

Two Versions of Iberian Orientalism: The *Geração de 70* and the *Generación del 98* in Light of Eça de Queirós' *A Relíquia*¹ and Juan Valera's *Morsamor*

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Abstract: This essay makes the case for the urgency of comparative Luso-Hispanic studies through a reading of two orientalist novels by two authors whose place in the Iberian canon is consensual. It argues nonetheless that canonical readings have largely remained oblivious to the critique of empire that is inherent to the apparent exoticism of both authors' appropriation of the orientalist motif. It also locates a precocious suspicion of what will be the claims of lusotropicalism in Eça de Queirós at the same time as it proposes an Iberian scope for the understanding of the *casticista* claims Juan Valera advances in *Morsamor*.

When Teodorico Raposo laments, at the end of his memoirs, not having had the presence of mind and the “shameless heroism of affirmation” (RB 289) that would have helped make him the universal heir to the fortune of his grandfather, G. Godinho, he transforms the meaning of repentance and obliquely disavows the conversion he claimed to have undergone just a few pages earlier. If there was any repentance, it was only for his lack of cunning, not for a life mischievously lived. Readers are thus left to wonder if and how this lament, which concludes Eça de Queirós' novel *A Relíquia* (1887), constitutes the “clear and strong lesson” (RB 3) to the century that in his prologue Teodorico claimed informed his memoirist writing. If this hypothesis can be confirmed,

not only will the narrator and protagonist of Eça's novel come across as a skillful storyteller and resourceful interpreter of Portugal's nineteenth-century social and political map, the novel itself will acquire an important allegorical dimension that most of its interpreters to date have failed to acknowledge, or have precipitously assigned to a metaphorical chain of narrower scope.²

Similarly, at the closing moments of Juan Valera's *Morsamor* (1899) readers are confronted with the possibility that the moribund Miguel de Zuheros' full conversion to the *Doctrina Christiana* might have been just a plot orchestrated in revenge for his deception by the magic arts of Padre Ambrosio, who convinced him that he had actually rejuvenated and traveled to the Orient in search of adventure, knowledge, and fortune. Yet the omniscient narrator of Juan Valera's novel ends his narration with the curious justifying statement—which thus significantly compromises his omniscience—that his story might not teach anything, but that he decided to tell it anyway because he found it to be “curiosa” (333). This oblique avowal helps confirm the readers' suspicions that, contrary to his claims, *Morsamor* indeed constitutes an example of an allegorical novel. These suspicions first emerged from contact with the novel's deliberately archaic structure, reminiscent of Cervantes' Byzantine novel *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, but were already warranted by the author's dedication of *Morsamor* to the Earl of Casa Valencia, in which a therapeutic value is ascribed to the writing of the novel through the implication that the free reign of imagination serves as an antidote to his “penas patrióticas” (43). As in *A Relíquia*, allegory seems to solicit here a discourse on the nation, and the Orient unarguably plays more than a decorative role in the dramatization of such discourse.

In this article I will analyze the role of orientalism in the fictional discourse of Eça's *A Relíquia* and Valera's *Morsamor*, with the aim of resuscitating the debate over the presumable literary and cultural influences exerted by the Portuguese *Geração de 70* over the Spanish *Generación del '98*.³ Specifically, I will assess the role assigned to orientalist motifs and ideology within the narrative economy of both novels, and the relationship between the orientalist discourses and the critique of nation—the Portuguese and the Spanish nations vis-à-vis other European nations perceived by Eça and Valera as more hegemonic—that they both set forth.

Such an approach evaluates the fictional writing of each of these two authors through a yet undervalued perspective,⁴ at the same time as it opens the way for bridging the gap between the fields of Lusophone and Hispanic stud-

ies, insofar as it requires a truly peninsular scope for fruitful contextualization. This strategy has the potential for bringing about future readings of Eça and Valera that are less hagiographically inclined, as well as a re-contextualization of the canons with which each of these authors are associated. Furthermore, by bringing forth the differences between Eça's and Valera's approach to orientalism—all the while remarking the inescapable appeal that orientalism exerted upon them both—this inquiry also hints at the richness of the field of orientalism in the nineteenth-century Iberian Peninsula. In doing so, the comparison contributes to a more nuanced understanding of Said's concept of hegemony,⁵ and to correcting the historical myopia that allowed for his complete dismissal of Iberian orientalism in *Orientalism*. See, for example, the following introductory statement:

Unlike the Americans, the French and the British—less so the Germans, Russians, Spanish, Portuguese, Italians, and Swiss—have had a long tradition of what I shall call *Orientalism*, a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience. (1)

Even if we were to accept the dismissal of three hundred years of Portuguese contact with the Orient and concentrate exclusively on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, plenty of material is available that could easily disqualify this statement.⁶ On the other hand, we will see how some of Eça de Queirós' investments in orientalism are not entirely foreign to Said's.⁷

"My Jerusalem": Eça's Orientalism in *A Relíquia*.

The centrality of orientalism in Eça's *oeuvre* can be attested by the constancy with which it is summoned as a *topos* in his fictional, travel, and epistolary writing, as well as by the critical importance of the questions (aesthetic, ideological, historical) that this *topos* allows Eça de Queirós to address. To be sure, from the notes compiled during his journey to Egypt (1869-1870) and posthumously published as *O Egípto*, to the later *A Correspondência de Fradique Mendes* (1900), orientalism is a recurring presence in Eça's writing.⁸ But it is in *A Relíquia* (1887) that this *topos* acquires its greatest complexity and affords its author the most decisive breakthrough in his career since the publication of *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1876). The Orient in *A Relíquia* ceases to be a mere *topos* and becomes also the locus of a sustained critique of hegemonic orientalist discourses, therefore confirming a tendency already announced in

O Egípto and then radicalized in two of the letters sent from Bristol to the Brazilian newspaper *Gazeta de Notícias*, when he occupied the seat of Portuguese consul, and which would later be included in the volume *Cartas de Inglaterra*.⁹

In 1930, Fidelino de Figueiredo might have been the first Portuguese critic calling attention to the transversality of orientalism in Eça de Queirós' literary production. This happens in a review of Eça's seven posthumous works included in the volume *Crítica do Exílio*. Aside from referring to the cyclical return of orientalist motifs in Eça's writings, from the early and incomplete short story *Morte de Jesus* to the posthumous epistolary fiction *A Correspondência de Fradique Mendes*, Figueiredo also provides his readers with short descriptions of such themes. As for *A Relíquia*, he singles out the "maravilhosa pintura da Paixão" (25) as its main contribution to orientalism. Undoubtedly, the description of the Passion of Jesus Christ—"witnessed" within a dream by the narrator and fictional author Teodorico Raposo and his Teutonic travel companion Dr. Topsius, during their journey to the Holy Land—occupies center stage in *A Relíquia*, and very early on critics were swift both to praise and condemn the Portuguese novelist for his insightful secularist approach to the evangelical narrative.¹⁰ And readers have often felt encouraged to interpret this passage as providing a Renanian *clé* to this shrilly anticlerical novel, especially when they all too credulously followed the narrator's opening claim that his memoir contains "a clear and potent lesson for this century" (RC 7). However—and while there is little doubt that Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* constituted a major reference for Eça's description of the Passion, both in *A Relíquia* and in its early incarnation in *A Morte de Jesus*—another strong preambular statement should have warned those readers about an additional orientalist layer. Claiming that he is writing out of "peculiarly spiritual motives" (RC 7)—and, in a wink to Lamartine,¹¹ that his journey to the Orient constitutes the "supreme glory of my career," of which the memoir is the "solid, yet elegant monument [...] for Posterity" (RC 7)—he goes on to warn that "I would not want these personal jottings to resemble some *Picturesque Guide to the Orient*. That is why (despite the promptings of vanity) I have omitted from this manuscript any succulent, glowing accounts of ruins and local costumes" (RC 7). If, according to this disclaimer, the central episode of the Passion constitutes indeed an obvious exoticist indulgence and therefore a plausible indication of the narrator's volatility, readers should still have taken the narrator's seemingly anti-orientalist warning more seriously, because its systematic role in the narrative will soon be brought to the foreground.

A discussion of orientalism in *A Reliquia* needs to consider the difference between Teodorico's and Eça's orientalism, even if such a distinction will eventually become considerably problematic for the same reasons that now call for it.¹² While, as we will see, Teodorico frames his memoir as both an apology and apostrophe to Portugal's liberal bourgeoisie—attempting to clear his name from the calumnious suggestion advanced by Topsius that he had traveled the orient while carrying the venerable bones of his ancestors¹³—Eça de Queirós frames his novel as a farce of Portugal's overly pious, politically inept and morally corrupt liberal bourgeoisie. For Teodorico, the Orient is an opportunity for finally indulging in concupiscent behavior away from *titt's* panoptic vigilance, and orientalism is a discourse that authorizes him and ultimately redeems him from a life of cowardice. For Eça, on the other hand, the Orient is an opportunity to reorient his literary career and orientalism is a discourse that allows him to simultaneously analyze Portuguese devotional life, disparage mainstream European orientalism, and dramatize a theoretical discussion on the critical relevance of literature for the new age he felt he was entering.¹⁴

The difference between the narrator's and the author's orientalism is essentially one of scope; both discourses denounce discursive manipulation while dexterously perpetrating their own. Teodorico's as well as Eça's orientalism evince fascination and disgust toward the Orient; both bear the marks of their European narcissism. Indeed, orientalism is a discourse that narrator and author share almost to the point of ventriloquism. However, whereas Teodorico clearly presents the case for his memoir—and within it, his orientalist case against Topsius—in terms of an opposition between truth and falsity, while remaining oblivious to the other dimensions of his orientalist discourse, Eça reframes Teodorico's narrative as a farce and his debate with Topsius in terms of persuasion and deception, thus bringing to the foreground the discursive stakes of orientalism. By drawing a very thin, almost elusive line between the fictional author's and the implied author's views of orientalism while alluding to the deeper implications of that discursive difference, Eça is able to recast his naturalist-realist approach to literature in terms of ideology rather than those of heredity and social environment. It is thus orientalism that affords him the momentum that will eventually bring about his definitive abandonment of any naturalist pretensions and the redefinition of his literary practice.

Looking at the narrator's preface, we can identify four major principles underlying his orientalist discourse. The first two are explicitly stated, the others are implied. 1. Writing about the Orient constitutes a spiritual endeavor, and

therefore it should not be taken lightly as in a typical exoticizing narrative; 2. The Orient is chiefly the “land of the Gospels” (7) and it is an utterly uninteresting place; 3. The Orient is a stage for a dispute about truth and falsity (regarding the contents of two ominous packages), which quickly evolves into a dispute about representation, literary and historical; and, finally; 4. The Orient is a stage for a discourse on (the narrator’s) contemporary Portugal. We can surmise that these same principles configure Eça’s own orientalist discourse, if we remain cautious about the differences in scope just alluded to.

The first principle was already patent in the passage discussed above, where Teodorico presents his memoir as a “monument [...] for Posterity” (RC 7); if we go back to the opening statement in his prologue the “peculiar spiritual motives” (RC 7) informing his writing are made clearer:

During the summer holidays I spent at my villa, the Quinta do Mosteiro (the former country seat of the Counts of Lindoso), I decided to write a memoir of my life which contains—or at least so I and my brother-in-law Crispim believe—a clear and potent lesson for this century so overly preoccupied with the ambiguities of Intelligence and so troubled by concerns about Money. (RC 7)

Because this passage is followed by a brief account of Teodorico’s journey to Jerusalem and his ensuing travails, critics rushed to conclude that Teodorico has here in mind the episode of the Passion as the “clear and potent lesson” for the century, and that it therefore constitutes the key to understanding Eça’s novel. I want to argue that it is prudent not to read beyond the narrator’s words, and instead accept as sufficiently productive the stated claim that his memoir responds to two of the nineteenth-century’s defining issues: the rise of capitalism and the intellectual crisis unleashed by rising secularism and the demise of a teleological worldview.¹⁵ The fact that the novel—and the narrator’s narrative within it—follow a farcical register in no way should disqualify the seriousness of the claim. Moreover, supporting the narrator’s claim is the evidence of the tone conferred upon his language. Indeed, the first two paragraphs of the prologue alone abound in possessives, thus strongly suggesting that the sense of property is a defining trait of the narrator’s identity: “my villa,” “my roof” and “my orchard” (RC 7). This indicates that the authority that Teodorico seeks for his narrative derives from his testimonial status rather than from a detached, observational position. Teodorico is a nineteenth-century capitalist writing about the legacy of nineteenth-century capitalism.

Readers are informed that the land of the Gospels (the Orient of *A Reliquia*) is an utterly uninteresting place—somewhat anticlimactically given that the journey to the Orient is also characterized as the “supreme glory of my career” (RC 7)—in the statements following the passage just discussed. Disgust with the Orient is a typical orientalist topos, and in Teodorico’s prologue it serves three evident purposes. It conveys the narrator’s spite for a land that failed to present him with the luxury, exoticism, and concupiscence he anticipated before departing Lisbon. It serves as a pretext for effectively shifting the focus towards his real yet unannounced theme, his Portuguese homeland: “Furthermore, the land of the Gospels that so fascinates the more sensitive among us is far less interesting than my arid homeland, the Alentejo” (RC 8). Finally, it allows him to surreptitiously decry imperialism—European as well as Ottoman—as the real culprit behind what he sees as Jerusalem’s defiled splendor, as well as to express his skepticism about Messianic landscapes:

Jerusalem is an Arab town crouched behind city walls the colour of mud, full of filthy alleyways stinking to high heaven and filled by the constant pealing of sad bells. The Jordan, a thread of feeble, muddy water dawdling along through desert lands, hardly bears comparison with that clear, sweet river Lima that runs past the villa here, bashing the roots of my alder trees. And yet, these sweet Portuguese waters never flowed about the knees of a Messiah, were never brushed by the wings of armed and glittering angels bearing warnings from the All High from Heaven to Earth! (RC 8)

Such disparaging words should once again constitute a solid indication that the “peculiar spiritual motives” (RC 7) informing the narrator’s writing might not after all be synonymous with the secular interpretation of the Gospel narrated later in the novel; instead, Teodorico’s refusal of traditional orientalism and concomitant tourist piety should be considered a persuasive enough spiritual motive, as his dispute with Topsius will help confirm.

The third principle of the narrator’s orientalism in *A Reliquia*, that the Orient serves as a stage for a dispute between truth and falsity, is evident in the contrast established by the narrator between his own work and *Jerusalem Seen and Described*, a seven quarto volume scholarly description of the Holy Land authored by his travel companion Topsius, “Doctor of the University of Bonn and a member of the Imperial Institute of Historical Research” (RB 5).¹⁶ Teodorico’s rivalry with Topsius takes center stage in *A Reliquia* and is announced in the pro-

logue as the single most important reason for writing the memoir; indeed, the memoir is addressed to Portugal's liberal bourgeoisie as a response to Topsius:

No, Topsius' statement [that Teodorico carried the bones of his ancestors in two identical paper parcels] discredits me in the eyes of the Liberal bourgeoisie, and it is only from this ubiquitous and omnipotent bourgeoisie in this Semitic and capitalist age that one can obtain the good things of life, from a post in a bank to the Order of the Conception. [...] That is why I invite my learned Topsius, who through his keen spectacles saw the contents of my parcels in the land of Egypt and in the land of Canaan, in the second edition of "Jerusalem Seen," to cast aside his academic scruples and his narrow philosophical disdain and tell scientific Germany exactly what was in these brown paper parcels, as frankly as I unfold it to my fellow-citizens in these restful holiday pages, in which reality lives, now halting and hampered by the heavy robes of history, now leaping free under the gay mask of farce. (RB 6-7)

Introduced as an effort to clarify the contents of the famous two packages, the real motives behind this rivalry progressively emerge in the narrator's words, even if at times those words evince a degree of sophistication hard to attribute to a character that his own writing depicts mostly as a crass, self-enamored rogue. Aside from the contest of nationalistic vanities, which the narrator presents earlier as a competition between the "sharp reason of Germany" and the "obtuse faith of the South" (RB 5)—and which will frequently re-emerge throughout the entire narrative—it is Topsius' scholarly demeanor that Teodorico strives to ridicule, by ironically hinting that the German's calumny about the two parcels is due to lack of character and Puritanism.

And yet the dispute between truth and falsity centers not only on the content of the packages but on the representation of the Orient itself. Teodorico's disqualification of Topsius' scholarly and scientific authority effectively casts suspicion on the pompous pronouncements and statements that he offers about all things oriental. At the same time, Teodorico's rebuttal of Topsius imparts an argumentative tone to his own preface: "Besides this, the enlightened Topsius makes use of me in these exhaustive volumes to *hang fictitiously upon my lips or my mind* sayings and opinions of devoutly absurd credulity, which he then refutes and overthrows sagaciously and eloquently" (RB 5; my emphasis). On one hand, Teodorico does exactly what he reproaches Topsius for, that is, to *hang fictitiously upon his lips sayings and opinions* that he then re-

futes, sagaciously and eloquently. Topsius is primarily a character in the narrator's autobiographical narrative, and the entirety of his discourse is as much a prosopopoeia as the caricatural depiction of Teodorico is in Topsius' *Jerusalem Seen and Described*. On the other hand, the argumentative tone ascribed to the preface calls attention to the fact that Teodorico is narrating a story, and that the type of writing that he chose is opposed to, or at least in competition with, that of his Teutonic rival. It is all therefore a matter of writing and persuasion, and that is why the preface culminates with a sentence that claims that Reality is hampered by "the heavy robes of history" (RB 7), a metaphor that echoes the novel's epigraph, a motto according to which "the diaphanous cloak of fantasy" should cover "the sturdy nakedness of truth."

Aside from the general irony pervading much of the narration of the interaction between Teodorico and Topsius, which borrows significantly from the tradition of the *conte philosophique*—and from the anti-philosophical strand within that tradition in particular¹⁷—there is one moment in the narrative that condenses Teodorico's seemingly unwitting critique of Topsius' brand of orientalism. When the narrator, his German travel companion and the Montenegrin guide Potte start their journey from Jerusalem back to Jaffa, where they will board the ship that will take them back to Europe, they chance upon a disheveled woman weeping over her child. The scene is depicted almost like an oriental *pietà*, to which the characters react in differently revealing ways:

When he trotted up showing the silver of his pistol, I begged him to inquire of the woman the reason of her much weeping. But she seemed rendered foolish with grief; she murmured something about a burnt hut and the passage of Turkish horsemen and milk failing; then she pressed the child against her face and, overcome, with disheveled hair, began to weep afresh. The festive Potte gave her a silver coin; Topsius took a note of her misfortune to serve for a severe lecture on Mussulman Judea. (RB 236)

Academic severity, it is implied in Teodorico's descriptive remark, does little else than pay lip service to the cause of denouncing injustice in Mussulman Judea, or in British-controlled Egypt, for that matter. Aside from being bothered by Topsius' habit of using his toothbrush, by his companion's intolerable "pride in his native land" (RB 71) as well as "his learned hoarseness" (RB 71), Teodorico consistently takes issue with the German scholar's tendency to ignore history in the making before his eyes in favor of a historicist

view of history. That is, Teodorico criticizes how Topsius' historical narrative conforms to a previously defined conception of history—one that basically confirms the unique destiny of certain national groups and the stability of their institutions¹⁸—rather than attempting to think through the meaning of change and its consequences for discourse. In other words, Teodorico's active suspicion of traditional orientalism entails a veiled critique of historiographical discourse.

If a "clear and strong lesson" is embedded in the passage of *A Reliquia* that readers more quickly associate with history, the famous episode of the Passion, the lesson is not so much that the events of the death of Christ may be read in a secularist, Renanian fashion—after all, Eça's anticlericalism was hardly a novelty for friends and enemies alike by the time he wrote this novel—but rather that the exoticist effort of traveling to the past does not afford the traveler an escape from history.¹⁹ Through his oneiric witnessing of the events of the trial, crucifixion, and death of Christ, Teodorico learns that the resurrection was but a plot orchestrated in order for a new religion to be invented. In this sense, the tedium or triviality of history would be invention, in the sense of both creation and deception. That is exactly what the exoticist effort of narrating an alternative time and place sought to evade. More importantly, the events witnessed are indeed trivial: Eça's secularization of the narrative of the Passion presupposes that one of the events that defined the history of the world—of a world where East and West meet at their seamless seams—was produced and endured by common people. Teodorico's witnessing of these events provides a background against which Topsius' hagiographical conception of history is projected as hollow. The roles are quickly reversed, as Teodorico becomes for a moment the archeologist of knowledge who, through storytelling, convincingly shows us that history is what persuasive historians say it is. And, at the time of writing *A Reliquia*, history was certainly perceived as being more in tune with what Germany wrote than with what Portugal failed to write, "writing" being here necessarily interpreted in a broader sense.

But *A Reliquia* dramatizes also the possibility of critiquing Teodorico's "My Jerusalem," that is, the appropriation and reification of the Orient as a rhetorical device for self-representation. Moreover, it configures an entire critique of the formation and transformation of Portuguese national identity, at a time when the survival of that identity was perceived as being under a grave threat.²⁰ This critique also configures the fourth principle underlying the narrator's orientalist discourse: orientalism is a short-cut to the narrator's contemporary Portugal.

Aside from all the information that the narrator's prologue provides to the reader about his motivations for writing, and the relationship of those motivations to the socio-cultural circumstances that envelop the writer and his work, readers notice that the Orient is a mirror-like surface where the narrator's actions, expectations, and worldview are reflected back as distorted, provincial, and anachronistic gestures of a buffoonish nature. It is as if Teodorico incarnated all the venal and fatalistic attributes that Orientalism—here capitalized in Said's fashion—ascribes to the Orient. Readers may also note Teodorico's incapacity to understand the pivotal relationship between the historical events he witnesses in Palestine and the tenets of the culture from which he hails. But the emblematic moment that defines the narrator's orientalist gaze at his own cultural circumstances is when Teodorico, both upon his arrival and departure from Alexandria, chances upon Alpedrinha, a fellow Portuguese citizen whose fortunes (sad fortunes, as it turns out) were shaped by and function as a metonymy of Portugal's place in history at the time of Teodorico's pilgrimage. In this episode the Orient functions as a mirror in more direct ways, since Alpedrinha is just a more entropic version of Teodorico himself. The encounter between these two would-be doppelgangers provides Eça with an excuse to indulge in his favorite pastime, irony:

A fellow countryman! He told me his melancholic story as he unstrapped my portmanteau. He was from Trancoso and disgraced. He had studied and even composed an obituary notice and learnt by heart the lugubrious verses of "our Soares de Passos." But after the death of his mother having inherited some land, he rushed off to Lisbon to enjoy himself; in the Alley of Conceição he made the acquaintance of a ravishing Spanish woman, of the sweetest name of Dulce, and went with her on an idyllic journey to Madrid. There gambling ruined him, Dulce betrayed him and a pimp stabbed him. [...] He became a sexton in Rome, a hairdresser in Athens. In Morea, in a hut beside a marsh, he had employed himself in the dreadful search for leeches, and in a turban, carrying black skins on his shoulder, he had been a water-crier in the narrow streets of Smyrna. Fruitful Egypt had always had an irresistible attraction to him, and there he was, sad as ever, a luggage porter in the Hotel of the Pyramids. (RB 72)

It is not implausible to assume that Alpedrinha is summoned here in order to spice up *A Reliquia's* picaresque register. But at the moment of departure from Egypt (and the Orient), when Teodorico and Alpedrinha say their goodbyes

for the last time, this character's deeper involvement in the orientalist dimension of the narrator's discourse becomes apparent. At the moment of farewell Teodorico suddenly engulfs himself in an uncharacteristic meditation whose source—whether narrator, authorial narrator or author—can only be guessed:

Unhappy Alpedrinha! Truly I alone understood your greatness! You were the last of the Lusians, of the race of the Castros and Albuquerque, the strong men who went in the fleets to India! The same divine thirst for the unknown will take you, like them, to that land of the Orient from which spring stars that spread light abroad from heaven and gods who unfold the Law. Only as you have not, like those Portuguese of old, heroic beliefs giving birth to heroic enterprises, you do not go, like them, with a great sword and a great rosary to impose on foreign peoples your king and your God. You have no God to fight for, Alpedrinha; you have no king to explore for, Alpedrinha! Therefore among the Eastern peoples you follow the only professions compatible with the faith and ideal and courage of the modern Lusians: to stand idly at a street corner or sadly carry the bundles of others. (RB 240)

In the modern Orient, the Portuguese adventurer and *conquistador* of yesteryear is converted into an immigrant. At a time when Portugal's stakes in Empire resided mostly in Africa (Goa, East Timor, and Macau were at this point just a memento of Portugal's *Império da Índia*), and when even those African pretensions were under German and British covetous scrutiny, the role that the Portuguese had left to play is that of the underdog. The excuse for traveling was now bare need, and not adventure and exploration. This meditation constitutes a pivotal moment in the narrator's (and author's) orientalist discourse because it provides a model for not only addressing the actuality of Portugal's geo-strategic circumstances at a defining historical juncture, but also for critically reformulating identitarian narratives that around this time capitalized on the nation's role in the history of world exploration. All the hagiography of the navigators and the viceroys gets reflected back at Teodorico (and the readers). And even if it had not yet been formulated coherently at this time, it is the whole edifice of lusotropicalism that was thus shaken to the ground.²¹

Teodorico, in his turn, also has his own Jerusalem, and it is synonymous with utter frustration. Not only does it not offer him the copious opportunities for self-indulgence that he fantasized about, but it proves to be even more tedious than his native bourgeois and pious Lisbon. As Teodorico's fellow countryman, the disgraced Alpedrinha puts it, Jerusalem is "worse than Braga" (RB

77). And yet he still presents his journey to Palestine as the “chief glory of my career” (RB 3), perhaps because it is the event in that career that triggers the turns of fortune that eventually bring him to the desk in his northern Portugal estate, to the comfort of his “holiday pages.” The frustrations and tribulations of Jerusalem have apparently been overcome by the time of writing his memoir.

As an author, he learns to convert failure into achievement, history into story, while showing at the same time how stories shape history, be it the history of Palestine or that of his native Lisbon, of Imperial Germany or of increasingly peripheral Portugal. Teodorico’s Jerusalem is indeed the crowning achievement of his career, and the lesson for the century is that there is no escape from the century, neither in space nor in time. In this sense, and despite his humbled ambition, Teodorico Raposo is a member of the liberal bourgeoisie, that is, an inevitable member. Writing an autobiography becomes a fully justified gesture, as it is the register that best tackles narcissistic wounds. And yet even the wounded nature of Teodorico’s writing is up for questioning.

At the end of his narrative, he laments not having had the inventiveness and boldness, or what he calls “the shameless heroism of affirmation” of the Topsiuses of the world, which would have allowed him to succeed in his ambition of becoming the universal heir of G. Godinho’s immense fortune. At that moment, he likens “new sciences and religions” (289) to the same shamelessness of invention, and he resents the lack of wits that barred him from inventing his own new science—a jab at Topsius—or his own new religion—a jab at his ordained rivals, more successful at deceiving Aunt Patrocínio about their venal intentions. This is what could be called Teodorico’s satiated melancholy, an implicit acceptance of his role as small liar and of his status as petit-bourgeois. But this melancholy conceals Teodorico’s effectiveness as a storyteller, that is, it conceals the fact that Teodorico pretends not to know that he is able to do what he does.

The West is in the East/The East is in the West: Orientalism in Juan Valera’s *Morsamor*

Published in 1899, just one year after Spain lost its possessions in the Caribbean and the Philippines, *Morsamor* is a historical novel that fictionalizes the deathbed conversion to true Christianity of a relapsed Franciscan friar, after he endures life-changing oneiric experiences in sixteenth-century Portuguese Asia. Orientalism not only takes center stage in this novel, but is also indisociable from *iberismo*, the ideology that, generally speaking, “proposes the unification of Spain and Portugal for a symbiotic existence” (Stern 26).²²

The discourse on the Orient is revealingly transmitted through the soliloquies of the protagonist, Fray Miguel de Zuheros or Morsamor. More importantly, this discourse functions as a swan song of Iberia and as a response to its perceived moribund status in nineteenth-century Europe. *Morsamor* pays evident homage to Cervantes' *Los Trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*—from which it borrows the structure of the Byzantine novel—and Camões' *Os Lusíadas*—from which it borrows its epic argument and an epigraph.²³ Yet the novel is practically devoid of exoticism; the Orient is always already the Portuguese Orient, and primarily a locus of self-reinvention. If exoticism is in this novel, the exoticized other is clearly the Iberian other—that is, the Portuguese—whose history of oriental expansion and Renaissance literature are appropriated into a narrative of Spanish *regeneración*.²⁴

A sign that is highly suggestive of Valera's idealization of both sixteenth-century Lisbon and the Portuguese oriental possessions is the contrastive and dystopian view of contemporary Portugal and Portuguese society that permeates most of his personal correspondence.²⁵ Overall, the idealization of the Portuguese imperial past serves as a springboard for an introspective reflection on the historical role of Iberia at the dawn of modernity, and on how such introspection should constitute a first step towards overturning the Peninsula's present decadence. In this sense, Valera's orientalism is very much a discourse in the Foucauldian and Saidian senses of the word. However, it does not aim at "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3), as Said puts it, and instead seeks to justify and revive a historical period during which domination over the Orient was tantamount to the formation and consolidation of Iberian and, subsequently, Occidental identity. As a typical nineteenth-century orientalist, Valera appropriates the Orient as Renaissance Europeans appropriated Greco-Roman antiquity. However late in the century, his orientalist ideology still constitutes a fine example of what Edgar Quinet calls the "Oriental Renaissance."²⁶

In a letter sent to Don José María Carpio on 8 August 1899, and quoted in Avalor-Arce's introduction to his edition of *Morsamor*, Valera offers a personal assessment of his then newly published novel:

Morsamor viene a ser un libro de caballerías a la moderna, donde se aspira a manifestar la grandeza real de una época histórica para España y Portugal gloriosísima, a través de una acción fantástica y soñada. En el enlace de lo verdadero y de lo fingido es donde he tratado yo de lucir algún ingenio si le tengo, y de emplear el arte

a fin de no cansar sino de divertir o interesar a los lectores. Sobre esto hay además en *Morsamor*, como en casi todas mis obras, muchas *filosofías* de mi cosecha. (27)

This assessment is reiterated in the dedicatory prologue of *Morsamor*, where Valera claims that he has no intention to “enseñar nada ni de probar nada” and instead wishes to “divertir un rato a quien me lea” (44-5). What needs to be retained from these paratextual instances, aside from the ludic dimension of his writing, is Valera’s deliberate recuperation of the chivalric genre as a metonymy of Iberia’s Golden Age. It is as if the grandeur of Spain and Portugal could only be apprehended in translation, through the fantastic and the anachronistic. On the other hand, we detect a slight anxiety in Valera’s insistence on the playful character of his art; the subsequent claim that his works are informed by many “philosophies” is what we could call an amusing contradiction.

The evidence that the serious dimension of the novelistic project far exceeds its playful element can be found in the same prologue, and at the beginning of the narrative, when the authorial narrator—who is predominantly a heterodiegetic narrator, even if he does at times speak in his own name—introduces the protagonist, Fray Miguel de Zuheros. In the prologue, Valera exposes his reasons for writing the novel, and they are essentially therapeutic and narcissistic: to distract himself from the ailments of old age, as well as from the depressing national atmosphere.²⁷ And then he adds this note, which surreptitiously pushes leisurely therapy aside in favor of a burgeoning ideology:

He de confesarte, sin embargo, que a veces tengo yo pensamientos algo presuntuosos, porque creo que el mejor modo de obtener la regeneración de que tanto se habla, es entretenerse en los ratos de ocio contando cuentos, *aunque sean poco divertidos*, y no pensar en barcos nuevos, ni en fortificaciones, ni en tener sino muy pocos soldados, hasta que seamos ricos, indispensable condición en el día para ser fuertes. Ser fuertes en el día es cuestión de lujo. Seamos pues débiles y inermes mientras que no podemos ser lujosos. Imitemos a Don Quijote. (45; my emphasis)²⁸

Morsamor boasts a curious amalgam of a vaguely Hegelian dialectics, which lends its triadic structure to the Cervantine-style plot development, and an Iberianist ideology harvested in Portuguese sources such as Camões and Oliveira Martins. In three chapters, entitled “En el claustro,” “Las aventuras,” and “Reconciliación suprema,” the story of a Fray Miguel de Zuheros, known as Morsamor in secular life, is told following a clear dialectical motif. It begins with

the aged protagonist leading a rather anonymous and shallow life in a convent outside of Seville (which corresponds to the moment of thesis), moves on to the worldly adventures experienced by Zuheros after a miraculous, indeed illusory rejuvenation bestowed upon him by the magic arts of Fray Ambrosio de Utrera (the moment of antithesis), and it ends with the enlightened death of Morsamor and the condemnation of Fray Ambrosio's vain science as a moment of synthesis.²⁹ The beatitude of Morsamor's death supersedes the adventurous phase of his life and constitutes the proof of the narrator's theory regarding the supremacy of interiority; indeed, adventure was literally and metaphorically an illusion and in the end the entire novel reads as a dissertation on *desengaño*. Valera's most significant incursion into orientalism is to be found in the articulation between Morsamor's disquisitions on *desengaño* and the Hegelian frame of the narrative, which occurs prominently in the second and third chapters.

Despite the obscurity of his cenobite life, Fray Miguel de Zuheros had become aware of the enormous success of the Portuguese and Spanish voyages of exploration, and secretly he resented his old age and aspired to take part in the new world that was being unveiled by Iberian explorers. After Father Ambrosio persuades him of the possibility of being magically rejuvenated, Morsamor decides to embark on an adventure that will take him to 1521 Lisbon and, retracing the itinerary followed by Vasco da Gama in 1497, from there to India and on to Macau. While in Lisbon, Morsamor acquaints himself with some of the most prominent historical figures of the Portuguese Renaissance: King Dom Manuel himself, the Jewish philosopher Judah Leon Abravanel or Leão Hebreu, and the humanists Damião de Goes and Garcia de Resende, among others. The descriptions of Lisbon's hectic, multicultural atmosphere evince Valera's keen knowledge of the Portuguese sixteenth-century chroniclers and humanists.

It is telling that Valera would make his protagonist choose Portugal's rather than Spain's colonial history as a background for his philosophical journey. Certainly Valera is working under the aegis of Oliveira Martins's notion of Iberia—one civilization, two nations—which renders the distinction between both Iberian histories secondary. Yet the choice also surely derives from the historical hardships that haunt Spain at the moment of Valera's writing of the novel, as well as from the allure that the Orient as a source of civilization exerts over someone concerned with issues of civilizational decadence and regeneration. Valera's fascination with the Lisbon of D. Manuel I is tantamount to idealization. Indeed, Morsamor's encounter with the "Venturous" monarch, the most important Portuguese humanists, and his own destiny in one single

day in a Babel of peoples and languages is more than serendipitous: it is the celebration of exoticism, the orientalization of Portugal, the surrendering to an Iberianist hallucination where the West is East.

Very quickly Morsamor's accomplishments—the voyage to India and the circumnavigation of the globe, in the footsteps of Magellan, another Portuguese navigator—project him into the grand role of inaugurating a new era. In sum, Morsamor is an incarnation of the argument advanced by Camões in *The Lusiads*, a synthesis of the heroic achievements of the Portuguese explorers and the poetic achievement of the Portuguese poet himself as chronicler of the greatest deeds. Morsamor is the man who closes the cycle of discoveries and initiates a new era, as the narrator puts it: “el hombre que iba a cerrar el ciclo y a dar comienzo a nueva era” (293). And he adds:

No, no era arco triunfal el que acababa de erigir y por donde gloriosamente se entraba en la edad moderna. Era más bien puerta com que él cerraba y terminaba un inmenso período histórico, una larga serie de más de treinta siglos, durante los cuales los pueblos que habitan en torno del Mar Mediterráneo habían sido guías iniciadores, maestros y hierofantes del humano linaje. Egipto, Fenicia, Grecia, Italia y España, habían tenido sucesivamente el primado, el cetro y la virtud civilizadora. [...] Supuso, por último, que *la ciencia empírica hija del exterior sentido, iba a arrebatarnos el imperio y a dársele a los pueblos del Norte*. (308; my emphasis)

This soliloquy, perhaps the moment in the entire narrative where the narrator's and the protagonist's voices are hardest to distinguish from one another, takes place towards the end of Morsamor's journey, when his ship is within view of the Tagus river mouth near Lisbon. After having circumnavigated the globe and conversed with Buddhist priests and the powerful of the world, the crowning moment of his exploring career nonetheless elicits overwhelming melancholy. However chivalric and otherworldly his ambitions and achievements, they forever broke the spell that sheltered gods and goddesses, and silenced the sirens that sang their last song in Camões' *The Lusiads*. It is as if Modernity's arrival were a mournful celebration: “Al reconocer Morsamor tal como es la tierra en que vivimos, había disipado el encanto que nos hizo señores de ella” (308).

Morsamor's melancholy is also fueled by the changing of hands of empire's torch, as the sentence highlighted makes clear. Since this changing of hands is a consequence of the epic gesture of the foundation of empire—and the awareness of this is the source of disenchantment or *desengaño*—the reader

is at a loss to distinguish between *desengaño* and resentment as the inspiration of Morsamor's (and undoubtedly Valera's) words. Furthermore, the scene and its melancholy have a contemporary resonance. The disenchantment/*desengaño* that feeds it travels across the ages to unite writer and character, for the empire being mourned is the one lost in 1898. At that time, the civilizational shift was perceived as irreversible, with Iberia no longer constituting an alternative paradigm—as it did for a while when it was the beacon of the Counter-Reformation—and instead just playing the role of loser in the game of industrial capitalism. At any rate, this melancholy is the prize of the oriental pilgrimage, the fatal taste of an oriental fruit, as it were—and the lexicon of fatality is more than a mere slip of the tongue.

The Orient is in Morsamor's soliloquy a nexus of Faustian and Camonian melancholy, of Iberianist idealization and of Hegelian temporality. During a stop in Macau, where Morsamor awaits the completion of the repairs to his ship that will allow him to pursue his planned voyage of circumnavigation, he visits the famous cave that, according to legend, Camões used as a love nest and ascetic *scriptorium* during his stay in the Chinese territory. Curiously, Valera reverses the legend, turning Camões into an imitator of Morsamor, since the Portuguese poet's presumed stay in Macau dates from 1557 to 1559, more than thirty years after Valera's character's oriental pilgrimage took place. In the cave, Morsamor indulges in what the narrator calls poetic and philosophical soliloquies. Evaluating his experience of the Orient, he asks: "Pero en lo fundamental, hay progreso acaso o hay mejora en Europa, en la India o en la China? Yo sospecho lo contrario. [...] No hay progreso sino perversión" (274). And he adds:

En este mismo Imperio en que ahora estoy, he conversado con los mandarines y sólo he visto en su saber ateísmo materialista y grosero; he conversado con lamas y bonzos, y despojando sus doctrinas de supersticiones y de símbolos, sólo he visto en ellas la confusión de Dios y del mundo y el destino y el fin del alma humana fluctuando entre el aniquilamiento y la apoteosis. (274)

The cave of Camões in Macau becomes in this meditation a metonymy for the Orient. And the Orient is for Morsamor, as it is for Juan Valera, little more than the excuse for a theological and philosophical meditation on the supremacy of the Iberian, Christian worldview with which the Portuguese "rescued," as Hegelian saints, the dormant and fatalistic oriental wisdom.

If, going back full circle, we read this passage in conjunction with the one in which, at the beginning of the narrative and before his miraculous rejuvenation, Morsamor ponders the reasons for his lust for a renewed life in the Portuguese Orient, we will be able to complete Valera's orientalist itinerary:

Misión providencial de los hijos de Iberia era sin duda sacar a los unos de la abyecta postración en que habían caído y despertar a los otros del sueño secular, del profundísimo letargo en que estaban. Esta parte de la misión parecía especialmente confiada a los portugueses. Habían, como el gentil caballero del antiguo cuento de hadas, venciendo mil obstáculos y dificultades, penetrado en los deliciosos jardines y luego en el encantado palacio donde, desde hacía muchos siglos, la hermosísima princesa estaba dormida. (57)

The Orient represents an opportunity for rejuvenation not so much because it is the source of civilization, but because it is a mirror where Morsamor, the Iberian Faust, is offered the possibility of contemplating the source of *his* civilization, that is, the historical moment in which the theological worldview that informs his actions seemed to have gotten the upper hand in the economy of civilization. Orientalism is then for Valera just an excuse to recast Iberia's historical role as an agent of civilization, that is, an early player in the game of Empire. Little seems to matter that in order to construe the argument with which Morsamor convinces himself of the West's philosophical (and civilizational) supremacy over the Orient—over the abject, lethargic, and fatal Orient—Valera borrows the narrative of Hegel's philosophy of history, according to which Morsamor's civilization is ceding terrain to the North, because that is necessary for the fulfillment of the march of the Spirit from itself towards itself.

The calculated anachronism of Morsamor's meditations thus constitutes the cornerstone of the orientalist discourse of Juan Valera in *Morsamor*. In this discourse converge an Iberianist imperial nostalgia, an introspective gaze at the historical reasons for *desengaño*, and the exoticizing idealization of the Portuguese Golden Age. But not only did this idealized Portugal never exist, it is also clear that in *Morsamor* it is taking the place of a Spain whose name cannot be uttered without opening a narcissistic wound so great that it unleashes a redefinition of geography and chronology. The East is in the West; the West is in the East.

Parallelism and a-synchronicity

In 1944 the Portuguese intellectual Fidelino Figueiredo coined the concepts of parallelism and a-synchronicity as apt descriptors of the historical relations between Portugal and Spain, characterized by consecutive attempts at political unification and the failure of such attempts. These concepts were, in the mid-twentieth century, the latest offspring in the genealogical tree that had Oliveira Martins, Juan Valera, and Miguel de Unamuno as its most patrician names. Published in 1971, Julio García Morejón's *Unamuno y Portugal* expands upon Figueiredo's suggestion that Unamuno's generation received a great deal of influence from the Portuguese intellectuals of the generation of Eça de Queirós and Oliveira Martins, among others. Such influence, which has since been documented by different scholars of diverse persuasions,³⁰ happened despite the distance in worldviews that informed both generations, due to a similarity of historic circumstances, namely, the loss of a colonial empire and the growing peripheral condition of both countries at the turn of the nineteenth century. This was a historical conjuncture that in Portugal gave rise to cosmopolitan and critical intellectual currents, while in Spain it elicited a traditionalist and *castiza* reaction, thus, parallelism of historical circumstances, and a-synchronicity of intellectual responses. Yet it would be misleading to think that the critical discourse issuing from the *Geração de 70* was an exclusive Portuguese appropriation of French and German sources. The critique of Iberia's relative developmental asymmetries has a distinct peninsular genealogy that goes back at least to the end of the sixteenth century. Already in Luis de Camões' *The Lusiads* we find repeated warnings about the looming threats to Portugal's overseas empire and to her viability as a politically independent entity. On the other hand, authors such as Oliveira Martins and Antero de Quental—whose Iberianist thought had remarkable influence over Spanish intellectuals like Juan Valera, Menéndez y Pelayo, and Miguel de Unamuno—were inspired by earlier critical efforts by Spanish authors such as Feijoo, among others. These genealogies have been documented by critics on both sides of the Iberian border.³¹

The case that I make here for comparing the orientalist discourses in novels by one Portuguese and one Spanish writer modifies the scope of Figueiredo's paradigm, by testing it in relation to two literary texts instead of two cultural histories. Although historical circumstances of different magnitudes inform the writing of both novels and their orientalist dimensions, the parallelism and a-synchronism that I trace here are almost exclusively literary and discursive.

Orientalism plays an equally crucial role in the organization of the fictional material in both *A Relíquia* and *Morsamor*, and for both writers orientalism is a tool for reflecting on the historical circumstances facing their respective nations at a complex juncture of the modern phase of the history of capitalism. Despite the fact that both novels reclaim an aesthetics of fantastic realism, and that orientalism plays an equally central role in both of them, Valera's borrowing of orientalism lacks the metafictional fold and the critical dimension that give complexity and character to *A Relíquia*. To the extent that it remains blind to its own ideological foundation, Valera's orientalism is the type of discourse scrutinized and mocked by Teodorico (and Eça) in *A Relíquia*. In sum, an intimate relationship between orientalism and aesthetics characterizes the writing of both novels, but the use of certain aesthetic devices in *A Relíquia*—fictional autobiography and the metafictional readings it elicits—along with the critique of orientalism itself as a discourse, endow Eça's orientalism with a critical complexity that Juan Valera's *Morsamor* lacks. This lack does not in any way diminish the comparative value of the novel, nor its singular importance within the context of Spain's nineteenth-century literary orientalism.

One other, equally important a-synchronism dividing these two authors is the fact that, by the time he writes *A Relíquia*, Eça de Queirós has grown skeptical of the possibilities of literature as an instance of social reform, and his embrace of what he calls fantastic realism bears witness to a certain desistance on his part to keep imposing a frame of reading on a reality that keeps evading it. Juan Valera, on the other hand, who published *Morsamor* one year before Eça de Queirós' death, embraces fantasy and orientalism as a therapy that he hopes will bring about the introspection (i.e., *casticismo*) that is necessary as a first step towards regeneration and rebirth.

At a historical juncture when, again, both Iberian countries seem to have much to share within a common European destiny, but when the a-synchronicities persist at so many different levels, fostering comparative Luso-Hispanic studies remains an urgent task. With respect to the question of orientalism, and in contrast to Edward Said's precipitous dismissal, this study has shown that issues of power and representation are not entirely absent from narratives that were once sold as mere entertainment, in countries that occupied a less than central position in the map of empire. The importance of Iberia to orientalism far exceeds its crucial historic presence in Asia in the bygone days of the sixteenth century. Instead, and as we have seen, that importance grows to the extent that Asia becomes an absence: in Eça's indictment of the historicism un-

derlying Topsius' (and Germany's) pretensions, as well as in Valera's appropriation of Hegelian dialectics in a *casticista* key, the orient is no more present than Ali Baba's fabulous cave. But an absence is not empty of meaning, and Valera's and Eça's orient(s) should be understood as reflections of the orientaling gaze endured by finisecular Iberia,³² as well as stages for the catharsis of an imperial hangover that, although marked by different overtones and chronologies, had a similar outcome for both Iberian countries: re-thinking their past in peninsular and continental rather than national terms. For scholarship to remain tied to its old, nation-oriented ways is unwarranted, and less myopic approaches are possible if we dare to follow the texts' always more cosmopolitan threads.

Notes

¹ There are two extant English translations of *A Relíquia*, none of which is entirely satisfactory. I will be using both of them intermittently, along with the original version in Portuguese. Aubrey Bell's version (1930) will from hereon be cited with the acronym "RB" and Margaret Jull Costa's (1994) with "RC." I am thankful to the Fundação Luso-Americana (FLAD) for their generous support of preliminary research conducted for this article at the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal in the summer of 2006. I am indebted to Sérgio Campos Matos for the invaluable guidance provided during my stay in Lisbon, and also to Juan Pablo Gil and Lisa Voigt for their insightful comments.

² I am thinking for instance of João Medina's reading of the novel as a *bildungsroman* and an ethical parable, or Ernesto Guerra da Cal's interpretation of it as a picaresque and Cervantine narrative.

³ In a sense this article pays homage to Julio Garcia Morejón's pioneering book of 1971, *Unamuno y Portugal*. While I am not so interested in ascertaining which of the two countries exerted—in the period that goes from roughly 1870 to 1900—more lasting cultural influence on the other, I do want to follow Morejón's lead in reclaiming the need to study the relationships between these two leading peninsular generations of intellectuals. I am convinced that such studies could contribute to fomenting the still incipient debate between the fields of Hispanic and Lusophone Studies, as well as to bringing forth more nuanced readings of the canonical texts penned by authors from both sides of the border, in order to more effectively debunk some of the persistent myths that surround the "revolutionary" and "regenerationist" claims with which these two groups were historically associated. As Garcia Morejón has already acknowledged, the idea of reading the *Geração de 70* and the *Generación de '98* in tandem is owed to the Portuguese Hispanophile Fidelino de Figueiredo (1888-1957), who claimed that the two main Iberian cultures were related through parallelism and a-synchronicity. In his *História d' um Vencido da Vida*, Figueiredo posited that the historiography of Oliveira Martins—and namely his *História da Civilização Ibérica*—formed one of the cornerstones of the regenerationist ideology of post-1898 Spanish intellectuals such as Unamuno, and would have contributed to the "pessimismo hiper crítico da mesma" (144).

⁴ Comparatively speaking there are more readings available of Eça's orientalism, even if most of them are devoted to aesthetic issues. The scarcity of readings of Valera's orientalism further persuades me that this is an important, neglected topic.

⁵ I find the discussion of hegemony at the outset of *Orientalism* rather unsatisfactory since it concentrates solely on the relationship between Orient and Occident, in terms of the dominance

of one over the other, leaving aside other, equally important relations of power and dominance within the West. In this regard, the discourse of Iberian decadence common to *fin-de-siècle* Portuguese and Spanish intellectuals, itself already mirroring northern European discourses of the “Black Legend,” should acquire center stage in the discussion of hegemony.

⁶ And not only contact but what that contact gave rise to and was anteceded by, a *discourse*, the dimension of orientalism Said is more interested in. Aside from the many accounts produced by countless explorers, anonymous or not, the sole mention of Fernão Mendes Pinto’s *Peregrinação* should suffice to disqualify Said’s parallel statement that, “Historically and culturally there is a quantitative as well as a qualitative difference between the Franco-British involvement in the Orient and [...] the involvement of every other European and Atlantic power” (3-4). If anything, Mendes Pinto’s *Peregrinação* is a vivid testimony to the idea that “Orientalism is more particularly valuable as a sign of European-Atlantic power over the Orient than it is a veridic discourse about the Orient” (6); not by chance, to this day folk culture in Portugal still refers to *Peregrinação*’s author with the pun “Fernão, mentes? Minto” [“Fernão, are you lying? Yes”].

⁷ The critique of the discourse(s) produced in the West on the Orient is unarguably one of Eça’s concerns not only in his fictional prose of the late 1880s—namely *O Mandarim* and *A Reliquia*—but already in his travel notes posthumously compiled under the title *O Egípto: Notas de Viagem* and, most notably, in two of his *Cartas de Inglaterra*—written when he was Portugal’s consul in Bristol—where he offers his sagacious, mordant critique of Great Britain’s involvements in Afghanistan (1847, 1880) and of Lord William Gladstone’s decision to bombard Alexandria in Egypt (1882).

I have so far and will be loosely associating the figure of Juan Valera to the so-called generation of 1898. Valera died in 1905, a few years before Azorín famously coined the term *Generación del ’98*, and so chronologically it may seem a stretch to include him with authors such as Unamuno, Ganivet, and Pio Baroja, among others. While I intend to circumvent the debate that for so many years has occupied Hispanists trying to ascertain the scope, validity, and effectiveness of the term *Generación del ’98*—for I deem it to be a largely unproductive and ultimately mystifying quest that could benefit from a shift in focus, as recently advocated by Christopher Britt Arredondo—I contend that Valera’s *Morsamor* can still be read as an opening statement in the broader debate that will occupy and haunt many of the authors that have been traditionally associated with the *Generación*. In *Quixotism: The Imaginative Denial of Spain’s Loss of Empire*, Britt Arredondo sustains that the “incessant discussion of the aesthetic ‘problem’ attending the notion of the literary generation of ’98 has served to minimize the decisive role that several of the authors typically associated with that generation [...] played in the narrative construction of a Spanish national modern heroic and imperial identity” (7). It needs to be said that while I agree with Arredondo’s proposed heuristic shift in the study of the authors of ’98, I also am convinced that his study lacks at moments the balance and ample contextualization that one expects from such a critical endeavor. The fact that Britt Arredondo entirely bypasses the question of *Iberismo* and its broader peninsular implications contributes to a less nuanced interpretation of figures such as Unamuno. On the other hand, his overarching argument that the quixotic discourse of the authors of ’98 anticipates and creates the conditions for the emergence of Spain’s national-catholic fascist ideology of the 30s is not entirely original. Similar claims have long been made about the thought of Portuguese authors such as Oliveira Martins and other members of the *Geração de 70*, which, although revolutionary in its context of emergence, actually opened the way for the conservative ideology of Oliveira Salazar’s *Estado Novo* (see Saraiva, and also Stern [26]). This is unarguably a privileged example of the need for an Iberian scope for the accurate analysis of these issues.

⁸ For an overview of orientalism in Eça and in Portuguese letters in general see Pires de Lima.

⁹ “Afeganistão e Irlanda” and “Os Ingleses no Egípto,” respectively.

¹⁰ As is well known, Eça submitted *A Reliquia* to a literary contest, which he lost when his

nemesis, Pinheiro Chagas, a prominent member of the jury, voted against him. One of the main arguments against the novel—and the episode of the Passion in particular—was its supposed lack of verisimilitude. For a brief history of the early reception of *A Relíquia*, see note 1 in Lopes and Eça's "A Academia e a Literatura."

¹¹ In his *Voyage a l'Orient*, Lamartine claimed that "Un voyage en Orient [était] comme un gran acte de ma vie intérieure" (qtd. in Said 177). Teodorico's claim modifies Lamartine's; the superlative indirectly implies the scarcity of interior life. On the other hand, this passage evidences the palimpsestic nature of Eça's text, and also the Romantic underpinnings of Teodorico's upbringing. Indeed, one of Eça's pedigree obsessions is the satirical denunciation of the grip that ultra-romanticism had on the Portuguese culture of the second half of the nineteenth century.

¹² Teodorico is an early incarnation of the type of narrator that Eça will keep perfecting throughout his career—and which has in *José Matias* one of the most accomplished examples—that is, a homodiegetic narrator who is a rogue and dramatizes discourses whose degree of proximity or distance from the author's acknowledged worldview is not immediately determinable.

¹³ Topsius' suggestion is offered as a facetious interpretation of the contents of one of the two identical packages that Teodorico carried with him while in Palestine. As abundantly discussed by critics, these two packages hold a symbolic meaning. One contains a nightgown presented to Teodorico by his English lover in Alexandria, while the other contains a crown of thorns Teodorico intends to bring back to his Aunt Patrocínio, or *titi* for short, which was assembled by him from a wild bush in the outskirts of Jerusalem, but whose authenticity is *scientifically* determined by Dr. Topsius. They symbolize concupiscence and devotion, two of the main themes addressed within the novel, and both of them are the objects of a fetishistic desire—and discourse—whose main features have been analyzed by Josiah Blackmore (see note 15). As is well known, the accidental confusion of these packages sets in motion a turn of events that is fatal for Teodorico's pretensions of becoming the universal heir to D. Patrocínio's fortune.

¹⁴ For Eça's awareness of a coetaneous change in sensibility, political and aesthetic, see "A Decadência do Riso" and "Positivismo e Idealismo."

¹⁵ Of the available interpretations of the "clear and potent lesson" proposed by the narrator and fictional author in *A Relíquia*, I would like to acknowledge Josiah Blackmore's enticing reading, offered in the context of two essays in which he proposes that the title of the novel, "*The Relic*," functions as a referent of the novel itself as the main relic to which all the other relics proliferating throughout the entire text are subordinated. Blackmore analyzes the relationship between relics as devotional objects and as texts, as well as the role of devotion in the configuration of Teodorico's and the other characters' discourses. The reading I am pursuing here is not in any way incompatible with Blackmore's, even if I am primarily interested in aspects of Eça's novel only barely touched by his analysis. The most salient feature of our interpretations is that they both reject the *bildungsroman* as a suitable model for understanding Eça's novelistic writing.

¹⁶ Orlando Grossegeisse suggests Eça's very plausible inspiration in the figure of Karl Richard Lepsius (1810-1884), a pioneering Prussian Egyptologist, for his German scholar character. Although the reasons for this characterization are not immediately evident, it is more than probable that the Portuguese writer chanced upon this name during the extensive research he conducted for both *A Relíquia* and *O Egípto*.

¹⁷ The exhaustive repetition of epithets such as "profound Topsius" or "learned Topsius" already announces a satirical intent, which is then reinforced with this classical tirade issuing from a literal fiction of ignorance: "I rarely understood his sonorous, well-turned sentences, precious as gold medallions, but I nonetheless bowed to his greater learning. It was like standing before the impenetrable door of some sanctuary, knowing that inside, in the shadows, gleamed the pure essence of Idea" (RC 72). Finally, the canonical motif of the philosophical donkey is invoked to complete the narrator's allegiance to this important satirical tradition: "At his side a donkey, forgetting the tender

grass, was contemplating in philosophic sadness the passionate endeavor of the learned man upon his knees on the ground searching for the Baths of Herod" (RB 120). In my forthcoming book manuscript I analyze Eça's indebtedness to this tradition in more detail, while pursuing an inquiry of the overall relationship between philosophy and literature within Eça's fiction.

¹⁸ And here resides, in my view, the main reason for the creation of Topsius, much more than in a mere satirical recreation of a specific figure such as that of Karl Richard Lepsius.

¹⁹ I am using the term exoticism here in the sense attributed to it by Victor Segalen in his *Essay on Exoticism: An Aesthetics of Diversity*. Segalen postulates that exoticism consists of an escape from "the contemptible and petty present" (24). As I am proposing here, *A Relíquia* is the story of how not even in history Eça (through Teodorico) finds an escape from the contemptible and petty present of bourgeois Europe (and Portugal in particular).

²⁰ This is the time of the "scramble for Africa," when other European colonial powers, such as England and Germany, threatened to seize control of vast African territories under Portuguese dominion. This would eventually culminate in the famous ultimatum of 1890, when England threatened to bombard Lisbon if Portugal refused to surrender the control of territories lying between modern-day Angola and Mozambique.

²¹ Luso-Tropicalism is a discourse that was formulated by the Brazilian author Gilberto Freyre, which postulated Portugal's colonialism as a catalyst for harmonious inter-racial coexistence, of which Brazil would be the foremost example. This discourse was later appropriated by the Portuguese *Estado Novo* (1933-1974) as a banner of the notion that Portugal was a nation comprised of all the territories under Portuguese rule, and as an excuse for not granting the African territories their political independence.

²² Sérgio Campos Matos does not entirely coincide with Irwin Stern's definition of iberianism. For Matos, "o iberismo não se esgotou numa problemática política e ideológica," and it constituted for Portugal a "desafio profundo ao Estado-Nação," which brought about a "metamorfose da identidade nacional." According to this historian, iberianism in the nineteenth century responded to and reflected great Peninsular and European cultural problems; the awareness of civilizational decadence and concomitant regenerationist ideals; the theory that saw the world as a competition of great and small nations, with the implicit and explicit condemnation of the latter to extinction; material progress and industrial modernization, etc. It is clear that Eça's *A Relíquia*, along with his subsequent fictional works, address these issues with increasing insistence, albeit in non-iberianist terms. On the other hand, it is interesting to note the resurgence of similar debates within the context of an enlarged European Union, when, after centuries of mutual disdain, Spain and Portugal are condemned to increasing (economic) integration. See Matos.

²³ Camões claims in *The Lusiads* that his epic poem is superior to those of his classical and modern predecessors—namely the Homeric poems, Virgil's *The Aeneid*, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*—because his subject matter, the real travels of exploration conducted by the Portuguese in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is also superior to the imaginary subject matter of his predecessors' epics. "Predecessors" is here an adequate term, considering that throughout *The Lusiads* Camões engages in a game of simultaneous emulation and rejection, particularly in relation to Virgil. See Camões, esp. stanzas 3 and 11 in Canto I.

²⁴ For this appropriation Valera capitalizes on the Iberianist insights developed by his friend, the Portuguese historian Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins in *História da Civilização Ibérica*, a groundbreaking book that was dedicated to Valera starting in the third Spanish edition (1886). This volume became popular in Spain, from the time of its original publication and throughout the twentieth century. Oliveira Martins—who was a close friend of Eça de Queirós' and one of the most influential members of the Portuguese generation of the 1870s—traces in this influential book the history of a common Iberian civilization, divided politically in two different nations. Among his Spanish admirers Martins counted Unamuno, Menéndez y Pelayo, and

Pardo Bazán. For the relationship between Martins' and Valera's iberianism, see Marcos de Diós, Serra and García Martín, and Apolinário Lourenço.

²⁵ Valera was particularly inconsistent in his opinions on Portugal and the Portuguese, including those he considered his friends, such as Latino Coelho. Many scholars have stressed this ambivalence in Valera, and recently a detailed account of its many instances was made available by Eduardo Mayone Dias and Antonio Morillo.

²⁶ Without alluding to the same genealogy, this is what Henry Thurston-Griswold nonetheless has in mind when he discusses Valera's idea of regeneration: "He aquí la fórmula de la regeneración que se propone: lo nuevo y lo original se encuentra en la imitación de lo antiguo" (37). Regeneration is an idea that brings Valera close to the constellation of Spanish authors that came to be known as the *Generación del '98*, as Thurston-Griswold claims: "Al fin y al cabo, lo que se narra en *Morsamor* es una regeneración espiritual, la cual aproxima a Valera a las soluciones propuestas por los escritores de la Generación del '98" (38). I would add that it is to the extent that *Morsamor* brings Valera closer to the *Generación del '98* that it gets him farther away from Eça's literary experiment in *A Relíquia*.

²⁷ "Para distraer mis penas egoístas al considerarme tan viejo y tan quebrantado de salud, y mis penas patrióticas al considerar España tan abatida, he soltado el freno a la imaginación, que no le tuvo nunca muy firme, y la he echado a volar por esos mundos de Dios, para escribir la novella" (43-4).

²⁸ The thought that dull or otherwise unexciting stories could constitute a leisurely therapeutic activity has something of a punitive (and hence contradictory) aspect that would be worth considering.

²⁹ There is a Faustian motif underlying the relationship between Miguel de Zuheros, Padre Ambrosio, and the Mephistophelian Tiburcio de Simahonda that merits study.

³⁰ Historians take the lead as far as comparative studies of Spain and Portugal are concerned; see, for example, Sérgio Campos Matos. In literary studies the scarcity of such studies is the rule, especially on this side of the Atlantic.

³¹ See Almeida and Cuesta, whose studies of Antero's famous conference *Causas da Decadência dos Povos Peninsulares* both paint a very nuanced history of reciprocal borrowings in Iberian critical discourse.

³² It is the whole debate about the relationship between Orientalism and Occidentalism that acquires urgency. The scope of Iberian orientalism can be shown to be much wider—and less peripheral—if we read authors like Valera and Eça in light of recent works by Couze Venn, Walter Mignolo, and Fernando Coronil.

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