

## "Woman" and the Time of Nation in Garrett's *Travels*: Take Two

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At the end of the impressively long epistle addressed to his sister-cousin, Joana, Carlos, the alter-ego of Garrett's fictional writer in *Travels in My Homeland* (1846), wraps up the gift of his much-traveled flesh and soul with a note of longing for familial paradise. While reportedly having been raised to follow "the tranquil glory and modest delights of a good family man," he claims to have lost himself to imagination "intoxicated with poetry" (242). He goes on to deny any direct responsibility for the fate making him "renounce for ever domestic hearth," adding unequivocally, "I did not make myself what I am" (242–43). Lest Joana or the virtual reader conclude that the influence of Romantic literature is solely to blame for his derailment, Carlos goes back in time to point out the origin of it all in his repenting old father, Friar Dinis, "the author of his and our misfortunes" (Garrett 243).

A structure of narcissistic-aggressive projection is here exhibited between the subject of enunciation, who dismisses self-authorship, and the noun phrase imprecating the friar as sole maker or "author" of the family's doom. By denying that the grandmother or his own mother were also responsible or "authors" of the family's downfall, Garrett's *enfant du siècle* displaces the feminine in a way that is in tune with the English Romantics' desire to forge a male-centered androgynous identity, as Diane Long Hoeveler has shown. Yet, Carlos's foreclosure of the grandmother and/or mother as agents or "authors" in their own right must also be understood within the historical frame of

the emergent liberal nation-state, specifically with reference to the changing position of women in the family. Although slow to take root, that change is announced as early as the first liberal experience of 1820, when what is to become the central nineteenth-century “problematic” (i.e., women) begins to be discussed in Portugal (Serrão 328–29).<sup>1</sup> The clash between Woman as pervasive ideological sign of the Eternal Feminine and women as an unstable human reality, gaining subject status and potentially impossible to contain within the newly reified civil sphere of the family may account for Carlos’s alleged inability to embrace patriarchy under liberalism. That clash may also account for his destruction of at least one woman, Joana, so that the feminine as poetic principle may survive only within himself. Be that as it may, Garrett’s Romantic hero does not accept the authorship and agency of those who would have begun to put in doubt the original *pater familias* role as a basic ordering principle of society.<sup>2</sup>

The difference that Carlos’s letter calls forth and simultaneously places under erasure sits on the specter of his dead mother, symptomatically foreclosed in his hysteric epistolary discourse. She hovers between the grandmother damned with the curse of first causes and the granddaughter, Joana, left to perish without accomplishing the life mandate of virginal *consolatrice* that her cousin’s missive bequeaths upon her. Suspended on the fault line separating the public and private, or State and family, in the liberal nation-state emerging in the 1820s, the absent mother points to a temporal elsewhere, a time much too Real to be delimited by her son’s indictment of frustrated paternity/authorship.<sup>3</sup> The elliptical maternal may, in fact, be the text’s implied metonymic axis. It is what makes each of the fragments of *Travels in My Homeland* a performance of dissemination and a constant crisscrossing of all socially ascribed meanings pertaining to the impossible question of being, the root of all fictions of identity. Poised on yet another time beyond Joana’s time, the reader is thus involved in a moving textual weave that is as much an appeal to genealogical reference as it is a slippery gift of libertine Romantic language memorializing Carlos’s *manque-à-être* as, specifically, male national subject.<sup>4</sup>

The present study aims to analyze the place assigned to women in the textual transit or signifying process foregrounding the construction of that failed subject, who rides on the wave of the anti-Enlightenment disclaimer, “I did not make myself what I am.” The term “process” is here used advisedly, to imply both the baffling unfolding of meaning through metonymical substitutions and the almost juridical proceedings that result from it, as will be here

followed in detail. I would like to suggest the centrality of female characters as bearers of temporal heterogeneity in the textual play eroding all fictions of reference, paternity, and self-presence.<sup>5</sup> I ground this centrality in the history of women, of nation, and of the literature that is born with and simultaneously constructs both Nation and Woman on the temporally contradictory model of the family. While the latter, following Anne McClintock's argument, appears to stand for the supposedly "natural," continuous, and homogeneous history of the nation, as a liberal institution the family is alienated from the state, from history and its temporal unfolding (91–92).<sup>6</sup> Garrett's *Travels* points clearly to how feminine characters are, on the one hand, the stronghold of what is supposed to be permanent and essential to nation and, on the other hand, how women, as such subjects of difference, insert the institution of the family in history. A critical approach that is not blind to this double temporal-semantic engenderment can possibly bring us closer to what is the most tantalizing contradiction of a text that mirrors itself poetically as well as politically on the paradoxical construct of the *belo sexo*.<sup>7</sup> The myth of femininity that underlies this construct may find cultural and literary validation in duplicitous Romantic *toilettes*, but its ghastly extension lingers over and, perhaps, beyond Garrett's witty dramatization of personal, familial, and national doom.<sup>8</sup>

### Inserting difference in the narrative of the "homeland"

It is not a coincidence that *Travels in My Homeland* insistently engages, as a whole, not only images of women *per se* but, specifically, constructions of gendered identities and gender relations, for the text is an experimental attempt to represent national time in a non-linear and non-totalizing way. Through his fictional writer-narrator, Garrett positions himself against the Eurocentric narrative of historical progress inherited from Enlightenment reason and utilitarianism.<sup>9</sup> He exploits a typically Romantic fragmentary and digressive style that privileges not the public events and figures of historical "cursive time," but what Julia Kristeva, inspired by Nietzsche's distinction, describes as "monumental time." This is the cyclical time-space of "reproduction and its representations," what, despite historical and cultural specificities, evokes a broader range of female experience relating diagonally to the linear time of national history, a "father's time" (Kristeva 189–93).<sup>10</sup> Following Rousseau and, particularly, the German Romantics, Garrett's sources for this archaic, cyclical modality of time intersecting linear historical time are condensed in legend and *romances*, unpretentious oral narratives that register "episodic

circumstances of a known and proven feat of magnitude" (*Travels* 189).<sup>11</sup> One such hypothetically traditional narrative inspired by an anonymous oral source—"this is the story [. . .], as it was told to me" (66)—is that of green-eyed Joaninha, the "*maiden of the nightingales*" (italics in the original).

That story, a long digression related metaphorically to the all-encompassing metonymy of "travels in my homeland" (Macedo 19), is conjectured upon a secluded window. "The window awoke my interest," the narrator reports; "It charmed me, it had me there as if spellbound" (65). Not surprisingly, the seductive window is marginal to the public world of national history, where the travels of the writer-narrator and his companions take place. The group of men recalls, in fact, the concept of the nation as "a deep, horizontal comradeship," a "fraternity" (Anderson 16).<sup>12</sup> Inasmuch as the narrator appears to distance himself from the others once captured by the mesmerizing sight of the window, the latter may be said to instill a poetic interruption in the process of homosocial male bonding constituting the "prose" of the (liberal) nation.<sup>13</sup> It is by virtue of such a standstill that the window can set the scene for the emergence of a symbolic episode of private life. Similarly to what occurs in Homer's *Odyssey*, to which the narrator ironically compares his own writing/travels (*Travels* 67), that domestic story cuts across and sheds light on the public events surrounding the construction of modern Portugal, and of its constitutive national subject. Presented in a series of frequently halted, visually plastic scenes, from Chapter X until the end of the book, the maiden's story outlines a writerly journey of personal discovery. This narrative conjoins in one common epilogue the narrator's and his companions' journey to the city of Santarém. Or, the dream-like, spell-binding frame of a feminine home window onto which is grafted an imaginatively fertile episode of the *vox populi* not only opens to but cannot be extricated from the father's/author's public narrative of the "homeland."

In effect, the bits and pieces composing the embedded story point towards a hypothetically truer or more valid national memory while setting off the corruptions of varying kinds to which official historical monuments and documents are subjected, as part of what Eric Hobsbawm describes as "the invention of tradition."<sup>14</sup> The eighteenth-century earthquake could have indeed "interrupted the thread of all our national architectural traditions" (*Travels* 152). Yet, it is the imperative of political substitution authored exclusively by male figures that accounts for the perversion of "taste" in national monuments (as happens, for example, with the church of Santa Maria de Alcáçova).<sup>15</sup> The



"us" constituted by the makers, builders, and writers of history is therefore to blame for the overall and continuous representational violence perpetrated by male-centered historical as well as historiographical exploits. This is forcefully put forward in the textual *mise en abîme* of the book's final scene, where the writer's fictionalized double confronts the complex and humanized character of Friar Dinis. The climax of the meeting comes at the point where politics and writing are discussed in relation to "one of those liberal broadsheets" read by both. "Well written and partly true. We were to blame, certainly, but the liberals were no less"—asserts Friar Dinis, to which Garrett's traveling liberal responds, "We have both made mistakes" (245). The attempt to recognize such common mistakes is, in part, what propels the narrative process, one outlining a pilgrimage of sorts through the stations of degraded national monuments.<sup>16</sup> The dilapidated or adulterated public buildings that the narrator is given to see in Santarém are not, however, any more reproachful than written accounts that similarly set in stone a perverted and "foolish" version of national history. As Carlos would have it, "What do they [the historians] know of the causes, the motives, the value and importance of almost all the facts they recount?" (241).

In an attempt to correct what goes down in history as disembodied, supposedly disinterested, and hence uniform and absurd facts, Garrett exploits the "performative" dimension of the so-called poetry of the people over and against the "pedagogical" narrative transmitting the fiction of a continuous and cohesive national community.<sup>17</sup> As if to contextualize, to lend socio-historical depth to the legend featuring the cyclical time-space of the nation's physical and symbolic reproduction (featured in the maiden's story), Garrett first calls attention to subjects of difference normally excluded from patrilinear "pedagogical" history. They are "the minority, the exilic, the marginal, and the emergent" (Bhabha 301), representing non-consensual local cultures and histories resistant to homogenization within the official "father's time." A good illustration of these local cultures appears in Chapter I, with the lively description of a group of twelve men composed of two contending subgroups, "in every respect [. . .] antipodes" of each other (*Travels* 24), as well as of the socially hegemonic group of Lisbon travelers. Representatives of each minority group within the larger group of marginal subjects in the liberal nation, the *campino* and the *ilhavo* emblemize dichotomous poles in the not only regional but, also, cultural and racial construction of masculine Portugueseness, the former associated with "African races," the latter with

"Pelagian stock."<sup>18</sup> The scene is obviously more than a quaint ethnographic note of standing north-south rivalries. The debate between the two men is a telling sign of the disjunction, the non-assimilable differences of the various regional, sociocultural and racial formations, not to speak of the various individual histories, exhibiting the multiple fissures underlying the modern nation as a horizontal "brotherhood of men."

The text's opening dispute stages, on the other hand, how such typical performances of competition among men overpower and ignore other subjects of difference, who are relegated to the margins of the national community. Witness, for example, the narrator's disparagement (in Chapter VII) of "the nasty, repulsive villains one so frequently comes across in similar places in my country" (51). Named only to serve as a contrast to "the master of the house," the owner of the Cartaxo café that welcomes the city travelers, the apparently undesirable populace represents an emergent threatening political force that Garrett deliberately excludes from his post-miserabilist narrative of the "homeland."<sup>19</sup> This textual erasure is worth questioning in a narrative that supposedly pays tribute to the behind-the-scenes of national life; to what, indeed, would soon enter the scene of public history in revolutionary, popular feminine garb.<sup>20</sup>

### **Feminine figurations of *natio* and nation**

The sweeping political, social, and cultural transformations brought about with the rise of liberalism—"This necessary and inevitable upheaval the world is going through" (*Travels* 23)—cannot, in effect, but crystallize the exclusions inherent in the concept of a homogenous nation-people. Among these, but unlike the textually dismissed "repulsive villains" to whom they are obliquely related, women become the privileged signs of national difference in Garrett's *Travels*. They are at the center of the "inevitable upheaval" simmering both inside and outside the borders of the homeland's windows. This may be the reason why it is not until Chapter IV that the first reference to woman appears, precisely to uphold modesty in ironic contrast to the vanity of those public men representing Portugal.<sup>21</sup> Such a feminine virtue summons the sphere of affective relations as an ideal corrective or therapeutics for the legal/political nation, which becomes apparent at the end of Chapter IX, where the first consideration of femininity as locus of national habitation occurs. This is done in reference to the old Duchess of Abrantes, whom the fictional writer-narrator reportedly had met during an earlier sojourn in Paris. Despite

the Portuguese affiliation signaled by her name, she is said to be “the perfect embodiment of the Frenchwoman, the most alluring woman in the world,” having merited the exclamation, “How comfortable one feels here!” (62).

The nostalgic remembrance of a time, a woman, and a national habitat in all respects foreign to the present homeland takes place just before the scene shifts to the valley of Santarém, in Chapter X, where the maiden's story is due to begin. An ambiguous frame of reference is thus set up in relation to a female “national type” synonymous with a time-space of nationhood.<sup>22</sup> The heterogeneous female figures emerging from the legendary *maiden of the nightingales*' window sharply contrast with the bygone glitter of the old “French” duchess, “that beauteous star of the empire surrounded by all the splendour of her decline” (*Travels* 62). Standing worlds apart from the duchess of yesteryear as well as from the remaining female figures is Georgina, a British specimen of a very different type of feminine “allurement” on the rise throughout the first decades of the nineteenth century. Still, the enlightened, independent, and altruistic lover of the once exiled, liberal Carlos appears in the national scene (or the textual “homeland”) only after the native, supposedly innocent feminine subject makes her appearance. It is not surprising that the writer-narrator refers to the latter with the diminutive, “Joaninha”; she points to the interior, unpolluted place of birth maintained and reproduced through blood ties and theoretically remains outside of the nation's historical time and its system of relations of affiliation.<sup>23</sup> The English woman, conversely, is an ostensible metonymy of a similarly idealized but external, rational, morally responsible civil nation composed of free individuals not strictly bound by kinship ties.<sup>24</sup>

Carlos (and the narrator with or through him) would surely love to have both women—the atemporal, child-like *natio* and the changing historical, if foreign-cultured, nation—in the privacy of his recently re-discovered, if disjointed, “homeland.” This may be why he is unable to choose between one and the other. Cameos of very distinct, but each in its own way feminine habitats, they equally step out of home boundaries in demand of his love. This is where the trouble begins: for all his progressive, anglophile self, Carlos is threatened to the point of inaction by two only superficially antagonistic figurations of feminine nationhood moving freely between the private and the public terrains to actively pursue him. No matter how “angelic” in semblance and demeanor their author insists on fixing each of them, Georgina and, especially, “our interesting Joaninha”<sup>25</sup> display a want and self-determination that

escape the bounds of his congealing masculine gaze. In other words, they both escape enclosure in private, purportedly ahistorical and asexual domesticity.<sup>26</sup>

Brought together by love and the nation's travails, Joana and Georgina are companion pieces illustrating how women's common, yet culturally specific, monumental time intersects with the nation's public/male-centered historical time. Estranged from the first by virtue of the circumstances surrounding his birth and family history, immaturely reacting rather than conscientiously following the liberal ideals associated to the second, Carlos is incapable of answering to any of the women's desires in the internally fractured time-space of his "homeland." Not only does he frustrate the fulfillment of cyclical or "woman's time" but, what is worse, he eradicates it altogether as he grows "fat, rich and become[s] a baron."<sup>27</sup> Joaninha, the embodiment of *nation*, goes mad and predictably withers away from the pain of rejection—Romantic appropriations of Shakespeare's Ophelia and the legend of Crazy Jane seem to live on the character's horizon (Showalter 10–13). Georgina, the progressive civil nation, is led to give up on Portugal and on worldly life altogether by enclosing herself in a convent in her fatherland. She cannot but remind us of the "entrepreneurial Mother Superiors" responsible for the "feminization of the clergy" and given to works of charity in England (De Giorgio 176). In a "homeland" internally shattered by the masculine logic of either/or epitomized in successive civil wars between absolutists and liberals, Carlos represents the pathos of a male national subject stuck on the bar of that divide.<sup>28</sup>

Neither the innate or "natural" community (Joaninha) nor the foreign or "cultured" civil nation (Georgina) take, however, textual precedence over Carlos's grandmother. Her construction brings to mind an insidious, eternal feminine time-space enslaved in the life of private affects by men similarly impotent to resolve the contradiction that, according to Hegel, would be the foundation of the modern state.<sup>29</sup> The grandmother is the class, cultural, and national antithesis of "French" Mme de Abrantes in relation to the bygone era of absolutism. Feeble and blind, she is the scar disfiguring present national time: the mark of an earlier time-space that gave birth to and still exists, in ghostly form, within the nascent liberal nation. As reminder and remainder of a male-made history that has not changed despite all the political, social, and cultural transformations witnessed with the rise of liberalism, the grandmother evokes the Penelope-like stance of women throughout time,<sup>30</sup> or what androcentric mythologies have insistently constructed women to be, so that their rightful owner-masters may reclaim a space of



home and national habitation, no matter for how long or to how many places their travels might take them.

### The grandmother as *autor*

Portrayed “winding yarn on her doorstep, at the house in the valley” (*Travels* 85), the grandmother embodies a past historical time and, simultaneously, a transhistorical feminine time suspended on the threshold of the private/public dichotomy. This is obviously not by chance: fated with an ideology of gender that, since the dawn of Western civilization, equates woman with weakness—“I am weak and [. . .] I am a woman” (85, 88)—the grandmother is held responsible for the home’s downfall. In terms of her family’s history, a history that bears the intertextual stigmata of many an “odyssey,” the grandmother’s “weakness” is what would have permitted the entry of an outsider into her home. Once military and then a scholar, the intruder is, ironically, a high representative of the community’s law: the district judge, Dinis de Ataíde, who would later re-emerge as the repentant, resentful, and misogynist Friar Dinis.<sup>31</sup> The reasons for and extent of the grandmother’s complicity in the illicit affair resulting in Carlos’s birth are purposely unclear. After all, what goes on inside the home should be a private, unknown matter—even if it is to reach the public proportions of legend. Still, Garrett invites us to travel through the meanders of the grandmother’s story in order to suggest how the politics of affects, what sensitive souls would call “love,” are enmeshed in the nation’s public history. Along the crisscrossed paths of sex and history, there is more than one hint to Carlos’s impossible coming into being as a free, self-determined, and rational individual, the ideal full-blown subject of the liberal nation.

Although Carlos and Joana’s grandmother receives “a splendid settlement” (96) when the judge enters the low-reputed order of St. Francis in 1825, it is seemingly not the perspective of financial gain that originally moves Dona Francisca to open the door to the stranger. Proud of what had been her family’s “good, honourable stock,” she refuses, in fact, to change “the modest condition in which she had lived until then” (96). There is also no indication that the grandmother, then the mother of a childless married woman and a younger son, is coerced by the district judge throughout the period of time during which he was “a frequent visitor of that house” (96). According to the sensible judgment of a neutral outsider of the family, “the English-woman,” the judge “is not so guilty” (184). The narrator’s reasoning in regard to Joana and Georgina’s tendering of “the monster” Carlos suggests that here

(as elsewhere) the origin of all trouble falls on the good old (arguably Kantian) “female heart,” source of so much “generosity” that it excuses women’s “innumerable faults” (183).<sup>32</sup> Since no husband is mentioned, not even an absent or dead one, the “weak” woman-mother, Dona Francisca, would have been left unguarded by masculine reason and authority. She would, consequently, have not only opened her door to a public man but, in doing so, would have opened her own and her married daughter’s “female heart.” The absence of her daughter’s husband from the home would ultimately have led to the adulterous affair, given the presumed predisposition of women for love—ironically a myth championed by nineteenth-century ideologues of motherhood and femininity (De Giorgio 194–97). Hence, against the grandmother who still believes in love as the ideal medium of human connection—“it is through it and only through it that we attain the others”—Friar Dinis would condemn, “Woman, woman! Love is the last of the virtues” (88).

The implications that can be abstracted from the tragedy befalling the grandmother’s family due to the feminine imperative of love may be read in a number of ways related to the troubled emergence of the liberal nation, and specifically to its gender and sexual politics. The pre-history of the *maiden of nightingales*’ window takes us inside a private space seemingly cut off from the nation’s political destiny played out in the public scene of the civil war.<sup>33</sup> This erasure of historical referents is indicative of how Francisca’s home is abandoned to itself, not unlike the nation whose king/father fled to Brazil in 1808. The mother reigning over this home would plausibly, then, embody the law of patriarchy in a family context where the Father is no longer a physical given. Opening the door to the judge and acquiescing with her daughter’s adulterous love begins the process whereby the symbolic fiction of paternity is dislocated. The son that is born from her daughter and the judge reconstitutes the grandmother’s family under the ambiguous shadow of, precisely, the “dead Father.”<sup>34</sup> That the daughter’s husband is killed, along with his brother-in-law (Dona Francisca’s younger son) before Carlos is born is thus important. By virtue of these deaths, she becomes the sole stand-in figure for a semblance of patriarchy that, in fact, never was. As grandmother, she is ironically, then, twice mother-guardian of the patriarchal masquerade on which rests the family home, the supposed moral pillar of the civil nation under liberalism.<sup>35</sup>

Abstracted from the time and space of nation, the grandmother’s home dramatizes the consequences of the separation between family and state, civil and political spheres. What is at stake in the grandmother’s story is the imminent

penetration and cultivation, if you will, of the family by a public man. The sociopolitical and not merely immoral presence of an illegitimate masculine power on the home front is presented here as a result of women's agency (since the grandmother lets the stranger into her home) and, simultaneously, as a result of the supposed "weakness" of women. At once "poor creatures" and "evils," they must be castigated and, ultimately, eradicated from the homeland for having deterred masculine civic duty in the interests of feminine affect. If maternity was upheld throughout the nineteenth century not merely as a function of household governance and reproduction but as a way of "'making men,' that great giving of life that was not cursed like the other" (Fraisie and Perrot 4 and Di Giorgio 195; emphasis in original), the grandmother can rightly, therefore, be also considered "the author of [. . .] our misfortunes" (Garrett 242–43). The text ultimately condemns her for "making a man" irredeemably cut off from the Mother, the cyclical time-space of nature and reproduction and, thus, cursed to live strictly by socio-conventional (masculinist?) ties/lies.

Carlos's fall from Nature, figured essentially as an estrangement from genealogical ties, is what avails him to become an instrument of abstract, foreign ideas (i.e., liberalism) that do violence to the traditions of the birthplace. To assert that the latter is not once associated with either motherland or fatherland is to point out the symbolic fracture upon which the liberal nation is founded. For this reason, the narrator "dreams" of reinstating himself as a Portuguese national and reinstating the nation as "Portugal again" (146), and decries the imminent death of Portugal as a "nation of miracles, or poetry" in an "age of prose" (166). Committed to the liberal cause imposed as a foreign set of referents on his native homeland, Carlos is damned as national subject, as are all of those who are severed from the women-centered kinship ties organizing the original, "poetic" birthplace (*natio*)—the distant, not only pre-liberal but in the end prelapsarian paradisiacal past from which men and women in general cannot but be expelled.<sup>36</sup>

For all else that Garrett's text may implicitly or explicitly probe, denounce, and allegorize, it engages and reflects upon the emergent phenomenon of women in relation to the sign Woman in the nascent liberal Portugal of the 1840s. Confronted with the blind, mummified mother of his sacrificed lost mother and with women like Joana and Georgina, who topple the dichotomy between the feminine home and the masculine space to actively demand him as object of desire, Carlos finds himself with no imaginary ground of primary identification. This accounts for his failed coming into being as male subject

the second time around, that is, when he comes back to his birthplace as a “foreigner” of sorts to face the fiction of his paternal origin. He is unwilling to recognize himself in the man dressed in religious robes, a man who condenses the shameful, sinister past underlying his and, by extension, the liberal nation’s very existence. So, Carlos must run away from and actually do away with women as sexually embodied subjects and from Woman as virtual place of national habitation. His flight to the scene of battle cannot but parody that of the narrator who, decades before him and in relation to “that beauteous star of the empire” already in decline, “French” Mme Abrantes, would have exclaimed, “How comfortable one feels here!”

### **Conclusion: From difference to poetry**

More so than symbols of nation or metaphorical “bearers of the collective” (McClintock 90), feminine figures in Garrett’s text bring to mind what Hegel, interpreting Antigone’s choice to uphold family interests against the historical mandate of the state, characterized as “the everlasting irony of the community” (Hegel 288). The grandmother subverts the patriarchal law that would prevent women from crossing the divide between family and affective matters, on the one hand, and the masculine sphere of civic duty, on the other—a privilege that only men were supposed to enjoy, as Carlos does. She thereby opens the cycle that would place “women’s time” in tandem with the emergence of a civic community found upon the erasure of women.<sup>37</sup> The grandmother’s descendants end up being sacrificed to the interests (and fears) of the masculine nation. However, the ironic woman survives (“sitting in her old chair, winding her interminable skein of yarn, like Penelope weaving her tapestry” [220]) to convoke women’s ghost stories in the story of the writer-narrator’s “mental travels” through the feminine.<sup>38</sup>

Multifarious projections of the impossible form/whole that the lacking, desiring Romantic male subject aims to be or attain for himself, feminine figures become thus privileged signifiers of movement-difference (or “travel”) in Garrett’s poetic recuperation of nationhood. As dislocations of the Eternal Woman, they are virtually synonymous with the wanderings of poetic language in its attempt to express what may be conceptualized as the untainted, socially unmediated or “natural” side of man’s soul (Michaud 131). The narrator’s frequently stated rejection of progress, utilitarianism, philosophy and reason, “an existence as absurd as this one [. . .] made by [society’s] laws, customs, institutions and conventions” (201), is first and foremost a rejection of the masculine



symbolic economy that crushes that soul in the interests of the homosocial bond mobilizing the modern community, as well as the narrative thereof.

Temporarily bracketing this forward-looking movement of historical "father's time," signaled by the masculine bourgeois group traveling in reverse direction from the nation's capital to Santarém, the narrator's solo voyage to the land of legend and poetry encapsulated in the maiden's window translates an attempted radical regression to the "homeland" of his soul. Its association with an original maternal time-space extensive to *natio* tellingly encounters the lost, dead Mother. She or, better, it evokes the unrepresentable "chora semiotica" that is repressed by, but nonetheless survives as a force of poetic disorder in the language of convention, of sociability (Kristeva), or, if you will, of "prose." Being synonymous with interior truth in opposition to the "lies" by which he lives, such poetic disorder is what Carlos/the writer-narrator procures in the images of femininity through which he dislocates and searches for himself.<sup>39</sup> It makes sense that such images are the very sign of feminine madness—all women that love Carlos are deemed "crazy" by the constitutional (liberalist) soldiers, Carlos himself also being considered "crazy" (121–22). For isn't the outcast madman the figure, *par excellence*, of poetic genius expressing true man's soul in the greater part of the nineteenth century?

The privileging of poetic disorder in the "natural" feminine, particularly in the image of the sister-child, Joaninha, is not by chance. She is said to embody and symbolize "the vacillations of the century" in her "green eyes and [. . .] pale face" (85). Corresponding not only to the poetry of yesteryear but, also, to the prose of the present, those "vacillations" find expression in all other imagistic projections of Woman. They are, at the same time and in good Rousseauian contradictory fashion, the writer-narrator's/Carlos' "saving Otherness" figured in Georgina, her sisters, and the Azorean lover, but they are also reminders of his fall from grace into "society's evils," as epitomized by the mother/grandmother.<sup>40</sup>

While the feminine in *Travels in My Homeland* may be the space for social evasion, critical self-reflection, and thus poetic engenderment in man's soul, it cannot be conflated with women as subjects of difference in the nation. In fact, the poetic, disorderly feminine here privileged as narcissistic imaginary projection is only possible at the cost of erasing women from the picture. It demands disassociating Woman from the female body, from its sexual desire, from any "excitable feminine imagination" (208) and, above all else, from women's reasoning intellect—"A woman cannot and should not understand

a man. Woe betide the one who realizes it!" (*Travels* 223). It is therefore not a coincidence that Carlos freezes Joana in his memory as the child, Joaninha, that he used to "carry in [his] arms or on [his] back" in a paradisiacal time before time (135). Only as a little, docile, defenseless, and supposedly sexually innocent being can Joana have any poetic saving value for the socially damned Romantic man-of-the-world. From the moment, however, that she displays a subjectivity that is not coincidentally expressed in terms of her insistent demand for Carlos's bodily presence as a full-grown man, he feels terrorized (141), eventually taking flight to the company of men on the battlefield.

For all the enlightenment that the "poet" prizes in women like Georgina, for all the innocent, natural truth that he attaches to the girl back home, he cannot reconcile fantasies of the difference within the male self with women as subjects of difference in the nation. And much less with woman as man's equal in a national community theoretically conceived as a fraternity of men. In this typically Romantic quandary, perhaps the only "travel" companion one can expect to find in a poetic search for the lost maternal Real of man's "homeland" is fated to be the incestuous figure of the sister-child made to order by the anti-Enlightenment *enfant du siècle*. Some time later, Baudelaire would memorialize the figure in his Orientalist "Invitation au voyage" in the volume *Les fleurs du mal*: "Mon enfant, ma soeur, / Songe à la douceur / D'aller là-bas, vivre ensemble! / Aimer à loisir, / Aimer et mourir, / Au pays qui te ressemble!"

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Note that in 1922 and 1923, respectively, the first two important periodicals dedicated exclusively to the female public appear: Almeida Garrett's progressive *O Toucador*, about which more will be said below, and the reactionary *Periódico das Damas*. See Leal's "Um século de periódicos femininos" for an overview of the several publications dedicated to and eventually written by women in Portugal throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth. It is perhaps a good idea to remind ourselves that "[n]ever were women talked about so much as in the nineteenth century," as Stéphane Michaud notes at the outset of his study included in Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot's *History of Women in the West* (4: 121).

<sup>2</sup> The traditional *pater familias* role is succinctly defined by Carlos's unfathomed father, Friar Dinis, in the following terms: "All power was in God, who delegated it to father over son, thus to the head of a family over the family, and thus from one of these over the State, but to govern according to the Gospel and with all the republican austereness of the early Christian principles" (*Travels* 91).

<sup>3</sup> The philosopher and political theorist John Locke is credited with laying the basis of liberalism in his *Two Treatises on Government* (1690), where he argues for the separation of family and

state at the cost of the older common principle of kinship. This separation would theoretically exclude women from the world of politics, economics, and production, limiting them to the private sphere of family affairs, reproduction and affects. See Nicholson, especially pages 133–66.

<sup>4</sup> Lacan associates metaphor with the question of being and metonymy with its irrecoverable loss—what he calls the “*manque-à-être*” of the speaking subject, dislocated in metonymical substitutions in the signifying chain in a failed attempt to answer the mystery of where he comes from. (Lacan, “Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious” 166–75).

<sup>5</sup> Although “[w]omen are typically constructed as the symbolic bearers of the nation” (McClintock 90), they are more often than not the “signifiers of ethnic/national differences—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 313).

<sup>6</sup> See also note 3 above.

<sup>7</sup> In 1822, Garrett publishes with the “*Imprensa liberal*” the first periodical completely dedicated to women, *O Toucador: periódico sem política dedicado às senhoras portuguesas*, Nos. 1–7 (Feb.–Mar. 1822). The phrase “sem política” does not so much corrode the progressive tenor of Garrett’s publication as it points to the liberal belief that women belong in the civil sphere of family affairs and should therefore be guarded from the influx of the public world of politics. Irene Fialho makes a convincing case for the political content of *O Toucador*, suggesting its importance for understanding the ironic verve with which Garrett treats contemporary politics in *Travels in My Homeland* (Fialho 109).

<sup>8</sup> Witness, for example, the narrator’s description of Joaninha. He takes such pains to emphasize her supposed natural beauty and demeanor that he ends up avowing his fault in making *toilettes*: “In terms of style—in the style of the foremost and most beautiful of all the arts, the *toilette*—this is a fault, I know” (75). See Álvaro Manuel Machado for a good insight of how the art of the *toilette* figures in Garrett’s literary and personal dandyism, or ironic Romantic duplicity.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter XIII, where this position is cast in characteristically ambivalent terms, pitting the monks from the old despotic regime against the barons representing the new liberal-materialist society. The monks merit an ironically sympathetic opinion, for their “serious figures” are considered to have been a redeeming presence “among the crowds of monkeys and dolls in tight jackets and bucket hats, which are typical of *Europe’s foppish species*” (79; emphasis added). The baron, by contrast, is considered a “much more noxious animal and more of a rodent [than the monk]” (81). In Chapter XV, outlining Friar Dinis’s ideas, we read, for example: “To cure a country that is ruined, like all those in Europe, by means of a liberal revolution, is the same as bleeding a consumptive” (92; emphasis added).

<sup>10</sup> Although not evoking Kristeva’s often quoted argument, Anne McClintock’s postcolonial perspective confirms this dichotomous gendered representation of national time, specifically in relation to the British narrative of nation. In it “women (like the colonized and the working class) [were figured] as inherently atavistic—the conservative repository of the national archaic. [...] White, middle-class men, by contrast, were seen to embody the forward-thrusting agency of national progress” (93).

<sup>11</sup> See Chapter XXX for a critical-theoretical discussion of the traditional ballad of St. Iria, contrasting the written and oral versions. See Carlos Reis for a discussion of how Garrett’s privileging of oral legends leads to his recreation of the genre in the long narrative poem, *Dona Branca*, prefiguring what he would later undertake to do in *Travels in My Homeland* (Reis 15–16).

<sup>12</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, Ernest Renan defined the concept: “A large aggregate of men, healthy in mind and warm in heart, creates the moral conscience which we call a nation” (Renan 20).

<sup>13</sup> “Portugal is, always was, a nation of miracles, of poetry. Her prestige has been destroyed; we shall see how she lives in *prose*” (*Travels* 166; emphasis in the original). The idea echoes Hegel’s famous dictum that the nineteenth century is an age of prose.

<sup>14</sup> Hobsbawm discusses the “mass production of public monuments” as the third major undertaking in the invention of tradition in France of the Third Republic, the first two being secular, public education and public ceremonies, respectively (264–65). To this and particularly in view of how Garrett’s text critically engages historiography, we should add how the mass circulation of the printed word in the nineteenth century was not only decisive for the construction of the modern “nation,” following Benedict Anderson’s argument, but was also an integral part of the invention of tradition.

<sup>15</sup> That is, the substitution of the old Church-centered absolutist order, represented by the spiritually and hence more aesthetically inclined monks, with the materialist barons of liberalism would have brought about the unsightly changes in national monuments and public buildings.

<sup>16</sup> The diatribe against the corruption to which national monuments have been subjected, especially “in the last century” (153), comes to a dramatic climax at the end of Chapter XLI, when the narrator decides once and for all to leave Santarém, a microcosm of Portugal: “Curses on the hands that have defiled you, Santarém; that have dishonored you, Portugal; that have demeaned and degraded you, nation that has lost everything, even the landmarks of your history” (203).

<sup>17</sup> I borrow from Homi Bhabha’s often quoted distinction between the “pedagogical” narrative of nation, founded on a myth of origins presupposing consensus and cohesion of a People, and “the performative [that] introduces a temporality of the ‘in-between’” allowing for the inscription of “cultural difference and the heterogenous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities, and tense cultural locations” (299).

<sup>18</sup> “The *campino*, like the *salão*, has the stamp of African races; these others [*ilhavos*] are of Pelasgian stock: regular, mobile features, an agile frame” (*Travels* 24).

<sup>19</sup> Referring to the shady Azambuja inn, complete with a witch at the door, where the previous chapter had ended, the narrator informs “the benevolent reader” about the literary context that informs the design of this Romantic *locus* (in opposition to Cervantes’s *posada*): “What inn should it be, now, in the year 1843, under the very nose of Victor Hugo, with Doctor Faust running round in our heads and the *Mystères de Paris* in everyone’s hands?” (*Travels* 31; my emphasis).

<sup>20</sup> I am referring here implicitly to Maria da Fonte, the leader of the popular revolt in 1846, which mobilized a great number of women among rural peasants and a variety of ideologically distinct forces against the abuses of power by the regime of the enlightened despot, Costa Cabral (*Marques* 3: 24–25).

<sup>21</sup> “I am talking about modesty and we live in Portugal. [. . .] Yet modesty can be almost entirely a failing in a man if it be excessive [. . .]. In a woman it is always a virtue” (Garrett 36).

<sup>22</sup> Michela De Giorgio notes how not only clerics but also historians, philosophers, and men of letters throughout the nineteenth century tended to characterize females according to “‘national types.’ From these derived specific moral behaviors: degrees of passion, sentimentality, willingness to sacrifice, marital obedience, and so on” (170). Obviously, Joana and Georgina embody two such different “national types.”

<sup>23</sup> Critics of the novel generally concur in seeing Joana as a representation of the natural, stable homeland or place of birth, in this case, the valley of Santarém. Because of the semantics of nature that inform her description, she is not on the side of reason and reflection, as Georgina, but on the side of intuition and emotion (see, for example, Reis 73–74 and 83).

<sup>24</sup> My juxtaposition of Joana and Georgina is somewhat inspired by “the inner/outer distinction” discussed by Radhakrishnan in relation to gender and Indian nationalism (84).

<sup>25</sup> John Parker misses the point by translating the “que era feito da nossa pobre velha, da nossa interessante Joana?” of the Portuguese original (88) as “what had happened to our old woman and to our adorable Joana?” (110). In juxtaposing “poor old” and “interesting,” Garrett suggests the unexpected possibilities, the fluidity of the young Joana as a woman in



contrast to the historical scars weighing down on and limiting the grandmother. "Adorable" translates nothing of this potential for surprise in the character of the young woman.

<sup>26</sup> As the grandmother asserts, rejecting Friar Dinis's warning that Joana will be in danger living "among the soldiery," "she is more sensible, more courageous, healthier and stronger than most men, let alone women" (110). About the superior "virility" of Georgina's character, one need only remember how, in Chapters XXXII–III, she confronts the weakness of her ex-lover and many times liar, Carlos, denying her love for him and swearing that he shall belong to his cousin, the "innocent creature" that she had "taken under [her] protection" (178).

<sup>27</sup> At the closing of the narrative, Friar Dinis reports to the narrator that Carlos "'has grown fat, rich and become a baron'" and that "'Joaninha went mad and died. Georgina is the abbess of a convent in England'" (244).

<sup>28</sup> In his *Either/Or* (1843, 2 vols.), Søren Kierkegaard posits the existence of two spheres of action: the aesthetic, related to the pleasures of life and to the private sphere; and the ethic, related to social, political, and religious duties. The problem with Carlos as both an individual and as a metonymy of the (male) national subject is that he does not conscientiously and freely embrace hedonist pleasures or, even less, follow an ethical course of action in the political sphere. Remember that he becomes terrorized and eventually takes flight to the battleground in a final cowardly flight away from Joana's demand of physical love (141).

<sup>29</sup> As it is known, Garrett makes an ironic, indirect reference to Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit* in Chapter II, where he argues that the two principles that govern the world, namely *spiritualism* and *materialism*, "are always together, the one some way behind, the other going on ahead, often getting in each other's way, rarely helping one another, but always *progressing*" (28). Garrett's critique of Hegel's dialectic is here given in nutshell: there can apparently be no dialectical synthesis but, rather, conflictive co-existence between the life of the senses and the flesh (related to women and animal/family life) and the life of the spirit (related to men and ethics in civil society). This being so, "the march of social progress" (28) is not to be seen in the dialectical movement leading to the state, as an ideal synthesis between the two former stages of existence but, rather, in the very process—the travels and travails—of the conflict between private and moral/political contingencies.

<sup>30</sup> Ivone Leal (1985) argues that, despite the political changes brought about with the onset of liberalism, the submission of women to men in the family was not essentially altered. "Papéis familiares que supõem uma hierarquia: inferior ao marido, a mulher deve-lhe submissão. É capaz de governar a casa, mas incapaz de se governar a si mesma" (354).

<sup>31</sup> The Friar's constant reproach of woman's weakness mechanically echoed by the grandmother, though in self-defense, comes to a violent climax when the latter reminds him of her "unhappy daughter": "'Silence, woman! Do not invoke *the devil* I carry incarnate in my breast [. . .]. Woman, woman! . . . this corpse has one live spot in its heart [. . .] and your egoism has put its finger on that very spot, woman!" (103; my emphasis).

<sup>32</sup> The idea that women are governed by passion (rather than reason), thus making them incapable of citizenship, is found in Kant (see, for example, Mendus).

<sup>33</sup> Note that while there are plenty of references to the civil war as a necessary background for the maiden's story, the grandmother's story is narrated without any reference to political events, as if taking place in a historical vacuum.

<sup>34</sup> I am here indebted to Lacan's discussion of the paternal function, based on Freud's reading of the Oedipus myth (Lacan, especially 310–11).

<sup>35</sup> For women as a stronghold of affects, sexuality, morality, and family inheritances in the newly reified civil sphere of the family under liberalism, see Nicholson, especially page 132.

<sup>36</sup> Despite the "exceptionality" of their characters (Reis 71, 75), Carlos and Joana are also representations of men and women in general, who, like them, are "expelled for ever from the paradise of delights in which they had been born" (*Travels* 119).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Fraisse (52), and see also note 28 above.

<sup>38</sup> I am here alluding to Blake, whose "The Mental Traveller" suggests how every woman is, in fact, the same Woman, a projection of the poet in his search to complete himself as a superior androgynous subject (Hoeveler 7–8).

<sup>39</sup> "I lied to you, I lied to myself and I was not truthful to anyone" (224); "I lied: men are always lying. I hate lies. I have never willingly lied and yet my whole life is a lie" (225).

<sup>40</sup> In regard to this contradictory pull of the image of Woman, inspired by Rousseau, see for example, Michaud 129–31.

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