

**Rosa Maria Martelo. *Em Parte Incerta—Estudos de Poesia Portuguesa Moderna e Contemporânea*. Porto: Campo das Letras, 2004.**

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Moving along a wide time frame that comprises Pessoa as well as Herberto Helder, this collection of essays on major voices of contemporary Portuguese poetry is also an insightful reflection on the questions of reference, authorship, and modernity in literature.

In the several essays concerning Carlos de Oliveira's work, Rosa Maria Martelo focuses on the poet's realism as an estrangement from a traditional poetics of representation. The progressive loss of circumstantiality in the course of the poet's work is read as a swerving from orthodox neorealism through a denial of an ontologically strong Marxist version of the world and a search for a broader and more complex referentiality that implies envisaging poetical form as an Adornian space of resistance. This is a reading that can contribute to a new appraisal of neorealist literature insofar as it draws attention to the underlying consciousness that the strengthening of bonds between poetry and the extra-literary world can only be carried out through a discursive practice.

Martelo also explores Carlos de Oliveira's rewriting of his own work as the reconstruction of his implied author. The same metonymical sliding of the empirical to the textual author that Martelo recognizes in José Gomes Ferreira's self-portrait, here read as the creation of a verbal image designed to efface its real-life model, could be discerned in her interpretation of Carlos de Oliveira's work as the emergence of an author-in-the-text in the manner of a Demanian "figure of reading." In fact, it is as if the researcher's experience of the poets abridged in this collection of studies shapes an approach to the text where the unraveling of meaning echoes a textual becoming subsumable in difference and deferral, since, to displace Martelo's remark to António Franco Alexandre's poetry:

A distância e o diferimento estão tão presentes entre os interlocutores do poema como entre o discurso e os seus referentes, discursivos ou não. Como entre o leitor e o texto. (233)

In "Corpo, velocidade e dissolução," Al Berto's poetics of discursive deceleration is read as a search for the possibility of a signature in the context of an urban experience textually reconstructed as velocity at odds with the integrality of its subject. Al Berto's movement towards identity is compared with Herberto Helder's intensification of discursive speed, approached as the embracing of a subjectivity fearless of disintegration. A similar value is ascribed to Luiza Neto Jorge's fractured syntax, whose impending disruption is analyzed as the weaving of a discursive excess capable of engendering a textual otherness that claims corporeal sexuality as a means of recapturing the power of insurgency. The body is also under consideration in the comparative study of Eugénio de Andrade and Fernando Pessoa, where Martelo argues that in Pessoa's work the body accompanies the disruption of subjectivity like a specter. Rather than an effacement of the body, she acknowledges in Pessoa's work "a ambiguidade de uma presença da ausência do corpo" (135), which, after all, is a crucial element in sensationism. The poetry of Luís Miguel Nava entices further attention to the complex role of the body in the construction of subjectivity, since Nava's work is regarded as approaching the sublime by weaving a network of significant of excess where the spiritual and the material are no longer separable, thus challenging the Kantian notion of sublimity as an immensity that cannot be comprehended by the senses.

The last and, to my mind, most pathbreaking section of this volume concentrates on the idea of literary modernity in its broadest sense and attempts to map out routes in recent poetry. Martelo remarks how the poetics of Romanticism already presupposes a stranded subjectivity to be acted on by the reader by expecting the "I" in the text to be subsumed in the addressee. She proceeds to interpret the turn to "figurative poetry" set off in the 1970s and characterized by an effort of concretion and a foregrounding of the "I" (often managed through a recourse to autobiographical materials) as a strategy to enhance communicativeness in poetry that can be subsumed in the Demanian notion of "de-facement." Bearing in mind that the circumstantiality in the poem remains but a textual fiction, the reader is then allowed to reconstruct it upon his or her own experience, thus creating an effect of real-

ism that no longer relies on an ontologically strong model of the world and of the self but rather builds on the modernist shifting of subjectivities.

Though most of the essays develop a thesis, the text breeds a profound openness to dialogue by welcoming voices from varied critical schools. On the whole, this work stands out in the landscape of Portuguese criticism as it puts into practice conceptual tools forged by great contemporary thinkers such as Deleuze and José Gil and suggests a thorough assimilation of landmarks in modern literary theory, namely Derrida and Paul de Man.

I would say this is an essential work for the study of the poets under discussion and also a very inspiring and juicy read for those interested in literary criticism in general.

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