

Introduction

Vitorino Nemésio: "Azoreanity," Universality, Iridescence, Confluence, and Eroticism

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The title "Vitorino Nemésio: "Azoreanity," Universality, Iridescence, Confluence, and Eroticism," draws inspiration from the content of the essays herein included and will not surprise anyone familiar with Nemésio's non-posthumous works, with the possible exception of the very last of the lexemes, "eroticism." Nemésio's oeuvre, starting with the collections of short stories *Paço do Milhafre* (1924) and *Mistério do Paço do Milhafre* (1949), and extending to the poetical collections *La Voyelle Promise* (1935) and *Festa Redonda* (1950), to the novel *Mau Tempo no Canal* (1944) and the travelogue *Corsário das Ilhas* (1956), encompasses a range of subjects profoundly rooted in the Azorean archipelago. At the same time—and here, besides *Mau Tempo no Canal*, we must emphasize the poems of *Nem Toda a Noite a Vida* (1952) and *O Verbo e a Morte* (1959)—the thematic and formal scope of Nemésio's oeuvre does in no way distance itself from the totality (and, to the extent that the word is valid, *centrality*) of Portuguese culture and, as well, from the western Great Tradition of which it is an inextricable part.

The first two essays included in this issue are contributions from former presidents of the University of the Azores. José Enes was a friend of the author and a scholar of his works; António M. B. Machado Pires, who succeeded Enes in the presidency of the university and is a former student and teaching associate of the illustrious professor, has been one of Nemésio's most committed scholars. Machado Pires is also the founder of the

Seminário Internacional de Estudos Nemesianos. The papers by these two contributors, each in its own way, are noteworthy for their insights into Nemésio's fiction and poetry but also for their broad incursions into revealing moments of the author's life, which both critics had the good fortune of sharing.

The subject of the next four articles is *Mau Tempo no Canal*, here presented in a thematically logical (as opposed to academically hierarchical) order. My paper deals with *writing and universality* (as opposed to *orality and regionalism*, all of these being interrelated modalities in which the novel is particularly rich and which will be the subject of an ongoing extensive monograph). The second essay on *Mau Tempo no Canal*, by Maria Helena Nery Garcez, coincidentally develops an aspect only briefly touched upon by my essay, namely, the novel's four main epigraphs. The essay shows the relationships among the epigraphs and other constitutive elements of the text, confirming once again the intra- and intertextual density of the undisputed masterpiece of Nemesian fiction and the far-reaching scope, in its overall economy, of elements that at first sight may strike the reader as being of limited significance or aesthetic value. Maria Alzira Seixo is the author of "*Mau Tempo no Canal*, the Iridescent Metaphor," a paper that—itself an iridescent piece of work—calls attention to a number of symbolically far-reaching moments in the novel, beginning with the phonetic import of its title. Some of these key moments, although not entirely unvisited before, are made to appear once again as relatively virgin territory. Irene Maria F. Blayer's paper is, to my mind, the first in-depth attempt on the part of a linguist (as opposed to studies by amateurish philologists) to deal with the representation of orality in *Mau Tempo no Canal*, particularly the author's attempt to render in writing variants of Azorean speech.

"Aspects of the Origin and Critical Fortunes of *Mau Tempo no Canal*" comprises an anthology of well-known "interpretations" of Nemésio's novel, here translated into English for the first time by Kelly Washbourne. These critical comments were excerpted and published by David Mourão-Ferreira in the sixth edition of *Mau Tempo no Canal*. Mourão-Ferreira's introduction to that edition of the novel is also translated here. A brief excerpt by João Gaspar Simões—originally published the same year as *Mau Tempo no Canal* (1944) and constituting the first public acknowledgment by a major literary critic of the outstanding merit of the work—is followed, respectively, by critical syntheses by Albano Nogueira, David Mourão-Ferreira, Maria Lúcia

Lepecki, Óscar Lopes, and António M. B. Machado Pires.

“Nemésio: Words Cast Forth,” by poet and critic Vasco Graça Moura, provides a broad and illuminating perspective on Nemésio as a poet. Graça Moura views Nemésio through a lens similar to the one Nemésio himself used to read poets as diverse as Guillén and Roberto de Mesquita: an approach that I term enlightened impressionism. Nemésio’s affinities with, among other poets, Blake, Rilke, Pessanha, as pointed out by Graça Moura, are not entirely surprising. Nor is the term “confluence,” used to describe the traditions—from symbolist to modernist to *presencista* and beyond—that come together in Nemésio to produce a unique poetic amalgam. More surprising, and yet quite convincing after this penetrating and aesthetically most satisfying tour into Nemésio’s poetic world, is Graça Moura’s placing of Nemésio in the forefront of Portuguese poets of the twentieth century, not excluding Pessoa himself. Another essay herein included is on the impact of Nemésio’s poetry on another major contemporary Portuguese poet. Fernando J. B. Martinho focuses on the importance that a public recital of one of Nemésio’s poems (“Pus-me a contar os alciões chegados”) by the famous *diseuse* Manuela Porto was to have on the poetry of Eugénio de Andrade.

The three papers on Vitorino Nemésio’s travel literature are, respectively, by Onésimo T. Almeida, Carlos Reis, and Maria de Fátima Ribeiro. The first of the essays focuses on *Corsário das Ilhas* from the perspective of an inside traveler, that is to say, of the traveler *in* and *of* his homeland. For purposes of contextualizing the *Weltanschauung* of this traveler, Almeida elaborates both on the controversial debate about the meaning and significance of travel literature for the understanding of human societies as well as on Max Weber’s concept of *Verstehen*. Carlos Reis takes his readers on a discursive tour of some of the privileged moments of Nemésio’s *Corsário das Ilhas*: for example, the meanders of its bibliographical code; the intimate relationship between traveling and writing; the semantic dissemination of the title (literally *Island Corsair*); the concept “Azoreanity”; the presence of Raul Brandão; and the migration, from other works of Nemésio to *Corsário*, of Nemesian narrators (the critic José Martins Garcia called them “interposed narrators”) such as Mateus Queimado. The third paper on Nemésio’s travel literature, by Maria de Fátima Maia Ribeiro, dwells on *O segredo de Ouro Preto e outros caminhos* (1954) and *Caatinga e terra caída* (1968), works based on two trips that Nemésio undertook, respectively, in Minas Gerais and in the Brazilian Northeast—one of them under the auspices of the Portuguese gov-

ernment, the other following an invitation from the University of Bahia. Ribeiro calls attention to the importance in these works, for contemporary and future readers, of the ambiguous ideological perspective embodied in the complex relationship between the two countries profoundly linked by historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds.

The lexeme “eroticism” will probably surprise readers of the Nemesian oeuvre. Eroticism in the non-posthumous works, although not totally absent from his poetry and fiction (for example, *Mau Tempo no Canal*), had previously never attained the degree of audaciousness that informs the almost three hundred pages comprising *Caderno de Caligraphia e outros poemas a Marga*, published in 2003 as Volume III of Vitorino Nemésio’s *Obras Completas*, and to which Mônica Figueiredo dedicates a courageous essay (the ninth in the series of essays included here).

By calling critical attention to this surprising work by the author of *O Pão e a Culpa*—one whose publication had been announced in an essay by Luiz Fagundes Duarte before the volume’s actual publication, edited by Duarte with a detailed prologue followed by an exemplary philological apparatus—it is hoped that this posthumous work by Nemésio will awaken more and more critical attention. As far as I know, a comparative study remains to be done (and in no way do I mean to imply by these suggestions any failure on the part of Mônica Figueiredo’s paper) between the stance on love that emerges from *Cadernos de Caligraphia* and, to mention but one important example, certain moments in the itinerary of Margarida Clark Dulmo’s and João Garcia’s relationship in *Mau Tempo no Canal*, particularly with respect to the *sublimated love* (for example, the episode structured in part by intertextualities with Dante in chapter VII, entitled “Schermo”) and the *carnal love* that informs many of the poems to Margarida/Marga/Cadela/Macaca de Fogo. In a certain sense, these poems of *Caderno de Caligraphia* comprise an inversion/humanization of those spiritualized moments of love in *Mau Tempo no Canal*. Some of the relationships between the novel and certain poems of *Caderno de Caligraphia* are more or less obvious: the coincidence in the names of the characters, including the insistence on the epithet *pérola* (cf. “pérola do Faial” in the novel); certain images that draw the two characters together—“bonequinha de sangue de *Mau Tempo no Canal*,” a designation that Nemésio used in a letter written to the woman who inspired the character Margarida Clark Dulmo; “Oh pedras de sangue / Oh chagas de sal” [O stones of blood / O wounds of salt] are images evoked in *Caderno* by the

remembrance of Marga. Other elements common to the poems and the novel, even though in distinct contexts, are the *Cucumaria of the Abysses*; the relationship between the principal female entities in the two works and the archetypes of Earth-woman and Island-woman; and the references to historical figures and happenings common to *Mau Tempo no Canal*, such as the Prince of Monaco and the voyages of the *Hirondelle* in Azorean waters.

We are also proud to present a generous bilingual anthology of poetry by Nemésio in this issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*. As is well known, until today very little of Nemésio's poetry has appeared in English translation, the exception being the poem "O Bicho Harmonioso," translated by John Brooksmith and originally published in an issue of *Modern Poetry in Translation* and afterward included in the volume *Críticas sobre Vitorino Nemésio*. The translations featured in this issue amount to more than a dozen poems, including texts as famous and as challenging to a translator as "O Canário de Ouro," "O Sonho Vivo," and "Ode ao Mar," all from the volume *O Bicho Harmonioso*. The translations are preceded by an introduction by the translator, Kelly Washbourne, who discusses, among other issues, the reasons behind his choices of Nemesian poetical texts.

The choice of the three short stories in English translation—in this case the responsibilities for the selection belonging to the translator Kelly Washbourne and the guest editor—is based on our perception of their aesthetic quality and accessibility to translation, but also on an attempt to establish a thematic link between the chosen stories and Azorean e/immigrant experience in the US. The stories portray the latter in its *preliminary phase* ("Fishhead"); they reveal Nemésio's re-creation of some highly imaginary aspects of Azorean immigrant experience in the US ("I'm very well, thank you"); and they evoke key moments in American history, like the Gold Rush, with which Azorean migrations are intimately connected ("Gold! Gold!"). The English-language reader will probably experience a sensation of thematic *déjà vu* when reading "Gold! Gold!" On the other hand, the reader of *Stormy Isles: An Azorean Tale* (the title of my own translation of *Mau Tempo no Canal*) will not fail to recognize, in that short story inspired by the Gold Rush, notable similarities with the novel. Suffice it to mention the physical wanderings and oral storytelling meanderings of the novel's character Damião Serpa from Boston to the California Gold Country, followed by a return and the temporary but apparently successful sojourn in the Azorean homeland, culminating, finally and not surpris-

ingly, in a return to Chicago—where he is going to pursue his career dream in an organization dedicated to the study of (most surprisingly) metapsychics.

The two contributions by George Monteiro and the essay by João de Melo complement this issue of *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies* devoted to Vitorino Nemésio. The compilation of translations of sonnets by Antero de Quental and the corresponding comments, from Edgar Prestage at the end of the nineteenth century to Ana Maria Almeida Martins in the twenty-first century, cannot fail to bring to the reader's mind the strong presence of Antero de Quental in many of the works of Vitorino Nemésio, not only as a paradigmatic symbol of Azorean culture, a subject discussed in the opening essay by José Enes and touched upon by João de Melo in his own essay, but as one of the main Portuguese intellectuals and literary artists of the nineteenth century. The name and works of Antero de Quental are ubiquitous in Vitorino Nemésio's oeuvre, from his criticism to his poetry to his fiction. The most telling example is precisely *Mau Tempo no Canal*, a novel in which the presence of Antero is particularly notable.

The publication in this volume of Thomas Wentworth Higginson's "The Ascent of Pico," edited and with an introduction by George Monteiro, hardly needs justification. Higginson, whose name is forever intimately connected with that of the great poet Emily Dickinson, also traveled to the Azores and there undertook the ascent referred to in his title. Needless to say, the parallel with *Mau Tempo no Canal* is quite obvious. We need but recall the ascent of Pico by main character Margarida Clark Dulmo and the emphasis placed by Nemésio in the same novel (and also in his poetry) on the tutelary presence of Pico's peak.

With his essay "O 'Complexo de Ítaca' nas Literaturas Insulares," the novelist João de Melo weighs in on what has been, in both history and the literary arts, a thematic constant in the two Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira, and on the Lusophone African island-nation of Cabo Verde. Reflecting on the myriad works inspired by the emigrant experience in the three island groups, although to widely different degrees, João de Melo wonders when the moment might arise for a writer to take up the momentous depiction of the reverse movement: the building of the literary island home, or what might be termed a literary homecoming. I might add that João de Melo's *Gente Feliz com Lágrimas*, although it too aligns primarily with the tradition of insularity/departure, already foreshadows a potential homecoming and home-rebuilding in the temporary return of the protagonist Nuno, one

with which this novel of Azorean wanderers and wanderings ends. I need not remind the reader that Nemésio's life and works are crisscrossed by a series of comings and goings having the Azorean archipelago as focal point.

The reviews of critical works on Vitorino Nemésio include, in some cases, relatively recent volumes, such as *Nemésio—Um saber plural* (2003), but also studies that, even though they appeared several years ago and, in one case (that of José Martins Garcia's *Vitorino Nemésio—à luz do Verbo*), a couple of decades ago, deserve, nevertheless, to be revisited/re-reviewed. Other works reviewed—some not even belonging to the field of literature—are herein included due to their thematic pertinence—that of the Portuguese diaspora, a subject to which Vitorino Nemésio also gave considerable creative attention.

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