Educating Joaninha: Writing the Gender Divide in Travels in My Homeland

Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez

If, for the most part, Almeida Garrett's theoretical disquisitions on education have been heralded as emblematic of progressive thought in the first half of the nineteenth century and have placed him rightly among the most admirable avant-garde thinkers of his time, this general statement can barely be extended to Garrett's ideas on the education of women, a realm in which the author remained most cautious. Indeed, as Teresa Leitão de Barros analyzes in her 1963 article "Garrett e o seu ideal de educação feminina," and Fernando Augusto Machado later reiterates towards the end of his book-length study Almeida Garrett e a introdução do pensamento educacional de Rousseau em Portugal (1993), for the author of Travels in My Homeland the issue of female education was a minor element of his pedagogical agenda. This gender shortsightedness does not stem from the author blatantly ignoring the belo sexo. Quite the contrary: part of Garrett's writing, such as the seven issues of O Toucador (dedicated to Portuguese women in 1822) is concerned precisely with women. More specifically, on the theme of female education, Garrett explores the topic in his extensive (albeit unfinished) treatise Da educação (1829) and also, sporadically, in his journalistic writing (in O Chronista, for example).3 He likewise illustrates his theoretical ideas in his poetical and fictional work—as we shall later discuss in relation to Travels in My Homeland. Given the breadth of his writing, it is surprising to note that Garrett, an ideological pioneer on so many fronts, steers clear of any innovative thoughts

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as he addresses the question of women's education from a most conservative angle. He broaches the issue by mainly repeating the common ground laid out by earlier educational thinkers, as is transparent in both his theoretical and fictional writing. After situating Garrett's thoughts on women's education in relation to other writers, we will turn our attention to Garrett's canonical novel *Travels in My Homeland* (1846) and the "education" of Joaninha, one of the most prominent female fictional characters that our literary memory of the Portuguese nineteenth century has preserved.

A worthy education: women not included

Almeida Garrett's ideological sphere reposes heavily and throughout on two complementary and related pillars: education and instruction. In the 1820s, when the revolutionary verve of the "Regeneração" was still freshly inscribed upon the nation's collective memory, Garrett's comprehensive project to construct anew a community of citizens entailed the reform of the educational system primarily to rectify the widespread illiteracy and lack of formal instruction throughout the country. In 1829, in *O Chaveco Liberal*, Garrett states his belief that the political regeneration of the country would only be possible if two-thirds of the population learned how to write and understood what they read. For Garrett, a valid educational reform would necessarily extend beyond social and geographic (urban) barriers to reach the majority of the nation, since "a worthy education is eminently a national education" (*Da educação* 677; trans. mine).

This basic principal of Garrett's educational agenda can be viewed as an honorable attempt to democratize education in Portugal, yet it remains on a theoretical and superficial plane when one bears in mind his views on the education of women. If, on the one hand, Garrett perceives women in parts of his work as equal to men—which is fitting with the new historical and civic consciousness that emerged and spread throughout Europe following the French Revolution⁶—on the other hand, his more traditional approach to the female population is apparent in the emphasis he places on the domestication of women as wives, daughters, and mothers; their necessary dependence on their husbands; their lack of autonomy; and the primacy of nature over education in the molding of their mental and intellectual well-being and development (*Da educação* 755–61). As such, when examined critically from the standpoint of gender, it becomes obvious that the proclaimed modernity of Garrett's educational ideas stops short at the gender divide.

As mentioned above, ingrained in Garrett's thoughts on education is the idea that a woman must first and foremost be a mother and as a consequence her limited social functions are predicated on this reductive construction of the female subject. In the ninth letter of *Da educação*, Garrett asserts that woman was "molded by nature for motherhood" (757). In his view, woman's place is primarily by the hearth and a necessary condition for safeguarding society from decadence and degeneration:

Observe society in its state of decadence and you will see in countries where civilization has degenerated [. . .] men resembling women by their timidity and domesticity, women having abandoned domesticity and the private sphere to engage in tumultuous activities of the other sex, and the so-called supremacy of man is reduced to a vain and ridiculous name. Women are no longer mothers, the function prepared for them by nature: they are erudite, writers, statespersons, everything other than women, with all the vices of men and none of their female qualities. (*Da educação* 757; trans. mine)

Such social-professional sexual discrimination is not altogether shocking at the time if we recall some of the writings that circulated widely throughout Europe. The mid-nineteenth century saw the publication of works such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's *Contradictions économiques* (1846)—where he first discusses his signature bipartite maxim for women, "courtisane ou menagerie"⁷—and Jean Michelet's *L'amour* (1858), which likewise eulogizes motherhood and domesticity perceived through the gender-informed doctrine of separate spheres.⁸ In Garrett's work, women's state of domesticity likewise stems from their economic dependence. He claims that women should not "serve men" properly speaking (a term he rejects as uncivil, unfair, and impolite), but that they need to be subjected to men precisely because of their dependent state (*Da educação* 756).

According to Manuel Canaveira's reading of Garrett's treatise on education, the author's impetus to reform and regenerate pedagogical ideas and practices in Portugal stands upon the firm misconception that he is the creator and initiator of all modern Portuguese pedagogical thought and that prior to his time only the sixteenth-century poet Diogo de Teive wrote any work of interest in the field. Canaveira goes on to justify his assertion by listing over thirty authors whose works, written from the fifteenth through the eighteenth century, deal with pedagogical issues in Portugal (88). The critic

places Garrett's conservatism concerning women's education in the footsteps of Verney; according to Canaveira, Garrett "merely imitates everything that had been written by eighteenth-century pedagogues, especially Luís António Verney in *O verdadeiro método de estudar*, and the author of the booklet entitled *Tratado sobre a igualdade dos sexos* (also known as *Elogio do merecimento das mulheres*)" (90; trans. mine). Furthermore, Canaveira explains that the fact that Garrett accepts without any reservations the reduced importance of intellectual education for women overrides his apparent defense of education for both sexes (in statements such as those quoted above where Garrett refers to the need for a "national education"). Indeed, it would seem that Garrett's gender-biased conceptualization of education goes beyond biological differences (which would have consequences on physical and moral education) and rests upon social prejudices.

Though Canaveira does have a point when he refers to the quantity of pedagogical works produced over the four centuries prior to Almeida Garrett's *Da educação* (amongst other works), as well as when he makes reference to the nineteenth-century author's apparent ignorance concerning these texts, what is of greater interest for our comprehension of Garrett's writings on education are the *ideas* expressed by these and other writers and, in particular for our study, those writings that concern women's education. Prior to Garrett, the "woman question" was discussed sporadically, in texts as diverse as *Dos privilégios e prerrogativos que o género feminino tem* (1539) by the sixteenth-century writer Rui Gonçalves, or the above-mentioned canonical work by Luís António Verney, *O verdadeiro método de estudar de Verney* (1746), both of which posit the (albeit reduced) intellectual capacity of women. Other texts were certainly less favorable to female intellectual development, such as the misogynous writings of Francisco Manuel de Melo compiled in *Carta de guia de casados* (1651).

Closer to Garrett's time, other men wrote in favor of women's educational emancipation, most prominently Mouzinho da Silveira, who is quoted as attempting to initiate a more drastic move towards women's education by stating as early as 1823 that "the education of women must not remain barbarically abandoned as has been the case up until now" (12). It is mostly, however, during the second half of the nineteenth century that the question of female education is brought with force to the forefront of public debates, such as in the works of the lawyer Inocéncio de Sousa Duarte (1819–1884) and of the professor, politician, and future president of the Republic, Bernardino Machado (1851–1944). The posthumous essay by the Minister of Public

Education, António da Costa (1824–1892), entitled *A mulher em Portugal* (1892), also expressed sentiments shared by a large number of Republicans who believed that the road to emancipation necessarily implied female education. Such writings can be viewed as the predecessors of the Portuguese feminist movement that would only truly materialize during the first decades of the twentieth century. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, at a time of budding liberalism, vacillating governments, and transient constitutions, in a country plagued by civil war and economic instability, it is not surprising that new possibilities for women could only slowly become available as the concepts of "individual" and "subjectivity" progressively created an appropriate forum for female emancipation fitting with the spirit of "Regeneração" that was only slowly taking hold. The acceptance of women's rights and intellectual qualities that would forge the necessary backdrop for their educational development on a par with men would have to await the following century.

Given this climate of social limitations for women, Garrett's conservative position is not peculiar. Rather, his writings echo the mainstream thoughts on female education at the time. The following analysis of *Travels in My Homeland* will focus on Garrett's conservative views of female education as fictionally represented by the main protagonist Joana/Joaninha, placed diametrically in opposition to her male cousin Carlos's formal education.

Nature vs. society: the educational dilemma

The division "nature/education" (and by extension "natural education/ social education") was a frequently debated topic during the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century, as the 1750 essay competition run by the Dijon Academy of Sciences historically emblematizes.¹³ In the context of Romanticism and here specifically in relation to *Travels in My Homeland*, as Carlos Reis rightly points out, the meaning of education is intricately linked to the relatively pernicious influences of society on the individual, including the educational procedures that thwart the natural authenticity and genuine goodness of man (Reis 75).

Critics have often referred to *Travels in My Homeland* as the text in which Garrett most closely echoes Rousseau's theory by which man is naturally good but corrupted by society. ¹⁴ However, what has received little attention is the fact that Garrett's representation of Rousseau's dichotomy is clearly articulated along the lines of gender: Joaninha remains true to her natural origins and education whereas her male cousin Carlos seeks his education outside the idyllic valley of

Santarém and degenerates in society. Fitting with the widely accepted practices of the time (which Garrett likewise echoes in his treatise *Da educação*) it was customary for boys to seek a formal education outside the home, whereas young girls were expected to remain in the household. As Garrett writes:

Young men: you should attend a public school outside of the maternal nest and the comfort of the paternal home, to become accustomed to the severe regularity of unfamiliar educators, and to the dealings and conversations of men with whom you will have to associate [. . .]. Young women: you should stay in your private quarters under the watchful eye of your mother and only in her care. (Da educação 680; trans. mine)

In other words, Garrett sees fit for young men to leave their natural environment and be exposed to the outside world, whereas women's place remains that of the home, where they receive an education through the teachings of their mothers.

The interpretations of the expression "natural education" are multiple. ¹⁵ In the context of *Travels in My Homeland*, "natural education" can be perceived as an education in and of nature whose effects would be beneficial for those seeking satisfaction and fulfillment in the immediate context of the present here and now; on the other hand, a "social education," conducted in civilization, is portrayed as potentially harmful when motivated by selfish or materialistic goals. The combined effects of a social education and the negative aspects of society are capable of undoing the natural essence of man. Both genres of education are depicted in Garrett's novel and merit closer examination.

Joana, portrayed as the natural woman *par excellence* in the novella embedded within *Travels in My Homeland*, is an extension of her natural habitat—as critics have been prompt to acknowledge. ¹⁶ Similar to Rousseau's Émile, she is a product of nature, and as such her natural qualities, beauty, health, and goodness stem from the milieu in which she lives and remain as she develops towards adulthood. She is described in Chapter XII as "the embodiment of sweetness, the ideal of spirituality" (*Travels* 74). Raised far from society, her "education" is conducted by natural life lessons and personal experiences. Nature, in opposition to education, has formed Joaninha:

Natural grace and an admirable symmetry of proportion had endowed that countenance and sixteen-year-old body with all the noble elegance, all the unas-

suming ease of manner, all the graceful suppleness that the art, the manners and the experience of the court and of the most select company eventually confer on a few rare and privileged creatures in this world.

But in this case, nature had done it all, or nearly all, and education nothing, or close to nothing. (74)

As the story goes, Joaninha did not receive a formal education, yet it is pertinent to remember that she is fully literate and knows how to read and write. Her "education"—more natural than social—provides all the necessary skills for her lifestyle in the valley of Santarém.

Given her family background and the absence of her biological mother, it is most likely that Joaninha, brought up by her grandmother, learned all the domestic skills for running the household from this surrogate mother. This corresponds to that which Garrett stated almost twenty years earlier in Da educação: "in all and any social class, in any state of fortune, the mother is to be the only educator, and no one can, in principal, transfer this right and this obligation to another person" (681). On the other hand and in return, it is Joana who will nurse and take care of her grandmother when she becomes blind and can no longer carry out the simplest domestic chores. The grandmother's activities are limited to spinning yarn on the front porch of the house, and it is only through Joana that the grandmother has access to her grandson Carlos's letters, which Joana reads for her out loud. Through Joana the grandmother's life is physically, mentally, and affectively prolonged. It is not incidental that following Joana's death the grandmother survives physically but is "dead to the world. She neither sees nor hears, she does not speak and recognizes no one" (245). Joana's madness and death remove the grandmother's lifeline to the reality of the world around her.

Nonetheless, before the tragic denouement of the novella, Joaninha's upbringing is emblematic of Garrett's pronouncements on the domesticity of women. Confined not only to the household, but also to the valley of Santarém, an idyllic setting that Chapter X amply describes, Joana is the product of her environment and also its prolongation. At different points in the narrative she is portrayed in the role of daughter (in relation to the grandmother), mother (through the "mothering" she affords the grandmother), and even, to a certain extent, as a wife when she lovingly nurses Carlos back to good health. All of Joana's roles correspond to the functions that Garrett outlined as appropriate for women. In his depiction, Joana remains removed from the ills of society.

In *Da educação*, Garrett claims that the strength of men is in their arms and the strength of women in their lips and eyes (756): Joana is emblematic of this. Joana's green eyes have merited much critical commentary as one of her main features and also because of the fact that they echo the natural greenness of her surroundings. Let us also remember that it is through her voice that she is first introduced to the narrative as she calls out to her grandmother on the porch, and her "dear, welcome voice" and demeanor identifies the protagonist with her feathered companion the nightingale, from whence her appellation "maiden of the nightingales" (120).

Yet, on the other hand, Joana tries desperately to retain and conquer Carlos's heart and is unsuccessful. Garrett's theory, whereby women should do all to please men, to be useful for them, to be loved and honored by them, fails (Da educação 756-57). When Joana realizes that her love for Carlos is unreciprocated, she becomes mad and ultimately dies. Raised within the same household, Carlos's departure from the valley of Santarém marked the beginning of the cousins' incompatibility: his social education separates him from his "original" condition as he succumbs to exterior influences. It is interesting to note that Garrett places traveling as part of a "good and noble education," but only when such an education has a firm national basis and the travels are complementary but not reactionary to domesticity (Da educação 677). In Travels in My Homeland, Carlos follows the steps prescribed by Garrett for young men—namely, he departs from the valley of Santarém to attend a more formal university education outside of his childhood sphere. At first, as Friar Dinis discusses with the grandmother, Carlos "is God-fearing, he is neither covetous nor servile by disposition, he is not a hypocrite, he has not yet been bitten by the liberal craze. He will be a worthy man" (97). Only later, during the second half of the "memorable year of 1830" and having graduated from college, does Carlos's degeneration become physically apparent as he is motivated by political and material gain and sets his mind on emigrating (98). This pinpoints the fact that it is not Carlos's education per se that is his downfall, but his ideological and political involvement, as clearly expressed through the heated dialogues with Friar Dinis, from whom nothing is hidden. If at first Carlos is merely an observer of political events, he later becomes involved and participates actively in the liberal cause. Once a free man, he has acquired political and societal obligations. Just as Rousseau outlined in the Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, "De libre et indépendant qu'était auparavant l'homme, le voilà par une multitude

de nouveaux besoins assujetti" (Œuvres 61). Carlos's progressive development evolves from his complete ignorance in the valley of Santarém, to a theoretical knowledge of political life and premises acquired through his university education and his social acquaintances, to ultimately being immersed actively in a political and ideological conflict. His formal education in Lisbon and Coimbra, his theoretical and practical knowledge of the laws and conventions of Civilization, remove him further and further from the natural state that was once his childhood of innocence. Joaninha, on the other hand, when reunited with Carlos during their first encounters, is described as "a sweet, beautiful young woman, a complete, fully grown woman, who had nevertheless lost none of the attraction, the charm, the sweet, delightful fragrance of childish innocence she had when he [Carlos] left her" (124; emphasis added). Whereas Joana is and remains the extension of nature, Carlos becomes an integral part of Civilization.

Garrett revisits this lost state of "childish innocence" through contact with Civilization a few years after the publication of Travels in My Homeland, towards the end of his literary production in his unfinished "Brazilian" novel Helena (1853-54), the novel to which his biographer Gomes de Amorim refers as Garrett's "very last word" (Amorim 427). In Helena, the dichotomy between a more natural education and an education conducted in a formal setting is portrayed by the contrast between two of the main protagonists, the daughter Isabel and her mother Maria Teresa. Both are born in the Northeast region of Brazil, in a forest area of the "Reconcâvo" region; however, Isabel's education takes place far from society, conducted by her English governess and her parents and complemented by her own choice of readings, in direct contact with nature, whereas her mother Maria Teresa is sent to a European school, "a prison" where she suffers all the martyrdoms of Civilization (Garrett, Obras 455). It is interesting to note that Maria Teresa's sojourn in Europe goes against Garrett's theory of women being primarily educated by their mothers and in their own homes. Fittingly, the consequences for Maria Teresa are brutal as the protagonist suffers from poor health and feels that it is her education abroad that has destroyed her "blissful childhood" (Obras 455). In contrast to her mother, Isabel benefits from home schooling and remains healthy and strong in the heart of nature. Inversely to the description of Carlos's degeneration portrayed in Travels in My Homeland as the young boy learns to think—an activity that Friar Dinis attempts to forbid—in Helena, Isabel's feelings dominate her reason, as she states:

I say what I feel, I tell the impressions that a book leaves in me, as I tell the impressions left by a beautiful landscape, a painting, a statue. This is not understanding or judging, but feeling. It is allowing myself to be penetrated by perfect and natural ideas, true feelings that touch my spirit, only the language of my parents. As you can tell, I was raised here. Had I gone to a foreign school, who knows . . . (Garrett, *Obras* 443)

Through the protagonist's impressions of her education, it is clear that reading is an extension of her communion with nature and does not disrupt the natural harmony of her lifestyle dominated by "perfect and natural ideas" and "true feelings."

It is indeed symbolic that several years after the publication of *Travels in My Homeland* Garrett returns once again to the same "educational dilemma" in *Helena*, proving his ongoing preoccupation with the theme since his earliest theoretical writing of the 1820s. *Helena* is one of Garrett's less frequently commented texts, yet it remains an important document in relation to the nature/civilization dichotomy. In *Helena*, the contrast is amplified and all the more drastic since the "natural education" is set in a removed Brazilian jungle-region, both figuratively and literally separated from the context of a (European) education in Civilization. Also, in this his last novel, the author moves away from the educational gender-divide portrayed in *Travels in My Homeland* since it is Maria Teresa who is sent to Europe to receive a more formal education. It is interesting to note this change since it dislocates the emphasis from a gender-informed dichotomy, as in *Travels in My Homeland*, to the portrayal of geographical and contextualized educational alternatives.

In both novels, the educational dilemma resonates with Almeida Garrett's thoughts on education towards the end of his life, when he no longer believes in the concrete possibility of the Regeneration of society. Disillusioned, he is far removed from the optimism and enthusiasm of the 1820s. In Rousseau's footsteps, Garrett did not condemn civilization but wanted to see the natural qualities of humanity sustained in society. The fact that Carlos rejects his family and all traditional values, no longer fears God, and ultimately becomes a Baron—the epitomic incarnation of materialism—and the fact that Maria Teresa becomes weak to the point of losing her health and dying both echo the same ultimate message: that of the corruptive force of civilization. Garrett, perhaps even drawing from his own biographical experience, was unable to come to terms with this aspect of civilization that, often identified with

social education as prominently portrayed in Garrett's work, disrupts child-hood innocence, simplicity, humility, tenderness, purity, and the fear of God.

A climate of frustration and gender-biased social limitations regarding the education of women persists in Portugal through the end of the nineteenth century. As was often expressed throughout the century, why would women seek education if they were denied the opportunity to put their training to any good use? For this situation to be rectified, it became necessary for the automatic identification of women as housewives, mothers, or daughters to be complemented by other social functions that would lead to and stem from formal education for women. Therefore, the first step towards widespread education for women was a much needed change in mentality, a slow process that within the context of a favorable political and social climate would ultimately entail an opening towards women's presence in formal education. This "awakening" would only bear significant fruits in the following century. As the historian Irene Vaquinhas states, despite the fact that the 1822 Constitution provided schools for both sexes, rare were the establishments that opened their doors to women (28). Likewise, multiple reforms and legislative measures that provided schooling for women or mixed schools that would be open for the instruction of women, accompanied by the financial means to achieve these goals, remained, for the most part, theoretical dreams. 17 Nonetheless, given that Garrett was a pioneer on so many other fronts, including educative reforms, his noncommittal stance with regards to female education appears somewhat out of character. All the more so when we consider that the theme of female education is woven throughout his work, as depicted in his two last novels and prominently in Travels in My Homeland, which conservatively preserves the educational gender-divide.

Notes

- ¹ For a discussion of the modernity of Almeida Garrett's educational theories, see Fernando Augusto Machado's "Ideário educacional" (87–106).
 - ² See in particular pages 178–80 of Machado.
 - ³ Garrett explores this theme in "Licções de poesia e de litteratura a uma jovem senhora."
- ⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of Garrett's educational ideas, see Machado, *Almeida Garrett*, especially Chapters X and XI.
- ⁵ See *O Chaveco Liberal*, no. 17, 30-XII-1829 (qtd. in Machado, "Ideário educacional" 88). The original reads as follows: "Creio na regeneração política do género-humano, e que há-de ter lugar quando duas terças partes dos Povos souberem escrever e entenderem o que lerem."

- ⁶ At least theoretically, in France the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789) and the important constitutional laws passed in September 1792 concerning civil status and divorce established equal rights for husband and wife.
- ⁷ This now classic formula "courtisane ou menagerie" is first stated by Proudhon in *Contradictions économiques* (197). See also McMillan (2–9).
- ⁸ The titles of the different chapters of Michelet's work are very telling: "La femme est une malade"; "La femme doit peu travailler"; "L'homme doit gagner pour deux." These last two chapters deal specifically with the doctrine of separate spheres (Michelet 59–66).
- ⁹ Garrett expresses this idea at the very beginning of his introduction to *Da educação* as a means to justify the need for his treatise (677).
 - 10 Otd. in Machado, Almeida Garrett 179.
- ¹¹ See, for example, de Sousa Duarte's text A mulher na sociedade civil (1870) and Machado's Introdução à pedagogia (1892) and A socialização do ensino (1897).
- ¹² At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth century, women's education would at last become more solidly formulated and visibly articulated in a widespread process of greater valorization. In the writings of female journalists and authors such as Alice Pestana, Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho, Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcellos, Ana de Castro Osório, and Adelaide Cabete, amongst others, a frequent topic is the need to "educate women," "make her free," "make her worthy," as repeatedly stated by Alice Pestana ("Caiel") in her 1898 text *La femme et la paix: Appel aux mères portugaises* (33, 38). It is also at this time that feminist-oriented organizations are formed and circulate their ideology in their periodical publications. Among these organizations are O Grupo de Estudos Feministas, a Liga Republicana das Mulheres Portuguesas, and a Associação de Propaganda Feminista.
- ¹³ The theme of the competition was "Has the progress of the arts and sciences contributed to the purification or the corruption of morals?"
 - ¹⁴ See, for example, Jacinto do Prado Coelho (81–84); Carlos Reis (75); and Victor Mendes (33).
- ¹⁵ Fernando Augusto Machado summarizes five meanings of the expression as presented by René Hubert in his treatise *Traité de pédagogie générale* as follows: a) a purely negative education, that presupposes absolute faith in the goodness of nature and whose goal is the regeneration of society; b) an education that does not cater to pedagogical goals, other than those written in nature; c) an education that seeks within nature the means towards action; d) an education that follows, step by step, the natural development of man; e) an education that being by definition natural is complemented by other sciences (Machado, *Almeida Garrett* 51; trans. mine).
 - 16 See Reis (78).
- ¹⁷ The first "Escola Normal Feminina" opened its doors in 1862 and the first "liceu" (high school) specifically for women, Maria Pia, began functioning in 1906.

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Kathryn Bishop-Sanchez is associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her first book, *Utopias Desmascaradas*, was published by the Portuguese National Press INCM in 2008. She has published articles in *Portuguese Studies*, *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, *Quadrant*, *Santa Barbara Portuguese Studies*, *World Literature and Its Time*, *Queirosiana* and *Portuguese Literary & Cultural Studies*.