

## Living on the Edge: Borders and Taboos in Torga's *Novos Contos da Montanha*

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The very title of Torga's *Novos Contos da Montanha* emphasises the peripherality of the communities depicted in these stories. Indeed, in the Preface to the second edition of the work, the author goes out of his way to emphasise the differing identity of the Portugal of which he writes from that of the majority of his readers:

E foi por isso que fiz aqui uma promessa que te transmito: que estava certo de que tu, habitante dos nateiros da planície, terias em breve compreensão e amor pela sorte áspera destes teus irmãos. (8)<sup>1</sup>

The distance from the centre of political and economic power which is implicit in this statement, then, is intended to lead the reader into the unfamiliar world of Torga's native Trás-os-Montes, a region where even today poverty and old-fashioned agricultural and social structures make life a never-ending struggle for basic survival for many of its inhabitants. This is also, however, a region whose mountainous villages are often small and isolated, and where the feelings of national identity to which Torga appeals in seeking the attention of his urban readers are perhaps secondary to the demands of tight-knit communities which have always fended for themselves. This sense of separate status for each community is testified to, for example, by Moisés do Espírito Santo, when he writes: "O território da freguesia é um espaço fechado, com limites bem definidos e assinalados por fontes, cruces, etc., que separam o território segurizante do espaço ameaçador" (28).

Appropriately, therefore, references to borders and boundaries recur frequently in these stories. It will have been noted from the citation from Espírito Santo above, however, that the division is often one which is regard-

ed as being of sufficient significance to the community to require a clear formal demarcation of limits. This would appear to suggest that boundaries may be significant here in terms other than the more obvious ones of the administrative and political subdivisions of the land as these are recognised in official maps. It is my intention in the present paper to explore the varying functions of a number of borders and boundaries which are alluded to in these stories: the boundary which divides life from death and the instinct for survival from the passive acceptance of death (“O Alma-Grande”); boundaries which divide locals from outsiders (“Fronteira”); boundaries which form an unnatural barrier between man and woman, or even within one person’s psychosexual nature (“Fronteira”); boundaries which exclude the individualist or the unfortunate minority from the community whose conventions they have sought to transgress (“A Confissão,” “O Regresso” and “O Leproso”); and boundaries which mark the initiation of the child first venturing into the adult world (“O Sésamo”). In short, therefore, the borders and boundaries which one sees illustrated in these stories do not simply demarcate land: in common with other significant forces in Torga’s work, they arise from the land and serve to indicate to the reader something of its nature, as is noted by Teresa Rita Lopes:

É por fidelidade a essa ‘lei da terra’, da Mãe-Terra, fulcro de tantos mitos, que Torga procura não propriamente criar novos mitos (como, por exemplo, o quiseram fazer Pessoa e Mallarmé) mas reanimar mitos ancestrais, na sua maioria tão elementares que é mais o corpo que a memória que os conhece. (“Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo,” 207)

In the story which opens *Novos Contos da Montanha*, “O Alma-Grande,” set in one of the crypto-Jewish communities existing along the political border between Portugal and Spain, the allusion to the other side of the border is used to emphasise the transition between life and death, “the other side” in a metaphysical rather than a geographical sense, as the grim figure of the executioner is described in the following terms: “Alto, mal encarado, de nariz adunco, vivia no Destelhado, uma rua onde mora ainda o vento galego, a assobiar sem descanso o ano inteiro” (16). This identification of Alma-Grande with the chilly winds of winter and the forces of death itself is further emphasised by the later implicit comparison of his role to that of Charon, the ferryman of the dead in Greek mythology: “Daí a nada a tenaz

das suas mãos e o peso do seu joelho passavam guia ao moribundo” (16). By way of contrast with the classical myth, however, Alma-Grande does not conduct his victims to any specific place; his function is simply to lead them safely, and above all quietly, out of the “Aqui” which is so fundamental in Torga’s work.<sup>2</sup> The chill winds alluded to above, therefore, signify total extinction: both the personal extinction against which Isaac fights so determinedly in this story, and, at a collective level, the cultural oblivion which threatens the community of Riba Dal in a society which is intolerant of minorities.<sup>3</sup>

More interesting than this casual allusion, however, is the exploitation of the political boundary between the two Iberian states in the following story, “Fronteira,” where the legitimacy of this border is called into question by the events which unfold. The conflict here revolves around the differing perceptions of the frontier held by the village as a whole and by Robalo, the new customs officer, who is not from the area, a point emphasised by the narrator in referring to the “positivismo da sua terra” in the Minho (29). Robalo, keen to make a lucrative career in guarding the sanctity of his country’s frontiers (29), treats these duties more seriously than his older colleagues, who adopt a policy of turning a blind eye to many of the illegal practices which they are well aware of in a village whose economy is entirely dependent on smuggling (28-29).

The opening paragraphs of the story recount some of these nocturnal activities in terms reminiscent of a description of the lifestyle of animals in the fields, as the villagers emerge from their homes, one after another, in search of their livelihood:

A seguir, aponta à escuridão o nariz afilado do Sabino. Parece um rato a surgir do buraco. Fareja, fareja, hesita, bate as pestanas meia dúzia de vezes a acostumar-se às trevas, e corre docemente a fechadura do cortelho. (25)

However, if characters such as Sabino are presented as comparable to animals, it is not with the intention of minimizing their significance as human beings.<sup>4</sup> Rather, I would suggest that Torga’s intention is a positive one, to stress that this community is living in tune with nature rather than according to the dictates of an artificial order alienated from natural processes, as is suggested by the later contrast between the community and the representatives of the State:

E se por acaso se juntam na venda do Inácio uns e outros - guardas e contrabandistas, fala-se honradamente da melhor maneira de ganhar o pão: se por conta do Estado a vigiar o ribeiro, se por conta da Vida a passar o ribeiro. (28, *my italics*)

Robalo's steadfast attachment to his sense of duty does not, however, prevent him from falling for the attractions of one of the smugglers, Isabel, whose charms are based entirely on nature:

E quem havia de lhe entrar pelos olhos dentro ao natural . . . A Isabel! A rapariga tirava a respiração a um mortal. Vinte e dois anos que nem vinte e dois dias de S. João. Cada braço, cada perna, cada seio, que era de a gente se lamber . . . De tal sorte, que, quando o dia acabou, o Robalo não parecia o mesmo. Evaporara-se-lhe o ar de salvador do mundo, e até já via Fronteira doutro jeito. (31)

Inevitably, however, his integration into this society is not an easy one, for his sense of duty requires him to tell Isabel that he will treat her no differently from other smugglers. His role as a customs officer is therefore not only a detail of the plot. It comes to dominate his life to the extent that the border which he is protecting is no longer a political boundary, it is the psychological division within himself between instinct and duty: "por detrás do homem o guarda continuava alerta" (33); "Mas era o Robalo guarda, a guardar" (34). To Robalo, allowing natural instinct to interfere with his job would be to permit base nature to infiltrate the space legitimately occupied by his sense of self-discipline.<sup>5</sup> Later, however, even he gives in to the law of nature when Isabel bears him a child, significantly on the premises of the customs house. Against his will, therefore, nature has invaded the space which he has reserved for artificially constituted authority,<sup>6</sup> and from now on Robalo, too, joins in the ways of the village, becoming involved in smuggling weapons over the border. He has thus ceased, in the words of the text (31), to view himself as a divine "salvador do mundo" and now recognises that he is a mere "mortal" who must be prepared to participate in meaningful transactions with the local community on an equal basis.

It is surely also significant that it is in the moment of childbirth that Robalo concedes defeat. The ethnologist Moisés do Espírito Santo argues that a common feature in the social influence of popular religion in the Iberian Peninsula as a whole is the inspirational nature of the image of the mother (213). This is intimately linked with his thesis that the figure of the

father is strongly identified with the forbidding authority of the State in opposition to the mother, who represents the life-giving land (94, 213).<sup>7</sup> According to this analysis, therefore, when Robalo's stern morality gives way in the face of the miracle of childbirth, this signifies a recognition of the deeper meaning inherent in the community than that offered by the Law. The fact that the birth occurs on Christmas night signifies the beginning of a positive new order for Robalo, whereby the call of the "terra" (the locality, which in this community includes the nearby Spanish village of Fuentes) becomes more meaningful than that of the "Estado" (which would exclude Fuentes as being outside national territory),<sup>8</sup> just as Christ's New Testament of love superseded Moses' law. Robalo, then, accustomed to assuming his own infallibility (hence presumably the pointed reference to the "positivismo" in his characterisation as a "minhoto") learns to show humility and to accept his humanity as a mixture of reason and animal instinct. The comments made by João Camilo dos Santos with regard to God in Torga's *Bichos* might, in fact, be equally applicable to the mortal Robalo in this story:

E se Deus não existe porque o Criador, o detentor da Lei, é imperfeito, a Lei perde o seu carácter divino, deixa de ser a verdade, torna-se discutível. (140)

There is, of course, a significant role-reversal in this story, in the sense that Robalo, the guardian of the law, is portrayed as the outlaw, the character who is out of step with the rest of the community and who is unable to live within the law of the land (as opposed to the law of the State). This point is reinforced by the references in the text to God. Firstly, as part of the narrator's preparation of the reader for the change in Robalo's outlook, he writes "o Diabo põe e Deus dispõe" (30), thus relativising the traditional roles of God and the Devil;<sup>9</sup> and then, when Isabel, the criminal in the eyes of the patriarchal state, appeals to Robalo for mercy when he catches her crossing the border, she appeals to him as an "homem de Deus" (35). These references deepen the significance of her plea to him: effectively by using these words, Isabel asks Robalo to abandon his previous self-appointed role of quasi-divine authority in favour of a recognition of their shared status as imperfect human beings, conscious of their own fallibility. To be able to continue living in *Fronteira*, therefore, Robalo must reject the role which he originally accepted (symbolically that of the father) and submit himself instead to the will of the mother, that is, the land, as Lopes states:

Mircea Eliade fala-nos de um ritual praticado em diferentes sociedades, com variantes, a que chama 'regressus ad uterum' e que é praticado 'dans le but de faire naître le récipiendaire à un nouveau mode d'être ou de le régénérer.' Consiste ele no seguinte: 'Le retour à la matrice est signifié soit par la réclusion du néophyte dans une hutte, soit par son engloutissement symbolique par un monstre, soit par la pénétration dans un terrain sacré identifié à l'utérus de la Terre-Mère.' ("Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo," 220; my italics)<sup>10</sup>

By the very act of making love to Isabel, therefore, Robalo has invited his own integration into the society which he originally found so distasteful in its illegal practices.

The political border with Spain is alluded to again in "A Confissão," where an old man returns to his native village, some fifty years after leaving it in the knowledge that he was about to be condemned for a murder of which he was innocent. In the case of this story, the reference to the border should be seen primarily as a merely factual allusion to a place of refuge. However, the theme which is raised here is once again that of exclusion and integration: Bernardo's exile from his native soil for the greater part of his life is the result of a perceived offence against the community, even if this offence turns out to be illusory. This is a theme which is further developed in other stories with regard to boundaries set by the community rather than by political authority.<sup>11</sup>

The three stories which I intend to refer to in this regard are "O Regresso," "O Leproso" and "O Sésamo." "O Regresso" revolves around a similar situation to that of "A Confissão," although in the case of this story, reintegration is prevented rather than achieved when Ivo returns home.<sup>12</sup> Whereas in "A Confissão" Bernardo's reintegration becomes possible when his innocence is established, here Ivo remains excluded from the community because his offence is undisputed. This offence is no crime as such, but rather a betrayal of the village by enlisting in a war of no relevance to its life, as Ivo realises when his identity is questioned by a small boy:

Por aquela boca falava a povoação. Exigia intransigentemente a cada filho um passaporte humano corrido e limpo, de fidelidade ao seu calor e de submissão às suas leis. (150)<sup>13</sup>

Even Ivo's dress ("calça de bombazina, blusa *americana*, gorra *vasca* e alpercatas *galegas*"; 147, my italics) expresses his difference and his exclusion. His choice of lifestyle - the traditionally masculine practice of war - has estranged him from the female "terra" to which he seeks to return. His ideals may or may not have been worthy ones - and the cause for which he fought is never revealed explicitly, although he may be thought to have been a combatant in the Spanish Civil War<sup>14</sup> - but he has chosen to turn his back on what is acceptable to the community and serve the world outside, and that is a crime for which it appears that there can be no forgiveness:

Partira contra a vontade pacífica e humana de todos para uma guerra que não era deles, matara sem razão nenhuma, atraíçoa milénios de fraternidade, de paz e de entendimento. Que poderia esperar agora? (146-47)<sup>15</sup>

This analysis is supported in sociological terms by Espírito Santo, who writes:

A aldeia tende a tornar-se auto-suficiente e sente menos a necessidade de quebrar o "isolamento" do que habitualmente se pensa. Para ela, são as pessoas de fora que estão interessadas em entrar no seu espaço; as estradas são sempre vistas como maquinações diabólicas, como lugar de passagem de forasteiros e de ladrões, e como uma incitação à fuga dos jovens para se subtraírem ao controlo familiar. (29)

The most important feature of Torga's depiction of village life here, then, is not sentimentalised vision of the small rural community as a haven of goodwill by way of contrast with the anonymity and dangers of the city.<sup>16</sup> If "Fronteira" demonstrates the value of community spirit and the futility of resisting it, then this story presents us with the negative side of the same coin: the demand for absolute conformity, which will brook no individuality and which will not take pity on a prodigal even if he has shown heroism and suffered wounds and disfigurement, as is the case here: "No fim do pesadelo - desmobilizado, mutilado e outro" (148, my italics).<sup>17</sup>

"O Leproso" is another story of exclusion, in this case that of the leper Julião, who finds that the revelation of his condition makes him unwelcome in his own village of Loivos, where feelings of guilt and shame lead to his identification as a scapegoat (71). Once again, a character who does not fit into the normal patterns of community life is excluded from it. Even if Julião finds some limited solace outside his own community, it is hinted that this charity

is equally humiliating in the sense that he is exploited by others merely as a symbol representative of their superiority to the people of Loivos: “Mas os povos em volta, precisamente por razões opostas, recebiam-no caridosamente, solidários com uma dor que não lhes envergonhava o berço e os comovia apenas durante os segundos de um padre-nosso” (71). It is hardly surprising, therefore, that, in spite of the hostility shown towards him, Julião chooses to remain around his own native community, even if he is restricted to its periphery. As Lisboa writes (in relation to the character Mariana, in the story of that name, also contained in *Novos Contos da Montanha*): “She spends her days wandering from village to hamlet, not within an undefined area, but rather within certain circumscribed geographical boundaries, and within an encircled space in which she is well known (and disapproved of) by the locals” (“Madwomen, Whores and Torga: Desecrating the Canon?,” 175). In other words, however much the locals may refuse to allow Mariana (and here Julião) to belong to the neighbourhood, she nonetheless continues to choose to identify with it emotionally.

As the locals’ tolerance of Julião evaporates completely, so this story gradually becomes a more chilling one, culminating in a fanatical witchhunt which sees him burnt to death by his own fellows (79-82) in spite of the apparent solidarity which is stressed by the narrator before the revelation of his condition :

Eram todos amigos, daquela amizade possível entre gente rude e sacrificada, sem licença para aventuras intensas do coração e do entendimento. Escravos de uma terra hostil e de uma sociedade hostil, simples e toscos instrumentos de produção nas mãos injustas da vida, como poderiam eles descer à grande fundura dos sentimentos limados e gratuitos? Gostavam dele como de um camarada de suor, prontos evidentemente a abandoná-lo se lhes disputasse a bica de água ou a sombra do descanso. (67)

The implicit hint of the possibility of exclusion in the final lines of this extract is confirmed as the story progresses: by indirectly selling to his fellow villagers the olive oil in which he has bathed, Julião effectively upbraids them for restricting their sense of fellowship to the good times:

A consciência do que fizera àqueles que por ser infeliz o renegaram, arredava-o, temeroso, dos termos do lugar nativo. Olhava de longe a povoação e, embora odi-



asse os homens, sentia uma ternura singular pelos pardieiros onde o tempo pusera uma beleza que não encontrava em mais parte nenhuma. Fugia contudo dela como de uma perdição. (78)

His actions prove to be merely the final impetus which is needed to drive his erstwhile friends to destroy their imperfect comrade. The inevitability of Julião's fate as a result of his sale of the oil is symbolised in his acceptance of the sum of thirty escudos in payment for it from the shady figure of Nunes (75), thus recalling the payment of thirty silver pieces to Judas Iscariot for the betrayal of Christ. However, even after the fury of his destruction by fire - which the villagers might view as purification but which also, in a Portuguese context, bears overtones of the Inquisition - a small trace of Julião remains as a memorial to the intolerance of the community which has rejected him: "Mas o corpo do Julião não estava inteiramente desfeito como desejavam. Era um grande e negro tição, que dificilmente se distinguia do tronco de um sobreiro mal queimado" (82).<sup>18</sup>

"O Sésamo" presents a character, Rodrigo, who one might initially imagine would be prone to exclusion on the same grounds of otherness which lead to Julião's condemnation: "Da gente miúda que escutava, o mais pequeno era o Rodrigo, guicho, imaginativo, e por isso com fama de amalucado" (103). Moreover, he commits the apparent offence against the local community of breaking a taboo by going to the "monte excomungado" in the Serra da Forca (104).<sup>19</sup>

Yet in the case of this story it appears that Rodrigo's offence is only an apparent one, for what he sees on the mountain - the miracle of the birth of a new lamb - effectively reminds him that he must conform and work productively for a living in this environment. To follow the line of interpretation offered by Fernandes da Silveira, therefore, the failure of his attempt to gain wealth by repeating the magic formula indicates that he cannot have dominion over the world; instead he must accept that it has dominion over him (37).<sup>20</sup> This experience therefore reincorporates him into the community in the same way as happens with the symbolically castrated figure of the priest in "O Senhor" when he helps Filomena to give birth, or when the birth of Robalo's child brings him into the fold in "Fronteira." Rodrigo's experience on the mountain appears to teach him the value of hard work as opposed to the easy wealth of which he has dreamt: "E o balido insistente acabou por acordá-lo para a realidade simples da sua vida de pastor" (108).

I would wish to suggest that the boundary which Rodrigo transgresses here is not, in fact, one which should give offence to the community. Rather it is the boundary which separates childhood innocence from full adulthood, for not only does his exposure to the birth of the lamb remind him of the responsibilities of his future adult life, but it also marks his initiation into awareness of the biological facts of life. This is partly illustrated by the use of imagery relating to sexual encounters or pregnancy, which is a recurrent feature of this text. When the adult Raul captivates the young boy by his telling of the story of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, he says the cave opened up “*em sedutor convite*” (101, my italics). The effect on the boys listening is akin to the awakening of their sexual desires:

Daquela feita tratava-se de uma história bonita, que metia uma grande fortuna escondida na barriga de um monte. E o rapazio, principalmente, abria a boca de deslumbramento. Todos guardavam gado na serra. E a todos ocorrera já que bem podia qualquer penedo dos que pisavam estar prenhe de tesouros imensos. (103, my italics)

Even when Rodrigo goes to the forbidden mountain, he does so more like the boy making his first curious exploration of the adult world of sex than someone who seeks the treasure itself: “A sedução de tudo estava no prodígio em si, na fascinação do próprio acto assombroso que iria realizar” (104-05, my italics). His wish to open up the ground could, in fact, easily be read as a metaphor for wishing to achieve sexual fulfilment from a passive woman who will grant his every wish: “*Abrir um monte! Dizer com ânimo e certeza duas palavras, e uma riqueza sem par oferecer-se passiva aos olhos da gente!*” (105, my italics).

As far as the location of Rodrigo’s adventure is concerned, Espírito Santo confirms that in the popular mind sexual adventure of the type which will interest a youngster is normally expected to be carried out outside the community, whose own space is reserved for more committed relationships:

Para lá . . . fica o território da gente “de fora,” de duvidosos costumes . . . os costumes são mais “livres” entre os “outros,” facto de que se tira partido por ocasião de uma festa ou de um passeio. As relações extraconjugais estabelecem-se também para lá desse limite, enquanto que os parceiros para o casamento começam por ser procurados entre as pessoas “do lado de cá.” (28)

In Rodrigo's case, then, although he is not aware of it, his incursion into what he believes to be forbidden territory paradoxically leads him by an unconventional route to the orthodox recognition of the forces which control life in his community: the regular renewal offered by nature and the human instinct for survival, which we have already seen exemplified in a very different way in "O Alma-Grande."

No longer will Rodrigo be the passive child who suffers in silence the primitive instruction given by externally-imposed instruments of social order and discipline such as the Church and the school: "Em Urros, ao lado da instrução da escola e da igreja, a primeira dada a palmatoadas pelo mestre e a segunda a bofetões pelo prior . . ." (101). In common with the Robalo of "Fronteira," Rodrigo realizes that the official discourse of obedience and orthodoxy laid down by Church and State are inadequate for survival in this land, where the principles which allow the community to function in practice are very different ones, tied into natural rather than man-made cycles, thus renewing the significance of the Christian mythology of the lamb in a way which is meaningful for the community rather than simply the dead letter of an alien scripture: this new-born lamb will live and die literally in order that man may live,<sup>21</sup> and, in common with Christ, the lamb of God, it teaches Rodrigo a life-giving lesson, in this case that rewards are gained by work in the fields, and that this will bring him treasures of an undreamt-of kind if he participates fully in the life around him. In common with figures such as Moses and Nietzsche's Zarathustra, he therefore comes back down from the mountain a wiser man than when he went up to it.<sup>22</sup> In this way, then, in common with Robalo, Rodrigo learns that he cannot exceed the powers given to others and remain within the community; he, too, learns that full integration requires the acceptance of the normal parameters of village life.

The concept of borders and boundaries in this cycle is therefore a variable one. References may be purely factual ones, such as the use of the political border with Spain in "A Confissão," or the same border may be exploited in a way which increases the depth of psychological analysis, as is the case in "Fronteira." But the boundaries which are meaningful in these stories may also be ones which are less easily perceptible than the lines drawn on a map to divide one country from another, and it is this type of frontier which stories such as "O Regresso," "O Leproso" and "O Sésamo" manipulate in order to convey Torga's ambivalent depiction of his native region, a region of intense internal warmth and community spirit, but also - in order for that

intense sense of identity to exist - a region where non-conformity is frowned upon and even the dearest sons of any village may be excluded if they fail to pay their dues of loyalty and devotion to this most demanding of mothers.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> It is clear from this statement that Torga's reference to "teus irmãos" in this context means something akin to the idea of Frank O'Connor, who writes: "The short story has never had a hero. What it has instead is a submerged population group" (18). As O'Connor himself acknowledges, this phrase "submerged population group" is perhaps not the best one for his conception of the short story, but for lack of a better alternative he uses it consistently throughout his study. He employs the phrase in a sense which might be expressed in the 1990s in terms such as "marginalised" or "peripheral voices," as he makes clear in his comments on Katherine Mansfield: "I mean that there is no real indication of a submerged population, a population which is not by its very nature in need of a coherent voice" (133). In these stories, then, Torga aims to provide a "coherent voice" for the "submerged population group" of his own region.

<sup>2</sup> Lopes develops this point in her article on the story "Vicente" (in Torga's *Bichos*), where she writes: "Eis-nos chegados ao fim do combate: 'a vontade tirânica' e destruidora do Criador é batida pela 'vontade inabalável de viver' da sua Criatura animada por uma força que recebe dum chão que é mais que a sua crista visível: é um poderoso subsolo que engendra a vida e recupera a morte - é o Aquém de que o Aqui é um superficial florescer." ("Além, Aqui e Aquém em Miguel Torga: Análise de 'Vicente'," 44)

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller discussion of one of the surviving crypto-Judaic communities in Portugal, see David Augusto Canelo, *Os Últimos Judeus Secretos* (Belmonte: *Jornal de Belmonte*, 1985). For information on the communities in Trás-os-Montes (Belmonte is located in the Alentejo region), see Amílcar Paulo, *Os Judeus Secretos em Portugal* (Lisbon: Editorial Labirinto, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Teresa Rita Lopes makes what is essentially the same point in relation to the depiction of childbirth in Torga when she writes: "Mas importa reparar que, em lugar de bestificar o humano, Torga procura uma espécie de ascese ao contrário, um recontactar com uma pureza e rudeza original para regressar a uma harmonia com a natureza e, muito especial-mente, com a Mãe-Terra" ("Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo," 220). For a fuller discussion of the function of imagery relating human beings to animals in Torga's work, see João Camilo dos Santos' article on this issue in relation to Torga's *Bichos*. The passage discussed here is also noted by Fagundes (218).

<sup>5</sup> This association of the customs officer with the psychosexual make-up of the individual was suggested to me by Rupert Allen's similar analysis of the function of the "carabineiros" in Federico García Lorca's poem "Preciosa y el aire," contained in his *Romancero Gitano* (Allen, 20-21).

<sup>6</sup> The association of natural fertility processes with both the act of smuggling and with Robalo's later integration into the community is, in fact, made earlier in the text when the smugglers are said to return from their missions "do mágico ventre da noite" (28, my italics). The point is further emphasised by Isabel's subterfuge of continuing her illegal trade after the child's birth by hiding silks under her clothing as if she were pregnant (36).

<sup>7</sup> Trigo makes the same distinction (specifically in connection with Torga) between the State as a masculine entity and the nation as a less separated, feminine concept:

Portugal é muito mais Terra Pai na obra de Torga do que Terra-Mãe. Esta, reincido, é a Ibéria, que o poeta nunca confunde com a Espanha, no sentido estrito. Visite-se o Diário XIV no calendário de 9 de Fevereiro de 1983 e confirmar-se-á essa visão mátria da Ibéria: . . .

*"Ibéria. Foi a conversa da noite. Uma Ibéria que afirmei convictamente aos meus interlocutores ser um verdadeiro continente cultural, económico e político. Mais do que um conglomerado de regiões, um conjunto de nações."* (11; the italics are Trigo's)

The quotation is from Torga's *Diário* - XIV, 36. The edition which I have used reproduces the final paragraph of this passage in slightly differently words (Trigo's article does not specify which edition of the *Diário* he has consulted):

Ibéria. Foi a conversa da noite. Uma Ibéria que afirmei convictamente aos meus interlocutores ser um verdadeiro continente pela singularidade da sua fisionomia física, rática, idiomática, cultural, económica e política. Mais do que um conglomerado de regiões, um conjunto de nações.

For further discussion of the equation of the concepts of "Terra" and "Mãe" in Torga, see Ferreira, 293-97.

<sup>8</sup> I follow the same essential distinction between "terra" and "Estado" here as that made by Torga himself in the Preface to the Spanish edition of his *Bichos*, where he writes: "A minha pátria cívica acaba em Barca de Alva; mas a minha pátria telúrica só finda nos Pirinéus"; this passage is reproduced in his *Diário* - III (47). In later life, however, Torga's attitude towards Spain became more negative; see his fears for Portugal's future in the context of the Single European Market and Spain's growing economic muscle in the early 1990s, as expressed in his *Diário* - XVI:

Chaves, 3 de Setembro de 1993 - Hoje foi a minha vez de atravessar a fronteira sem cancelas de nenhuma ordem. Nem fiscais alfandegários, nem polícia a carimbar o passaporte. Apenas um painel de doze estrelas a mandar seguir. Mas nem por isso andei por Espanha dentro de coração solto. Confrontado com a realidade do poder crescente que por toda a parte nela verifiquei, a minha velha suspicácia de ibérico livre veio à tona agravada . . . Para todos os nossos vizinhos, somos independentes, sim, mas provisoriamente, enquanto os iluminados governantes que temos não acabem de abrir mão dos nossos últimos triunfos nacionais, e um outro Felipe II nos integre submissos no grande redil peninsular, desta vez sem necessidade de herdar, de comprar e de conquistar o rectângulo rebelde. Recebe-o gratuitamente de bandeja. (174-75)

<sup>9</sup> This relativisation of the concepts of God and the Devil may well be a conscious reflection on Torga's part of popular beliefs in Northern Portugal. Espírito Santo writes of numerous rites and beliefs honouring the Devil which exemplify the popular saying "O Diabo não é tão feio como o pintam" (125-26).

<sup>10</sup> The references to Eliade are to Mircea Eliade, *Aspects du Mythe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), 102 and 101 respectively.

<sup>11</sup> On the theme of exclusion of women from the community in *Novos Contos da Montanha*, see Maria Manuel Lisboa's analyses of the stories "O Milagre" and "Mariana" in her articles "Cadáveres Aditados: a Loucura na Heroína Torguiana" and "Madwomen, Whores and Torga: Desecrating the Canon?" respectively. In her analysis of both of these stories, the critic identifies structures which exclude women from society for their reproductive offences against the community.

<sup>12</sup> As "A Confissão" was included in *Novos Contos da Montanha* only in the fifth edition of the work (see Fagundes 233, note 13), it is perhaps best viewed as a positive counterpoint to the negative experience recounted in the earlier "O Regresso," which did appear in earlier editions; as Fagundes points out, the two stories are placed consecutively in what he labels a "mini-ciclo" (Fagundes 180). This, of course, raises the complex question of *Novos Contos da Montanha* as a story-cycle rather than as a mere collection of short stories unrelated to one another except by their common setting in Trás-os-Montes. It would be impossible to do justice to this question in the context of the present article, but the recurrence of certain themes

clearly suggests a cycle of some kind: even Fagundes' own lengthy article, which is explicitly centered on this question, claims to reach only a provisional conclusion as to the overall significance which can be attributed to the collection as a whole (223), although it discusses the subject in considerable depth and from a variety of angles.

<sup>13</sup> Lopes prefers to quote this passage from the second edition of 1945, on the grounds that Torga's substitution of the word "povoação" for the original "terra" in subsequent editions diminishes the resonances of the text ("Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo," 216, note 30).

<sup>14</sup> I take the reference to be to the Spanish Civil War in view of Ivo's declaration of himself as a volunteer on his arrival at the frontier (147-48). In this case he would probably have fought for the Republicans, which may well contribute to his family's disowning of him in a predominantly conservative society such as that of the rural North of Portugal (146). Fagundes also speculates whether the reference may be to the Spanish Civil War but adds that "Nada na história, porém, justifica uma resposta definitiva" (176). In truth it does not really matter which war it is; the essential question in this story is that of Ivo's relationship to his native soil.

<sup>15</sup> There is, of course, a faint echo of Sebastianism and more particularly of Garrett's *Frei Luís de Sousa* in this story. In common with Garrett's Romeiro in his final interview with Telmo Pais (Act III, Scene V), Ivo refuses to accept a name when the child whom he meets identifies him with his past self (148). Moreover, the circumstances which lead him to this rejection of his own identity are very similar to those of D. João de Portugal on his return to Almada:

Sabia que morrera há muito para toda a aldeia. A mãe, a Maria Torres, trajava ainda de preto, mas acostumara-se à tristeza de o ter perdido. O pai, ensimesmado como sempre, engolira o desespero silenciosamente, envelhecera dez anos em poucos meses e esquecera-o também. As irmãs, depois do choro convulsivo e do ano de luto carregado, vestiam blusas claras e namoravam alegremente. Era a vida. Já ninguém o lembrava, o desejava, o chamava ali das veras do corpo e da alma. (146)

Compare these reflections to Romeiro's words to Telmo Pais in Garrett's drama: "Agora é preciso remediar o mal feito. Fui imprudente, fui injusto, fui duro e cruel. E para quê? - D. João de Portugal morreu no dia em que sua mulher disse que ele morrera... Na hora em que ela acreditou na minha morte, nessa hora morri." (213). As Lisboa writes in a different context: "The ultimate post-colonial irony, then, may well prove to be the realization, in the aftermath of a return to the place of origin, that one has after all lost oneself" ("You Can't Go Home," 356).

<sup>16</sup> This isolationist vision of the mountain is essentially a subversive one, as it clearly contradicts the regime's integrationist exploitation of events such as the competition to find "A aldeia mais portuguesa de Portugal" in 1938; see Ferreira's interesting account of this attempt at using ethnography as propaganda (294-95).

<sup>17</sup> One might choose to make a comparison here with Camilo's *Novelas do Minho*, where reintegration into the homeland cannot be achieved through the accumulation of wealth abroad, but rather only through the artifice of the revelation of a long-lost family link (see, for example, stories such as *O Comendador* and *Maria Moisés*). The essential vision in both authors is, however, the same: integration in rural communities normally requires sustained and unquestioning involvement in local life of a type which it is difficult for the outsider or the individualist to display. In general in these works Camilo has to resort to the *deus ex machina* of blood-ties to impose a happy ending on what is essentially an unlikely reintegration.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the gradual stages of Julião's exclusion and persecution, see the excellent article on this story by Alinaluz Santiago-Torres, culminating in an examination of the importance of the use of fire to symbolically eliminate figures of extreme revulsion such as witches, vampires and (in more recent times) victims of AIDS (260). Figures such as Julião thus exemplify what O'Connor meant when he wrote that in Joyce "the submerged population of the short stories becomes liberated into figures from classical mythology" (153): as

Fagundes notes, Julião displays a certain tragic grandeur in his refusal to bow meekly to the distaste for him expressed by the villagers: "Apesar de doente, as árvores a que está associado são nobres, o pinheiro e o sobreiro - sendo o último, note-se, símbolo do país" (220).

<sup>19</sup> The theme of "O Sésamo" recurs elsewhere in Torga; Fernandes da Silveira alludes to it in *O Outro Livro de Job*, *Lamentação* and *Cântico do Homem* (37, note 6), while Lopes also lists a reference in *Portugal* ("Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo," 215).

<sup>20</sup> Fernandes da Silveira also quotes from another article (co-authored by himself and Vilma Arêas) which makes the same point: "Análise de *Novos Contos da Montanha*," in *Novos Cadernos da PUC* (Estudos da Literatura Portuguesa), 9 (May 1972): 51-62.

<sup>21</sup> On Torga's renewal of myth in a form meaningful to the people of the mountain, Lopes writes: "Ora o que Miguel Torga tenta, em muitas das suas páginas, é restituir à dimensão de mito os seres e os actos da vida sepultados sob a ganga do hábito e da mediocridade" ("Miguel Torga: Mito, Rito e Disfemismo," 208).

<sup>22</sup> See Exod., 19.20-25, and Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (10). It is worth noting that when Moses is called up to Mount Sinai, he too breaks a societal taboo in going there: "And Moses said unto the LORD, The people cannot come up to mount Sinai: for thou chargedst us, saying, Set bounds about the mount, and sanctify it." (Exod., 19.23) I have used the King James Version of the Bible.

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