (“pingos”) as well as the present (“pálpebras vermelhas”) with the result that the memories of his daughter seem more present than the actual daughter. Similar to what is the case with his parents (“(-Desculpe se a contrário mãe mas o que herdei do meu pai?)”) (20), she is absent from his life. Each family member is, moreover, in exile from one another, yet connected by way of discursive memory (“(pronto confesso tenho vergonha do meu pai)”) (29). Also, the narrator suspects that his exile is not intentional, but rather a result of an inexplicable feature which makes others withdraw from him: “perdoem-me se exagero, mas visita-me a suspeita de existir qualquer coisa em mim, no aspecto, na maneira de exprimir-me, no cheiro, que afasta as pessoas, o meu chefe para não ir mais longe nunca me estende a mão” (26). From his exiled position, the “drops” from the past which he carries within become the sole connection between the self and the world to the extent that they – discursively – tie him to the place and to the present and, as such, even to his daughter: “há alturas em que me ocorre que qualquer coisa entre nós, um laçozinho ténue, uma espécie de saudade, patéticas no género e engano, laço algum, ela uma gruta também onde os pingos e os líquenes secavam, espaço vazio e sem ecos, pedras mortas, silêncio [...]” (50).

As a repetition, or extension of the first storyline, the same kind of disrupted family story is echoed in the narratives of the inhabitants of the Bairro, for example in the voice of a woman:

Nasci aqui, sempre morei aqui, os meus pais e o meu filho faleceram aqui e portanto sou daqui e não saio daqui mesmo que o meu marido continue a insistir que os corvos se foram e os defuntos deixaram de perguntar por nós no baldio onde os enterramos às escondidas a seguir ao que sobeja de uma capela de quinta [...] (169).

Here, the “Bairro” as the site of origin and death, fulfills the role of a home. The woman’s voice is “rooted” in the place as she can also “hear” other voices from within: “são outras vozes que oiço, finados de antes do meu nascimento num português de pretos porque somos pretos e não temos um lugar que nos aceite salvo figueiras bravas e espinhos [...]” (173). In this case, the question of belonging, exile and self obtains a further meaning from the fact that the sense of self is determined hence disciplined by the discourse of race and gender. The Bairro is the site of exiles, of different temporalities and genealogies that are unfixed, and family stories are in danger of dissolving into rejection or forgetfulness. For example, the woman rejects to acknowledge her son: “não me comparo com o meu filho porque não tive filho, tive cacos a ferirem-me por dentro e um choro que as velhas embrulharam em panos [...]” (177). The familial liaison remains a sense of bodily pain and estrangement (“era um

desconhecido que recebi como um desconhecido”) (180):

depois do falecimento do meu pai a minha mãe a espreitar os corvos sem espreitar fosse o que fosse porque o Bairro lhe acabava nos limites do corpo, para além da pele não existe nada e o que existe no interior da pele não me rala, não sou fora de mim e o que sou em mim não o sinto, não senti os meus filhos, cresceram-me no sangue sem me pertencerem, foram-se embora, adeus, a minha filha primeira, quase branca (294).

Now, if these statements can be seen as representative of the joining-separating communications of exiles, it becomes clearer how the question of belonging and separation is problematic in the context of identity and narrative. The statements are “bodily statements” in the sense that they express and discursively determine the body (“branco,” “preto,” “mestiço”) within a regime of power relations and with reference to Deleuze and Guattari, the novel is an example of how language is primarily social and consists of order-words, expressed by speech acts that are linked to a “social obligation” and not to a communication of identity (Deleuze, Guattari, 2004: 87). It is, in other words, a matter of repetition and redundancy rather than information and signification and both signification as well as subjectification depend on the “nature and transmission of order-words in a given social field” (88). Furthermore, the “impersonal collective” determines, or assigns, “individuality and their shifting distributions within discourse” (88). Deleuze and Guattari go on to emphasise that the speech acts are attributed to bodies (in a broad sense) of a given society (89) and the order-words have a transformational power on bodies, as for example in regard to the question of race and gender. As Lambert notes, “black” and “white” as attributes” is an incorporeal transformation that is applied directly to bodies and is inserted into the subject’s actions and passions. In short, it subjects the body to an ‘order’ (Lambert, 58). In the voice of a female *mestiço*:

Que coisa é mulher?
Talvez a palavra secreta que qualquer dia direi
Que coisa é mulher?
[...]
não me vou embora deste Bairro porque não sei se existo desde que
estou sozinha [...]
(qual o motivo que não entendo de não partir daqui?)
[...]
(há quanto tempo não sou branca eu?) (95-97).

These considerations beg further inquiry into the particular role played by speech acts and order-words in the novel, where a determination of a discursive “order” seems problematic. In order to look more closely at the relation between order-words, genealogy and identity, it will be fruitful to turn briefly to systems and family theory.

3.1.1. Postmodern familial constellation: autopoiesis

How the discursive power relations in the novel act upon each other in a productive sense can be examined by looking at the Bairro, or collective, as a “social system”: On the one hand, we have seen that a regime of order-words determines – at least temporarily – subjectification and individuality by assigning a place within an order. On the other hand, this place is a relative position and when the order dissolves new orders, along with new order-words, need to be established. The assumption is, therefore, that the material for the production of the new orders and order-words is to be found in the reminiscences of the self. Moreover, the individual lines of memory reshuffle the relations within the Bairro as a site of power, and, consequently, re-discipline the order. This, in turn, demonstrates that the Bairro, as a “system,” is engaged in a continuous negotiation across borders (temporal, spatial, objective, subjective), i.e. between establishing itself as a closed vs. open system of production/creation and rejection of identity. Referring to “families” as social systems, Mary Joan Gerson observes that, if a closed system is governed by the law of entropy, it will deteriorate into undifferentiated chaos (Gerson, 1996: 22), whilst “open” systems are organic and will “move toward a higher and higher degree of complexity because information is exchanged with the external environment in such a way as to maintain ‘a steady state’ or equilibrium” (22).

In the case of the “family relations” in the novel – and hence in the Bairro – it becomes evident that the collective is both tending towards entropic chaos as well as towards establishing itself as a “steady state.” Its complexity – deriving from its discursive nature – ensures that the collective is maintained and reproduced by the constant exchange of order-words that create, but also destroy orders that in turn reconnect. For example, the assignments of race and gender are a way of “naming” the self, but, through the intervention of memory (i.e., history), that fixation, or “naming” is destabilised by a different order, which is what emanates from within the self. As a result, we see that it is the self who negotiates his or her inner “vocabulary” with those coming from the outside (site) and the novel demonstrates on the one hand that to be “seen” is to adjust to a set of order-words and to a relative regime of statements; but also, on the other hand, it is made explicit that by introducing an individual story- and timeline, that position, or adjustment, is severely put in question. The bodies seem to reject or oppose the statements from within and as a result, the novel becomes a linguistic, discursive battleground. As Deleuze observes: “power is that ‘other thing’ (a liquid being) that appears both on the side of statements and on the level of bodies. It is that which is felt (a relation of force that appears in the vicinity of another

body and causes the relation to power); at the same time, power has a definite sense that is bound up with linguistic sense” (Lambert, 2008: 149).

The novel, in other words, displays a “life cycle” of the narrative as a continuous line of error and deviations from the norm (Lambert, 2008: 165). Language is bound to “fail” and disappoint the self and at best it is a means by which new frontiers are constantly being created and erased. As Foucault writes: “I don’t want to say that the state isn’t important; what I want to say is that relations of power, and hence the analysis that must be made of them, necessarily extend beyond the limits of the state...” (Foucault, 1994: 123). Discipline of language, furthermore, is a game, an application of power, but it is constantly met with resistance and will, as a consequence, become powerless. The last pages of the novel by Lobo Antunes, shows what happens when the demonic voices are exorcised, or “disciplined” by an “order” *after the fixed Order has failed*. The section shows with sharp irony, that language as power can only discipline itself; it shows only itself, not selves.

4. Conclusion: A literary legion

Towards the end of the novel, we return to the voice of the Police, now in exile, in fact, an inhabitant of the desolated Bairro. His reflections are no longer in line with the order of the police report, and he is astonished by the fact that he can remember anything at all from the time in which he believed in the “order” (337, 354). Now, his focus is on the narrating discourse itself: “(expressão quase poética, a beleza que as frases ganham quando as deixamos à solta) [...]” (345), and even the memories have become independent as *discourse*: “(ora aí está uma memória clara, quem não se maravilha com as idiossincrasias da mente?)” (345). Similarly, the last chapter is in the voice of one of the boys of the Bairro, relating to the meeting with the law. He has spent seven months at the so-called Institution (364): “Puseram-me na oficina do carpinteiro e na escola” (365). And the narrative mirrors the “learned” rhetoric of an institutionalised disciplinary order, whose aim is to include the self in a language: “Suponhamos dois automóveis a cinquenta quilómetros um do outro. O primeiro automóvel numa esquina que designaremos por A como água e o Segundo automóvel noutra esquina que designaremos por B como bota” (368). Or:

Água e bota não são para escrever. Só para ter a certeza que não confundem A e B com outras letras. Não o A evidentemente. Vogal cheia. Fácil. Totalmente aberta mas o B traiçoeiro. Susceptível de ser entendido como D ou P ou Q ou T. Cuidado com o B. Continuemos (372).

Later, the voice of the boy (“mestiço”) is interrupted by, or even aligned with, that of the police, which brings us back to the order of the speech act only:

(retomámos o ditado é o último parágrafo)
o mestiço a levantar um taco vírgula a abrir um saco de lona
(eu uma semantinha que sai pela janela e definitivamente perco)
a abrir um saco de lona não sei se vírgula e a retirar do saco uma
espingarda vírgula cartuchos vírgula
(não consigo dizer isto devagar perdoem têm de correr ao meu lado)
[...]
(acabaram-se as virgules é só correr senhores)
como a semente me abandonou a mim ou seja me abandonei a mim
mesmo, vos abandonou a vocês e desapareceu no silêncio de que
o mundo é feito, acabou-se a minha mulher, acabou-se o Instituto,
acabaram-se as aulas (379).

Here, in terms of narrative structure and composition, we have an example of how the discourse of the police “returns” to the beginning; how all the voices, or speech acts involved in the narrative have come to constitute a different “order” within the novel as a whole. At the end of the “relatório,” the voices are merged and the police, the self, *is* Legião, the Bairro, for he is many and his power derives from the fact that he is inhabited by a number of changing orders or genealogies, dominated by some, dominating others. As such, Lobo Antunes demonstrates that to write a piece of contemporary fiction, becomes a meta-fictional exercise, where the writing process becomes visible and turns towards showing itself as a discipline, an institution, or a state. As such, we are all institutionalised participants, yet individuals, engaged in the making of the work and the establishment of its frontiers, and eventually, this discursive activity becomes an ongoing exercise in re-determining the limits of selves and of the collective whole.

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